

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

MY AIM AS A PREACHER

Wesley Simons

The major points in this article were written by Dub McClish and appeared in *The Minister's Monthly* in June 1967, page 483. The points are so great that we feel they need to be repeated. I am convinced that many preachers have forgotten what their true aim ought to be. Many preachers are so busy doing minuscule things and trying to please all the people all the time that they do not have time to study, visit the lost, visit the sick, edify the saved and defend the Truth. Now let us notice what our aim ought to be.

1. "Be true to God's word regardless of the consequences." Some preachers are so afraid of being dismissed that they will not preach what needs to be preached. They will not preach on subjects like: marriage-divorce-and-remarriage, social drinking, dancing, various denominational errors, and the like. I want to be able to say on judgment day, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). God will take care of us if we proclaim the Truth. Even if we are killed as were some in the first century, then heaven will be our final abode. Brethren, it takes courage to be a preacher. Who are you trying to please?

2. "Seek the approval of God above all others in spite of who might disapprove." Every preacher must have the attitude that he is God's man first. We are to proclaim the Truth in love. Those to whom we preach may or may not approve of our message. This we regret. However, consider this: "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19). Also ponder this: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered

and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). We cannot allow the pew to control the pulpit. We must allow God's word to control the pulpit. Many preachers have become "so tactful" that they never say anything worth hearing. Some are trying to preach without making enemies. This is impossible! Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake" (Luke 6:22). The Bible also states, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3: 12). Somehow, some feel that they know more than God in that one can live the Christian life and never suffer in any way for it.

Some have declared that if Stephen would have been more tactful, then he would not have been stoned. What nonsense! Those who state such are so-called preachers.

Brethren, we are living in a very liberal and compromising age. Can God depend on us to be his mouthpiece here on this earth? Will we have the conviction to speak the Truth in love regardless of the cost? May God help us to do this. (Originally printed in the Oct. 1995 issue of CFTE, p. 14.)

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Bro. Simons and the Tri-Cities School of Preaching evidently think it is sinful to apply the truth of his excellent article to the unrepentant false teachers Dave Miller and Stan Crowley as well as their supporters. Why is that the case? —EDITOR

IN THIS ISSUE...

MY AIM AS A PREACHER – WESLEY SIMONS.....	1
EDITORIAL – FLOYD DECKER'S ARTICLE – DPB.....	2
WHAT ABOUT CONSTANT ASSOCIATION WITH UNREPENTANT ERRING BRETHREN? – Robert R. Taylor, Jr.	3
DIFFERENCES IN C. CH. & C. OF C. – F. A. DECKER.....	4
FROM THE [UN]CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE – DUB McCLISH.....	5
BRETHREN, YOU SIN AGAINST US – JAMES W. BOYD.....	6

BOYD'S STATEMENT AT '81 SPIRITUAL SWORD LECS.	7
JEPHTHAH'S VOW – ALTON W. FONVILLE.....	8
IT IS NEVER RIGHT – AUTHOR UNKNOWN.....	9
LONG TIME LIBERAL GOES... – DUB McCLISH.....	10
CARTOON – STEVEN D. CLINE.....	10
THE BAPTIZED CAT – STEVEN D. CLINE.....	11
ELDERS: WHO ARE THESE MEN? (2) – BILL JACKSON.....	12
WE JUST WANT TO LOVE EVERYONE – GARY W. SUMMERS.....	14

Contending FOR THE Faith™

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

Floyd Decker's Article

Some of the things and terms the late brother Decker mentions in his article appearing on page 5 of this issue of *CFTF* are not necessarily wrong. Some of them are authorized in that they are options serving to expedite (they are advantageous) discharging what is Biblically authorized. Or, they are terms that simply identify, define and specify the work of Christians as they function within the Biblically authorized framework of the church. For instance, surely no properly informed child of God would affirm that having a “church secretary” and “church custodian” necessarily implies such positions to be as much a part of the New Testament organization of the church as are elders and deacons. They are simply terms, describing the work the eldership has authorized such persons to do. The term “great commission” falls into that same category—a term that accurately describes what Jesus said in Matt. 28:18, 19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46, 47, but the term is nowhere explicitly found in the New Testament.

However, all other things being Scripturally equal, when an option for expediting an authorized act ceases being a means to a Scripturally authorized end (the discharging of the authorized act) — *it becomes the end in and of itself alone*. This it cannot be and remain in the optional category. Or, if a term is used, the idea of which is not found in the New Testament — such as calling an evangelist the “pastor” of a church when the term has nothing to do with the meaning and usage of it in the New Testament — *that term itself is corrupted because of the wrong definition assigned to it*. Or, if the term “church secretary” is considered to be a necessary office in the church as is the eldership (such as the Secretary of State in the U. S. Executive Branch of government) — *it loses its descriptive term status and, therefore, its Scriptural reason for being employed*. Also, the erroneous view of some brethren that the church building itself is holy as the Mosaical Temple was holy—those “anti” brethren who bind where God has not bound notwithstanding. I have in mind here such things as kitchens in the meeting house, eating in the meeting house, the term “director” applied to those who under an eldership direct preacher training schools, the term “youth meetings” that correctly describe young people coming together for spiritual edification, Bible camps, and such like. Any one of the preceding matters and more like them can be and have been perverted because people remove them from the option category (those ways and means that discharge a Biblically authorized act in the quickest and best way possible) making something contrary to Bible authority out of them. Thereby they are perverted and become sinful. The faithful will always repudiate and reject such corruptions of good things.

With the previous Biblically qualifying and modifying points in mind regarding brother Decker's article, it is *very important* to realize *what* those terms and activities listed in his article meant, as well as *how* they were used in the Christian Church 65 years ago when he wrote his article (and before). This is necessary because the Christian Church then

and now has very little to no concern for Bible authority regarding what they believe and practice. If they truly possessed such a concern in the mid 19th Century, they never would have introduced the use of mechanical instrumental music into the worship of God. But they did — and they did it while all the time admitting that singing without any other kind of music in worship was perfectly acceptable to God. That same unconcern for and repudiation of Bible authority (Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Col. 3:17) over the last 140 years has led them to embrace about anything denominational. Indeed, today they are only another sectarian man-made outfit and the Disciples of Christ gladly call themselves a denomination.

The disdain for, with the rejection and repudiation of, Bible authority has grown in the church of our Lord until at present it is running rampant throughout the land. The average member knows little to nothing about ascertaining Bible authority and really does not care to know about it. Furthermore, many in the church have rejected the natural communicative element of language—the way language by its very nature functions and, therefore, the way any language authorizes anyone to do anything. Having lost their concern for Bible authority, coupled with a willful ignorance of the same, the church has grown to love and cherish denominationalism in general and the Independent Christian Church/Disciples of Christ in particular.

Couple such wild rebellious false brethren as previously noted with certain other brethren who are willing to justify their friends' sins, and today the church finds herself, not in

The Grip of Grace, but in the strong destructive Grip of Satan.

We never would have believed that some brethren could be brought to believe, much less openly proclaim and argue for, categorizing sin as *Big Black Sins* that we must oppose, and *Little White Sins* that God permits us to ignore and overlook, *but such is the case*. Obviously these brethren do not believe that the accounts of Cain, Nadab and Abihu, Achan and his family, and Uzzah have a thing to teach us about God's view of sin and its punishment. *But Paul certainly thought such inspired accounts did* (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-12).

As Israel of old went “a whoring after other gods,” many Christians today are guilty of the same rebelliousness in their desire to be like the man-made religions round about them. From every quarter of the church we hear of unfaithful members making known their longings to “ape” their denominational neighbors. But, they are not only content to mimic sectarians, they are openly and forcefully attacking those brethren who oppose sectarian denominationalism. They fully intend to carry as many as possible into denominationalism.

With the previous article before you, please consider the late brother Decker's article, realizing that at one time what he said about the church of Christ was true of almost all the congregations of God's people. Today it is not. *That being the case, what are you going to do about it?*

—David P. Brown, Editor

WHAT ABOUT CONSTANT ASSOCIATION WITH UNREPENTENT ERRING BRETHREN?

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

It is difficult to figure out some of our brethren in their inconsistent actions. They will bemoan the liberal spirit that is capturing large portions of our once uniformly conservative brotherhood. Yet on a continuing and even increasing basis they will appear with them on lectureships, workshops, seminars, and other occasions. It would be wonderfully courageous and highly commendable if they went to unmask their errors and uphold Truth with militant majesty; yet this they do not do as a general rule. There may be a few exceptions along the way but not many for sure! July Jubilee in Nashville annually is spearheading the perilous plunge into apostasy. Yet each year there are a few more conservative brethren who agree to speak on it, and with the backing of their elderships respectively. If they went there with the spirit of Elijah before Ahab or the false prophets of Baal, the spirit of noble Nathan before adulterous David, the spirit of John the baptist before Herod and Herodias, the spirit of Christ before Pharisaic hypocrites, or the courage of Paul facing Judaizing troublemakers, they would not have the welcome mat extended to them for repeat performances. Will any doubt it? If so, on what logical basis?

“Birds of a feather flock together” is not just true of winged fowl; it has a spiritual application as well. Brethren who constantly associate with false teachers, never confuting them, have not yet learned to hate every false way (Psa. 119:104, 128; Rev. 2:6). Yet they want to maintain a reputation for soundness. Such is extremely hard to attain and then maintain while giving tacit endorsement to liberalistic forces. (From the Annual Denton Lectureship Book, *Studies in Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, pp. 528, 529.)

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[In the previous quotation brother Taylor hit the nail squarely on its head regarding “our brethren in their inconsistent actions.” But, in the case of at least two unrepentent false teachers, Dave Miller and Stan Crowley along with those fellowshiping and defending them, he and others like him do not practice what he taught in his article. Is it not amazing to what lengths some brethren will go in seeking to justify their erroneous conduct?—EDITOR]

[The late Floyd A. Decker was pastor of the Murrell Boulevard Christian Church in Paducah, Kentucky. In 1930 he heard J. Petty Ezell preach on the differences between the Christian Church and the church Jesus built. As the result of his love for the Truth, having heard the sermon, Floyd Decker left the Christian Church to become a Christian—nothing more, nothing less and nothing else—a member of the Lord’s church. What follows is an article Decker wrote in 1944 on the same subject that moved him to become a New Testament Christian. Please see the editorial regarding Decker’s article—EDITOR]

THE DIFFERENCES IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Floyd Decker

1. The Christian Church has women Counselors, Directors and Lecturers; the church of Christ does not (1 Tim. 2:11, 12; 1 Cor. 14:34).
2. The Christian Church has Educational Directors, Associate Ministers and Youth Directors: the church of Christ has elders, deacons, evangelists and teachers (Eph. 4:11; Phil. 1:1).
3. The Christian Church has Missionary, Benevolent and Educational Organizations to execute the work of the church; the church of Christ does not (Eph. 4:4; Eph. 3:10, 21).
4. The Christian Church celebrates days of heathen worship, such as Easter, Mother’s Day and Christmas; the church of Christ does not (Gal. 4:10).
5. The Christian Church fellowships various denominations in their activities, leaving the impression that all are brethren; the church of Christ does not (2 John 9-11; Gal. 1:6-10).
6. The Christian Church seeks to get crowds with Youth Meetings, Campaigns for Christ, Rallies, drives and Promotions; the church of Christ does not (1 Tim. 4:16; Rev. 22:18,19).
7. The Christian Church emphasizes society and the physical man by appealing to the carnal nature, with church carnivals, bands, plays, choruses, dramatics, church kitchens, church camps, and elaborate fellowship halls; the church of Christ does not (1 Cor. 10:7; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 11:22,34).
8. The Christian Church elevates its preachers above the rest of the members by using titles as Pastor, Superintendent, President and Doctor, but the church of Christ does not (Matt. 23:5-12; Job 32:21,22). Also, the Christian Church has forced its ministers into the denominational “Pastor System” by hinting, suggesting, complaining, and even demanding that its preachers run after the members, taxi the people here and there, and hold hands of the sick. The church of Christ does not expect this and God does not expect this sort of treatment from those who have been called to preach the

gospel. Acts 6 points out that it is not scriptural for ministers of the gospel to leave the word of God and serve tables. The church has women servants and has deacons who are supposed to take care of the physical needs of the congregation. And the church has elders who are entrusted with the “souls” of the members. And the preacher is left free to study, meditate, pray and carry on an unhampered work of preaching the gospel to the lost (Acts 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:15; 4:1-5). And if a church does not have elders, etc., it can no more scripturally introduce the “Pastor System” than it can introduce the piano because it has poor singing.

9. The Christian Church misuses the name “christian,” which is a noun, by speaking of “Christian nations,” “Christian schools,” and “Christian Church.” The church of Christ does not (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).

10. The Christian Church takes up collections at services other than on the first day of the week, and uses unscriptural means such as suppers, property rentals and special collections to raise money for the church; the church of Christ follows 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 by having each member lay by in store on the first day of the week. This is its ONLY way of raising money.

11. The Christian Church owns and operates Publishing Houses, Radio Stations, Hospitals, and other Benevolent Societies; churches of Christ build nothing but churches (Eph. 3:21).

12. The Christian Church owns, supports and operates schools for secular education, through theological schools; the church of Christ does not (1 Tim. 3:15).

13. The Christian Church has a compromising spirit, will not defend its doctrine, is nothing but man-made denomination, has no regard for the authority of the Bible, bases its practice on the silence of the scriptures, and appeals to the traditions of the elders rather than to the simple unadulterated gospel of Christ. The Christian Church is not part of the New Testament church and should not be regarded as a friend of Christ nor of the truth. ❧❧❧

FROM THE [UN]CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Dub McClish

The [UN]Christian Chronicle carries a story in its Feb. 2009 issue that is almost sad enough to make a grown man cry (pardon my sarcasm, although any report of apostasy is certainly depressing to faithful saints). Like so many brethren concerning so many situations, Richland Hills, Texas “Church of Christ” is whining because it wants to “have it both ways.” It is well known that Richland Hills began offering a Lord’s supper service with instrumental music on Saturday nights in 2007. A few months ago they began having an “a cappella” service AND a separate mechanical instrumental music service on Sunday mornings (a 2-year-old could have seen that coming). So what are they boo-hooing about? The 2009 edition of Churches of Christ in the United States (21st Century Christian) had the unmitigated audacity to leave Richland Hills out of its listings as a “Church of Christ, and did so intentionally, at that”! (I am surprised 21st Century Christian had the backbone to do it, but good for them.) Meanwhile, Richland Hills is crying, “Unfair, foul-play.” “We strongly feel like we are a part of Churches of Christ and continue a strong love for—and commitment to—excellent a cappella worship,” so Mike Washburn, Richland Hill’s “executive minister” bawled (Washburn is Maxie Boren’s son-in-law, incidentally). He continued: “However, we are a part of a huge movement in our fellowship who do not believe a cappella worship is the sole way of defining who Churches of Christ are.” Waaahhh! Now isn’t that a surprise? A “huge” number who claim to be in the church nowadays are as comfortable singing praises to God and His Son with the accompaniment of the emblem of Baal as they are with worshipping in spirit and Truth. (It is clear from Washburn’s statement that Richland Hills has more respect for what a “huge number who claim to be in the church” is comfortable with than with what the Lord and His Word are comfortable with.) There you have it, Richland Hills moved outside, but they still want to be listed as on the inside. Those conversant with the ever-progressive apostasy of Richland Hills over the past 25 plus years (I have lived about 30 miles from their building for 28 years), were not the least bit surprised when they brought in the instrument(s). Their obvious disdain for Scriptural authority in numerous manifestations (including the employment of their version of elder r/r in 1987, predating Brown Trail’s/Dave Miller’s use of their similar procedure only by 3 years) made some of us wonder why they waited so long to roll in the organ (saxophone, gut bucket, washboard, or whatever they employ). It has not bothered Rick Atchley, Mike Washburn, the Richland Hill elders, or their large assortment of other “ministers” that the Lord blotted them out of His “directory” decades ago, so it

seems both inconsistent and silly for them to feign such sorrow at being left out of a mere human register. But then, I never met (or heard of) a liberal who did not, sooner or later, evince both traits. Altogether, 21 churches that were in the previous directory were intentionally left out of this year’s. Seventeen of these were congregations that had ceased having any a cappella meetings. The other 4 (Richland Hills, Farmers Branch, TX [Dallas suburb], Jenks, OK, and Redwood City, CA) are in-betweeners, having both instrumental and a cappella services—at least for now. Isn’t it big of them to be so understanding, non-judgmental, and tolerant of their “weaker brethren”?

The sobering and sad truth is that if you want to know what the vast majority of congregations that still have “Church of Christ” on their signs will look like in 10 years, just take a gander at Richland Hills. With its “courageous leadership” in that direction, many congregations will not take 10 years to plunge over the same precipice. Throw in the growing affinity some liberals among us (though they long since ceased to be) have for the Emerging Church theology, and the process that ends in spiritual (and eternal) disaster will only accelerate. Further, as many are aware, among those who still staunchly oppose (and will likely continue to do so) the use of instruments have compromised egregiously concerning fellowship otherwise in the past three years. This means that faithful brethren are now a remnant of the larger non-instrumental “remnant.”

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BRETHREN, YOU SIN AGAINST US

James W. Boyd

That liberal digression has invaded the ranks of the church is obvious to anyone who is aware of the erosion and division because of false doctrines being taught from pulpits, publications, school classrooms, lecture programs, and such like. There are two kinds of people the devil applauds: (1) those who militantly and aggressively promote false doctrines, like the Jubilee Church, and (2) those who are too self-serving to oppose error and expose the teachers of it, who prefer to stand idly by saying and doing nothing significant enough even to show distinctly whom they serve.

There are those who say they hold to the Truth and do not agree with the liberal heresies being taught all around. They may not teach these heresies themselves. They say they do not encourage attendance and support of the events, churches, schools, and people who are driving division among us by their false doctrines. Yet, they never seem able to bring themselves really to combat this insidious work of the devil. They are not heard to speak out in opposition of the false doctrines and identify the sources of them. They do not know what it is to reprove and rebuke the heretics. Nothing they do seems really to discourage those who are tearing the church into pieces and creating this new digressive denomination now so evident.

CATALYSTS FOR DIVISION

They will attend the functions of these servants of the devil who teach error. They will announce their works, produce their materials, advertise in their papers, sell their books, invite them to teach their people, have them on their lectureships, advance their influence, even participate in their programs known for the heresy promoted. They may say they are not supporters of the movement to restructure and change the Lord's church into another denomination, but you cannot tell it from what they do, or refuse to do. Actually, their cowardice serves as a catalyst for the continued advance of division caused by heresy. Yet, they try to act so innocent and loving!

Yes, they will preach part of God's Truth, but ignore all parts that have to do with dealing properly with false doctrines and false teachers (Ephesians 5: 11; II Corinthians 6: 14-18; Romans 16:17-18; II John 9-11; II Thessalonians 3:6). Their loyalty to Christ seems to extend only so long as it might not disturb their jobs, salaries, positions, friends, family, and acceptance. Do they really consider themselves to be so "somewhat" that they can rise above the battle for Truth and go along to get along regardless of what is going on, and think God or faithful brethren must be pleased with them?

DO THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO?

Why are brethren willing to do this? Even if *preachers* are unwilling to risk anything to stand for the Truth, why do *elders* permit their preachers to be associated with the events of heresy? I cannot judge their motives. Their deeds speak to

their discredit. But I can accept what the inspired Paul said was the motive of false teachers (Romans 16:18). It may be that some of these fence-straddlers know not what they do. But they *need* to know what they are *really* doing. They are *sinning against God and faithful brethren*. That is what they are doing. I do not know who they think they are, but I can tell what they are by their fruits!

They are undermining the patient, kind, firm, and faithful efforts to oppose error, being more critical of those who *oppose* error than they are of the *error* being opposed. Do they really think they can serve God and mammon? Cannot they decide whether they are with the Lord or with the liberals? They cannot have both. Are they content to ever be double-minded and talk out of both sides of their mouths?

LET'S CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES

These people who cannot bring themselves to be against false doctrines and the teachers of it may mean no harm. They may even think they are standing for Truth. But they are not when they continue to trot along with the sources of error. They are sinning against Christ and faithful brethren, lacking conviction sufficient to do battle in a crucial hour. They lay burdens on those who fight the good fight, and give encouragement to the Lord's enemies by their fear and reluctance to take a meaningful stand.

If that is not contrary to the will and actions of the Lord that he taught and demonstrated, and as was taught and demonstrated by his apostles, why isn't it? How can they rest easy in such glaring duplicity and fear? How much better it would be, for them and everyone else, if they could be like Joshua (Joshua 24:15), and stand with faithful brethren in resisting the forces of evil. Do they have no concern for the consequences of their attempts to please all men, except those who seek only to please God? (Originally printed as a guest editorial in the September, 1992 issue of *CFTF*, pp. 2, 3).

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[We personally witnessed bro. Boyd manifest the courage of his convictions when he publicly spoke out in his sermon during the 1981 Spiritual Sword Lectures, opposing the appearance on that year's program of the late Ira North. See Boyd's statement on page seven.]

In his excellent 1992 CFTF article bro. Boyd clearly saw in many their lack of (1) Biblical conviction, (2) the courage of their convictions, (3) their failure to publicly expose and oppose false teachers (4) while all the time claiming not to believe their error, as they (5) continued to extend fellowship to them.

Hence, today we ask bro. Boyd regarding the false teacher Dave Miller, et al, why does he reject the above points one through three while embracing points four and five? —EDITOR]

JAMES W. BOYD'S STATEMENT AT THE END OF HIS SERMON DURING THE SPIRITUAL SWORD LECTURES, OCTOBER 19, 1981

"In Ephesians five and verse eleven we are taught to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. We don't have any difficulty, brethren, in refusing to fellowship these unfruitful works of darkness. And I only need to mention the passages of Second John, nine through eleven, to know that we are not to bid God speed to that which is false and to those who teach that which is false. And we have no difficulty in withholding and refusing to bid God speed to those who teach the false doctrines and the teachers of Seventh-Day Adventism.

"But I would suggest to you as we very properly and appropriately expose the error of the various religious groups and cults under consideration this week we also be sobered in the awareness of false teachers and false practices among members of the churches of Christ.

"Brethren, listen to me, and my time is about up. Unfortunately, and far too often, too many brethren are content to just give mere Lipservice to this matter of bidding God speed when there are prominent people who teach error or who begin to compromise the Truth. It seems the bigger the name behind the false doctrine the less inclined some are who want to recognize it for what it is. To your speaker, it is increasingly and disturbingly characteristic of many in the church to ignore, or to cover up, or try to just simply explain away false doctrines and false practices that are taking us into deeper digression, and apostasy, especially when they are taught by prominent brethren. And such brethren are so condoned even as they continue in their false teaching and in their false ways without repentance. They are considered as acceptable as anybody else.

"I read to you what I consider an excellent line from the latest issue of the *Spiritual Sword*. 'When brethren fellowship false teachers while opposing faithful brethren we are reminded of the situation of Jeremiah's day.' The Bible student knows that the situation of Jeremiah's day was a day of apostasy. I concur heartily with the sentiments that are expressed by N. B. Hardeman as are also quoted in this latest issue of the *Spiritual Sword*. He said,

'There is no man against whom I would say anything destructive to his fair name or to retard his influence. I pray God that I may not be filled with envy and with jealousy that will make me see things other than that the truth demands. With the Spirit of Christ paramount, I stand against error, from whatsoever source it may spring ... I contend for the truth, as I see it, against the claims of all persons who oppose it, but for any man, personally, I have but the kindest of feelings.'

I concur in those sentiments and I trust that you do, too.

"I, as so many, have appreciated so much the *Spiritual Sword* lectureships of the past. I have considered it a deep privilege and opportunity and an honor to be allowed this third time to speak on this series of lectures. And I, like many others, have looked into the past and looked over these lectureships and have considered them as light in the midst of an ever-growing darkness of digression in our midst. Brethren, I have felt so comforted because of the *Spiritual Sword* lectureship and the brethren here. And I have received great personal encouragement from the lectureships of the past and those who have spoken. And I am determined for one, to be true to my convictions until such time someone proves to me from the Scripture that they must be altered.

"Now that which I want to say with the utmost kindness that's within me to speak. God knows my motive and my heart and I'll stand before Him in judgment. And I want to speak respectfully. And I want what I have to say to be constructive. And I realize

that which I am about to say that I run the risk of alienating brethren whom I love better than some of my own family. But I am compelled to say that my appearance on this lectureship this time is the courteous upholding of my commitment that I accepted when I accepted the gracious invitation extended to me to speak. But my appearance is not to be considered as an endorsement of every speaker that appears on this platform this week, because I do not so endorse them.

"False teachers among us are of no consequence to some. False practices among us don't bother a lot of people. Brethren, you will just have to excuse my ignorance. I cannot possibly understand why the continued use and toleration of those who have led us into paths of digression. And concerning the use of brethren, brethren who have repeatedly proven themselves to be uncertain and unsound and unreliable, I say to you in the utmost kindness, we need to take the medicine we have so boldly handed to others and be more respectful of God's rebuke against the endorsement or the appearance thereof of those who have promoted error and who will not repent of it. This is true whether the false teachers and false practices be in the church, from Seventh-Day Adventism, from whomsoever and wheresoever.

"And it hurts worse, more than I can find words to say, that when you risk your all – and I have – and when you have suffered and been berated – and I have – to stand against the inroads of digression in the church, to see those who have promoted these very digressions lifted to this very platform and commended as sound and acceptable teachers. It's not right, brethren. There is no man on God's earth that can prove it's right. Thank you very much."



[Following bro. Boyd's comments the late editor Ira Y. Rice wrote in part:

*It does little good, for whatever reason, to invite some well known false brother; when it means you are going to lose the endorsement and support of faithful brethren who are wholly committed to the Truth of the Gospel. I doubt, of course, that they ever will ask me again. However, the time has come when it is necessary to inquire whom else is being invited before we can agree to appear on most lectureships; and now this appears to be the case with the *Spiritual Sword* lectureship, as well.*

To hear some tell it one would think that those of us who have opposed Dave Miller, et al., are the first ones ever to be concerned about speaking on lectureships with false teachers. Obviously for those who care about the facts in a case, this conclusion of the "some-says" is false—not that it will make such people any difference.

*Also, it is evident that either bro. Boyd does not believe Dave Miller and his fellow travelers are in sin or he has bought into the false position of Memphis School of Preaching, Gospel Broadcasting Network, Southwest Church and School of Bible Studies, along with their friends and decided to play God in determining which sins are **Big Bad Sins** that must be opposed and which ones are only little biddy sins that are okay to ignore—Talk about human councils, synods, and the like deciding to legislate for God. It is nothing less than amazing that men can be so willingly blind to their own biases and respect of persons as they follow a multitude to do evil.*

It is our prayer that such men as bro. Boyd will remember from whence they have fallen, repent and return to where they used to stand—or, at least, where we thought they stood when in our youth we looked to them as examples of consistent faithful preachers and defenders of all of God's Truth. —EDITOR]

JEPHTHAH'S VOW

Alton W. Fonville

In the “softening down” process of God’s Holy Word which so many in the present apostasy have been so actively engaged in, the powerful inspired account of Jephthah and his “rash vow” has been used to try and prove that God will somehow change His will to accommodate our failures, sins and lack of faith in Him.

This account is recorded in Judges chapter eleven. Jephthah was the son of Gilead by a harlot. His other brothers, by Gilead’s wife, cast him out, even though he was a **“mighty man of valor.”** They did not want him to inherit on an equal with them. So he fled and dwelt in the land of Tab. But, in time, the Ammonites made war against Israel and the Gileadites sent for Jephthah and pleaded with him to come back and fight as their **“head.”** At this point, Jephthah very forcefully pointed out that they had cast him out, but, when the chips were down, they called him back to help fight for them. This reminds us so much of our own human nature and actions with God. When all is going well, we turn God out of our lives, but, in times of distress, we call him back to help us out. This is a repeated story since the world began.

Jephthah did come back and serve as their head and captain, relying on God very heavily. It was evident that he prayed. This was when he made the vow to God that if God would deliver the enemy into the hands of the Israelites, and if Jephthah returned home in peace, **“whatsoever cometh forth out of the doors of my house to meet me shall be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering”** (verse 30). Clearly, this was a “rash vow” as we can see, but, nonetheless, it was a vow with God as a witness just as surely as a marriage vow, and Jephthah could not “go back on it.” It grieved him deeply when his only child, a virgin daughter came out to meet him. He expressed his deep grief to her and she had the courage and faith to tell him to “keep his vow.” “Since you made your vow to God, it must be kept—after all, God kept His word and gave you victory—you can’t do any less.” (verses 35-36 paraphrased)

Jephthah did allow two months time to lapse before he fulfilled his vow, just as his daughter had wished. Verse 39 clearly declares that at the end of the prescribed time, the vow was kept as stated and that it became a custom in Israel to memorialize the daughter four days every year.

My first remembrance of this account was when I was a freshman in college at ACC in 1947. I do not remember much about it then, but, ten years later, I decided to ask my Bible teacher there about it, since I had heard much discussion and disagreement among different people. He told me that Jephthah *did not* actually “sacrifice” his daughter, but let her go to the mountains and never marry. He said that God would not have accepted a burnt sacrifice of humans anyway. This was his explanation of the whole story. My faith sunk to a lower level.

I could read what God’s word plainly said, and here,

we have a “learned man” saying that it did not mean what it said.

And much of the people are still trying to twist the Word of God to mean things that are in opposition to what our Lord meant. It is not relevant whether God would or would not accept a human sacrifice. A vow had been made to God, and deity was a witness—it had to be fulfilled as stated. Marriage laws are tossed around and changed at the “burn of a biscuit” today with no thought of the vow made to God and with His witness. Abortion is being done and excused by other “silly” reasoning and much innocent blood is being shed. Instead of our conforming to the God’s Word, we are changing it to suit our desires. Praise teams and praise choruses are used in our worship because they entertain us and make us feel good. We relegate our worship to Almighty God as He directed, to a back burner. And, we continue to flaunt His Word about and “do that which is right in our own sight.” Jephthah, though he came by means of a harlot, had more integrity than many today who are of the family of God.

BACK TO JEPHTHAH’S VOW

It seems that believing what God said in his Holy Word is one of the hardest things for many people to finally get into their heads. We want to think in our terms, the way “we want it to mean” and completely miss the Truth of what God said and meant. So many times, we do not want to see the “severity” and justice of God, only the “loving side” of our Maker. When he gave laws to Israel of old, the penalties for not keeping those laws were usually spelled out in plain language. In spite of that, they “conveniently” forgot to obey them and had to “bear their own iniquity.” Again, we today, are not much different from what they were.

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Regarding the great example of Jephthah who made a “rash vow” and kept it in spite of the severe consequences, he went down in history as a “faithful” servant of God who kept his word that he had spoken with God (Hebrews 11:31ff). The Bible plainly tells us that he “did with her according to his vow which he had vowed” (Judges 11:39). And, by looking back to see just what that vow included, he was to give ‘**whatsoever**’ came out of his house to meet him after a successful battle, as a burnt offering” (Judges 11:31).

It is not uncommon today to hear different ones try to excuse Jephthah. If ever there was a twisting of God’s Holy Word, that is a classic example. His actions indicated the dedication that Jephthah had to God. His daughter even had the right idea and pleaded for him to keep his vow. Notice what she said: “**If thou hast opened thy mouth to the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth**” (Judges 11:36).

Did God accept the harlotry of Rahab, mentioned in the same context? Did God accept burnt offerings of human beings? The clear answer is a resounding NO in both cases. But, look at what those people were commended for—“**working righteousness.**” That simply means “keeping God’s commandments,” since “**all thy commandments are righteousness**” (Psalms 119:172). Did God say anything about “swearing and vow making?” When God is brought into the equation during an oath or a vow, to do anything different from those exact words was abomination and in some cases meant the death penalty for the ones who did not keep their vows (Leviticus 20:10). It is one of those things that God hates, like the popular practice of “adultery and divorce.” But, let us turn to His Word to get our answers.

A Scripture that most preachers have used many times comes to mind and is very pertinent to this situation. Samuel said, “**Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams**” (1 Samuel 15:22). Keeping our word with God and obedience to him is better than all our “worship” activities. Consider this; “**And ye shall not swear by my name ‘falsely,’ neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord**” (Leviticus 19:12). Doing something different from what you had vowed is to deal “**falsely**” and profane God’s name. God did command the “doing” of all his statutes and judgments and not take his name in vain (Deut. 5:11).

In the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ taught that it was serious business to swear or vow by the name of God. “**Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all**” (Matthew 5:33-34). And, James had this to say, “**swear not by anything lest ye fall into condemnation**” (James 5:12). In the light of these severe warnings and teachings about vow keeping, how can any lover of God’s Holy Word teach anything contrary to what is plainly stated? It is not wise to try and put our finite wisdom up in competition with that of Almighty God, our Maker. It is so much simpler and safer to simply BELIEVE WHAT GOD SAID. After all, it is TRUTH.

—337 Madison 4605
St. Paul, AR 72760



IT IS NEVER RIGHT

It is never right to do certain things; therefore they should be abhorrent to the Christian nature.

It is never right to divide a congregation through strife or selfish ambition (1 Cor. 1:10).

It is never right to try to exalt yourself by runing down someone who is not present (Titus 3:2).

It is never right to be dishonest in small matters or in large affairs (Romans 12:7).

It is never right to tell an untruth, however insignificant it may seem to be (Eph. 4:25).

It is never right to play the hypocrite, either with a friend or an enemy (Rom. 12:9).

It is never right to be inconsiderate of the other person, whether he is a stranger or a friend (Phil. 2:3, 4).

It is never right to engage in those things that will lower you or the church in the estimation of others (Matt. 5:16; Rom. 14:16).

—Author Unknown

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LONG TIME LIBERAL GOES TO HIS OWN HOME

Dub McClish

The February 6, 2009, *Denton Record-Chronicle*, carried the obituary of Walter Burch. He was born and grew up in Forth Worth, was married in Denton, and his body was brought back to Denton for burial.

Although I did not actually know Burch, I certainly knew of him. My first introduction to him was a series of doctrinal newspaper articles he wrote when he was a comparatively young preacher (early 1960s?), which were very well written and were faithful to the Scriptures in every way. Many congregations reprinted these articles in their local papers with good effect. He was the first full-time preacher at the apostate Richland Hills (Fort Worth suburb) [non] Church of Christ when both he and it were doctrinally sound. He also taught at and then worked for Abilene Christian College 10 years. However, his convictions (as did those of many others of his generation) underwent some radical changes in the mid-to-late 60s. (He became a “change agent” several years before Lynn Anderson applied the term to himself and his fellow-subversives.)

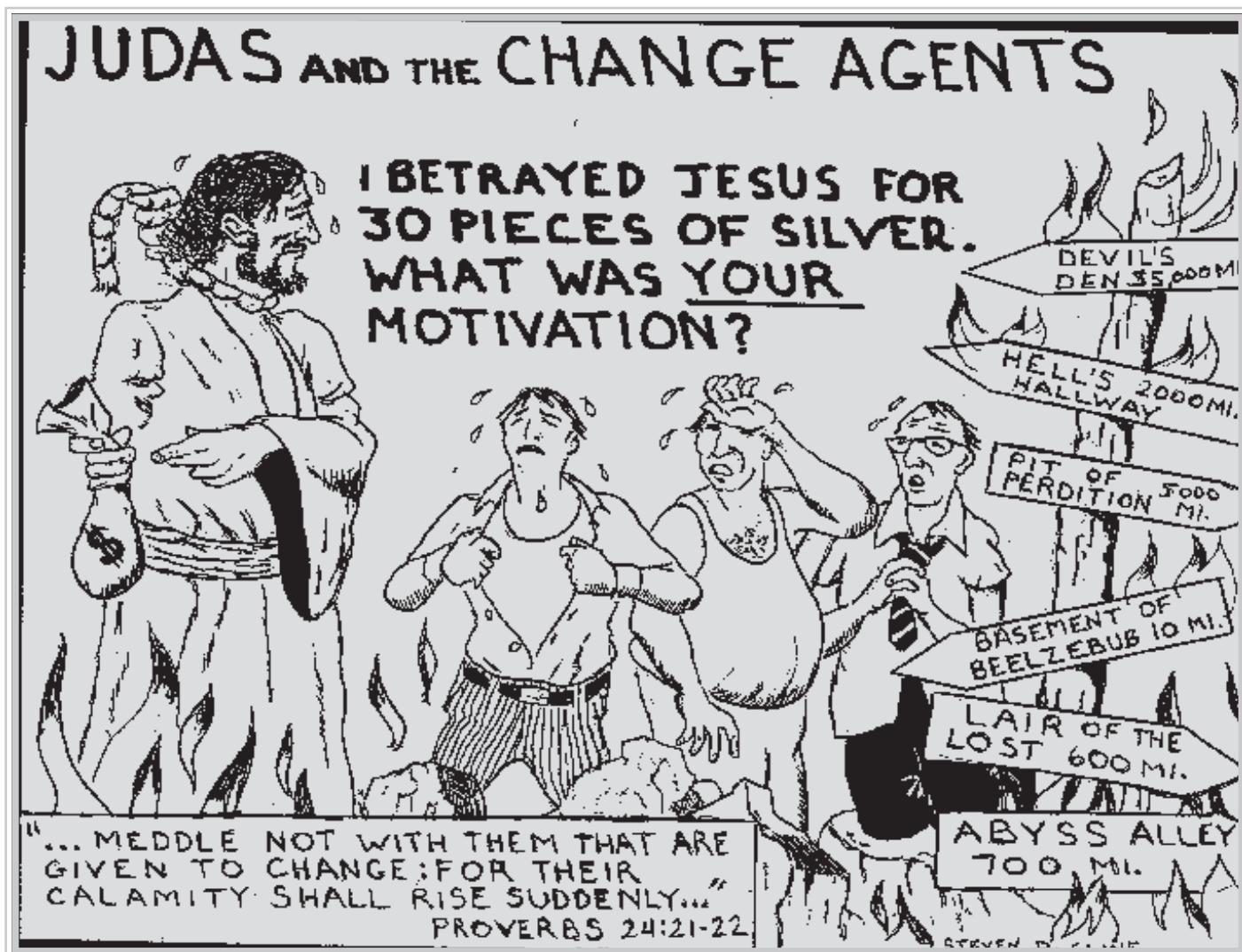
In my *Preachers of Today*, Vol. 4 (1970), Burch’s closed his biographical information as follows: “Helped plan Mis-

sion Magazine.” As the expression goes, “nuff sed.” He served on its board and wrote articles for it for several years, long after it had fully demonstrated its radical liberal agenda and emphasis. By the early 1970s he had not only forsaken, but when asked, repudiated the Truth he had taught in his excellent newspaper articles.

Long before the 1984 “Joplin Restoration Summit” (later renamed “Restoration Forum 1”) Burch stated his willingness to fellowship the Christian Church. He not only went astray himself, but through his influence, doubtless led many others from the Truth.

Not surprisingly, both the Richland Hills and ACU Websites heap great praise upon him. (I can hardly wait to read the accolades *The [un]Christian Chronicle* will give him.) Leroy Garrett, Denton resident and comrade-in-liberal-arms with Burch, will most likely have somewhat to say regarding his liberal (and destructive) legacy.

—908 Imperial Dr.
Denton, TX 76209



THE BAPTIZED CAT

STEVEN D. CLINE

One recent evening while assembling for Bible study, we decided to open the doors to Charlie, a neighborhood tabby. He was a mainstay around the church building and would sometimes dart inside as the people would enter. Since he was such a friendly feline, most of the members showed him plenty of attention. On the evening under discussion, our number was very few, so we saw no harm in letting him prowl and explore the auditorium.

The door to the baptistery was ajar and Charlie, with the curiosity typical of cats, decided to investigate realms and frontiers into which he had never been. Perhaps he was seeking the proverbial “quiet church mouse”. At any rate, while leading a song prior to the lesson, I suddenly heard the wild splashing of water directly behind me. Evidently, Charlie had ventured up the steps to the baptistry, fallen in, and was frantically but futilely endeavoring to claw his way up the slippery, smooth fiberglass wall. I reached over and pulled the soaked, panic-crazed cat out of the water, and he made a bee line for the front door. As of this writing, Charlie has not been seen since.

Save for Charlie, all of us had quite a laugh from the incident and one good sister sagely observed that our furry friend was like so many others ... they are baptized and then they are gone, never to be seen again. Despite visits, phone calls, and letters of encouragement, they vanish like wet cats. What a true assessment! That is not at all humorous. I have known, and I am sure you, the reader, haVE as well, so many who were baptized and then they are not seen “hide nor hair” of again. Could it be that they believe baptism is the finish of the Christian life and not the start; or rebirth (John 3:3-7)? Could it be they believe baptism is the end of the race and not the beginning (Heb.12:1)? Do they seem to be under the faulty impression that baptism guarantees eternal salvation in Heaven?

But doesn't Mark 16:16 state he who believes and is baptized shall be saved? Indeed! But does it say “he that

believeth and is baptized shall be saved forevermore in Heaven”? No. From what then does baptism save? Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16 are splendid commentaries on Mark 16:16. The former verse says that baptism is for the remission (i.e., the putting away or forgiveness) of sins and the latter verse tells us that baptism washes away sins. Therefore, rather than baptism being an act that insures unto us an unconditional pass to a future salvation in Heaven, it is an act that, through God's grace, insures unto us a salvation from past sins. That is to say, when the scarlet blood of Jesus removes our scarlet sins in baptism, they are no longer counted against us, and we are saved from our former sins, and now have a new life in Christ (Galatians 3:26-27).

But to be saved in eternity is a different matter. We need to continue to be cleansed by the blood by walking in the light (1 John 1:7), which is another way of saying that we must be faithful to Christ and His doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16). That is why Hebrews 3:14 admonishes that we are made partakers of Christ if we are steadfast unto the end. That is why Hebrews 10:36 instructs that we might receive the promise after we have done God's will. That is why Romans 11 :22 exhorts us to continue in His goodness or face being cut off. And that is why Revelation 2:10 informs us that we will receive the crown of life by being faithful unto death.

A cat being “baptized” then “scatting” may be a humorous scenario ... a precious human soul doing so is not.

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[The following installment is the second in a series of articles concerning the eldership. Originally this information appeared in a single uncopyrighted booklet written and printed in about 1990. It was one of the last literary productions of the late and lamented gospel preacher, brother Bill Jackson. Time has not altered the timeless Truth taught in brother Jackson's material on this most important subject. Herein, therefore, is another work from Bill's pen that continues to teach us. Indeed, he being dead yet speaketh. Regardless of how sinful preachers become, how ungodly deacons are, how incompetent Bible class teachers turn out to be, or how bad anyone else in the church is or will be, if the elders were willing to do at all costs what God commanded them to do, no problem could arise in God's church that would not be solved by faithful elders. Thereby, the Lord's church would kept faithful to God.

The only alterations made to brother Jackson material was for the purpose of putting it into article format. —DPB]



ELDERS: Who Are These Men? *Men Of Spiritual Character (2)*

W. N. "Bill" Jackson

"...a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God ..."
(Titus 1:7)

If one begins in Acts 2, with the establishment of the church, and reads the New Testament in order, he will learn of the existence of the leadership, of their work and responsibilities, and of their being over the saints in the work of the Lord. He will be missing the details as to the life and character qualities God expects, until he comes to the epistles to Timothy and Titus. It is not our purpose to examine each qualification and give a treatment of it; there are several works available accomplishing that end. Rather, we want to see the character God envisions, in the overall. We will see this by listing the qualifications, I Timothy having the larger list, and then will give the equivalent, found in Titus 1.

Titus 1:6 – 11 Continued — Not self-willed, not soon angry, Lover of good (men), Just, Holy, Temperate

Regarding The Qualifications

(1) THERE IS BUT ONE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

All who belong to God are to be of that character, whether male or female, young or old. We have stated the express words in 1 Timothy and Titus, and when men notice that the 1 Timothy list is slightly longer, they dare not assume contradiction. In fact, in the fullest defining of some of the character qualities, there would be an overlapping. But since there is the one Christian character, we can know that the men who are vigilant, of good behavior, patient, controlled, with proper view of this world's goods, experienced in the faith and with a good report from non-members (I Timothy), would also be the men who are just, holy, temperate, loving, good, not self willed and not soon angry (Titus). Our point is further made in realizing that in the definitions of some of the words, as vigilant (1 Timothy) we find the word temperate, that is also used in Titus 1.

Likewise, when one reads the fruits (sic) of the Spirit (Gal. 5), and then the graces for the Christian's life (2 Peter 1), there is some variance in the wording between the two, but there is no contradiction. One who has the graces of II Peter 1 will bear the fruit of Galatians 5 and vice versa.

(2) FOCUSING ON THE MEN, THE ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER STATED FOR AN ELDER ARE TO BE IN ALL CHRISTIAN MEN.

Notice we said elements of character, for it is clear that a faithful Christian man may be single, may be a new convert, and, due to his newness in the faith, have as yet no skills in teaching. There is one point of emphasis needed here: A man in the church may not possess the elements of Christian character due to his just beginning in the faith, or due to carelessness and neglect, or due to outright sin in his life – but an elder

1 Timothy 3:1 – 7

- Desire to do the work
- Blameless
- Husband of one wife
- Vigilant
- Sober
- Of good behavior
- Given to hospitality
- Apt to teach
- Not given to wine
- No striker
- Not greedy of filthy lucre
- Patient
- Not a brawler
- Not covetous
- Ruling his house ... children in subjection with all gravity
- Not a novice

Titus 1:6 – 11

- Blameless
- Husband of one wife
- Sober
- Lover of hospitality
- Using the Word to exhort, convict
- Not given to wine
- No striker
- Not given to filthy lucre
- Faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly

MUST have these qualities in life, else he cannot serve as an elder!

(3) BLAMELESSNESS – Clearly, the Lord is not stating that, for one to become an elder, he must be some kind of super-human, never having made a mistake. Whoever is selected has made mistakes, and will make some in the future. The word refers to the examining of one's life, and finding no cause for reproach, there being no glaring character defect. Surely most of God's children are blameless in life, and indeed, it is required of each and every child of God (Phil. 2: 15). Once more, any member of the church, through their own fault, might not be blameless, but an elder MUST be!

(4) A WORD ON DESIRE. – Actually, to “reach for, try to gain” something. No man should be appointed who has no desire to serve, but that's true concerning an elder, deacon, preacher or Bible class teacher. We should have a desire to serve in whatever capacity we undertake. We hasten to point out that through growth, understanding of the work of the kingdom and the eldership, encouragement given to men, etc., proper desire is developed within one. It is far, far better to have that desire thus developed by growth, encouragement and urging of faithful brethren than for a man to have desire on his own and then to begin running for the office.

(5) THE FAITHFUL CHILDREN. – Remember, as we have seen, that an elder is one who is older, has been in the faith for such time as to have manifest Christian character in all of its qualities, and has such abilities as to teach through exhorting the flock and convicting the gainsayer of his sin. The word faithful in Titus 1:6 is used throughout the New Testament to refer to those faithful in Christ. There is no doubt, in view of the above, that God desired men who had demonstrated in their own homes, and in their own children, the ability to teach and lead them into the Christ, and, thus, the faithful children are those who are obedient to the gospel.

Wives And Children

We do not believe that it is an accident that, in the context wherein elders and deacons are mentioned, a word is

given concerning wives. A point has already been made concerning elders' children. The Bible does not teach a double-standard – indeed, there is but one Christian character. However, wives and children should live their lives with an awareness of their husband/father's position, and not desiring to adversely reflect upon the husband and/or father should help motivate one in godly living. Would we not expect the same, even in secular matters? The mayor's wife and children have the same citizenship standard before them as does everyone else, but I would expect the mayor's family of all people, to understand what is involved and to conduct themselves respectful of his position. The chief of police's family come under the same obligation to be law-abiding as does everyone else, but I would expect his family, of all people, to live in accord with the law, being mindful of his position. Should we expect less in God's Kingdom, of the families of elders and deacons?

One other word: There is no New Testament office of elder's wife. He must have a wife, but she remains just that: his wife. The godly woman recognizes this, and would neither have an officious air nor would she find herself speaking for her husband. Her role remains that of an helpmeet (suitable help—*Editor*) to him, and especially supportive in view of the added responsibility he now has. ❧❧

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“FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR.”

“WE JUST WANT TO LOVE EVERYONE”

Gary W. Summers

“We don’t want to get involved in any kind of controversy or strife; we just want to love everyone.” This is the kind of thinking some brethren use as an explanation for their refusal to be involved in any controversy. But Jesus was in the midst of controversy constantly. And no one taught more accurately or demonstrated love more powerfully than Jesus.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another” (John 13:34-35).

He gave the disciples this commandment after washing their feet, and it is a tremendous example of what Paul would later write: **“...through love serve one another”** (Gal. 5:13). God is love and had always shown love to His creation, but Jesus added a new dimension to the word when He commanded His followers to love each other *as He loved them*.

Jesus loved them in selecting them to follow after Him, in allowing them to assist with the great work of preaching the gospel, in giving them time to allow their faith to grow, and in being patient with them as they developed. Even after the Last Supper, Luke writes that **“there was also rivalry among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest”** (Luke 22:24). Paul is probably considered the greatest apostle of all, and he was not even there!

Jesus also taught His disciples: **“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends”** (John 15:13). Jesus showed His love for them and us by enduring the crucifixion that man’s sins could be forgiven. As Paul pointed out, **“God demonstrated His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”** (Rom. 5:8).

What Is Love?

Love is being patient with others (1 Cor. 13:4), but it does not mean never doing or saying anything negative. **“See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all”** (1 Thess. 5:15). What might be best for someone else may be a rebuke or even punishment. Consider children, for example. **“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him properly”** (Prov. 13:24).

Many child “experts” disagree with the Bible’s teaching, saying, “Don’t tell a child no”; “Don’t ever spank a child”; etc. However, Solomon wrote: **“Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell”** (Prov. 23:13-14).

The Hebrews writer also taught: **“Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect...”** (Heb. 12:9a). If we chastise children out of love, then why are not Christians rebuked and chastised out of love, also? Actually, we are, and we ought to realize: **“For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives”** (Heb. 12:6).

This fact should not surprise us, since the Scriptures are **“profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”** (2 Tim. 3:16). Furthermore, in the Old Testament we see God sending prophet after prophet to condemn sin and to get the people to repent so He would not have to carry them away into captivity. *Love does not exclude rebuking, reproofing, admonishment, or exhortation.* In fact, genuine love includes all of these.

Brotherly Love

Christians should not be surprised to learn that they *must* love as God does, which in part means rebuking brethren when the situations calls for it. Paul rebuked Peter face to face **“because he was to be blamed”** for his actions (Gal. 2:11). Peter did not hold a grudge against Paul for rebuking him because he knew Paul had his and the church’s best interests at heart. Later he referred to him as **“our beloved brother Paul”** (2 Peter 3:15).

Although some may act out of improper motivations (Phil. 1:16-17), nevertheless, love demands making corrections where they need to be made. This may be done brother to brother (as Paul did with Peter), or it may be done from one person to an entire congregation, as Paul did with Corinth (1 Cor. 5). Rather than taking offense that someone had the audacity to criticize us, we ought to weigh the criticisms in light of the Scriptures. Harboring suspicion that someone does not have the right motivation is no excuse for not considering the substance of the complaint.

Sometimes, love must be shown by withdrawing fellowship from a brother. If he does not see the severity of his sin, then it must be impressed upon him by those who love him. When someone is withdrawn from, those brethren who console him are doing a great disservice to this brother. They are, in essence, saying, “We sympathize with you. We really think you were treated poorly.” Although they may not intend to do so, they are actually saying, “We hate you.”

In our day, many congregations display an appalling view of love—especially to those in unscriptural marriages. They apparently are operating on the basis of a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy. If a man today was in the situation of living with his father’s wife and was withdrawn from, all he would have to do is travel another ten or fifteen minutes down the road to a congregation that would accept him. He would never have any motivation to repent—because of certain brethren who hold to an unbiblical view of love!

The same thing holds true for false teachers. Some just want to love people; so they refuse to become involved in anything controversial, such as: *“Is this brother teaching ideas that are contrary to what the New Testament teaches?”*

False Teachers

What did Paul say about false teachers?

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18).

Actually, Paul said plenty more (2 Cor. 11:13-15; Gal. 1:8-9; Phil. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 4:14; Titus 3:10), but this passage is sufficient to show that marking false teachers is not inconsistent with his teaching on love. He not only penned the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:15, but he also wrote the famous definitions of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. The point is that one who loves God, loves Christ, respects the Word of God inspired of the Holy Spirit, and loves the church will mark those who are teaching false doctrine. It is not only what love demands, but it is also what God, through His apostles, commands.

Peter was no different from Paul in this regard. He commanded, **“Love the brotherhood”** (1 Peter 2:17), as well as these words: **“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous”** (1

Peter 3:8). He even admonished brethren to “love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Peter 1:22). Yet he was not some positivist who refused to pay attention to reality. He also communicated this warning:

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed (2 Peter 2:1-2).

Ah, wouldn't it be lovely if we could just all get along and love one another! Yes, and we will—in heaven! But the devil still seeks to do all the damage he can on this earth. We, therefore, must realize that we are at risk—and the more blasé we are about such matters, the easier a target we will be. Peter taught both about love and false teachers.

What about John, “the apostle of love,” as some call him? To be sure he does frequently bring to mind that we are to “love one another” (1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 John 5). He also warned: **“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world”** (1 John 4:1). He also says in his second epistle: **“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist”** (v. 7). He also forbids fellowship with such men (vv. 9-11).

Christ, the Controversialist

Jesus Himself, who always showed perfect love in all things—even to the point of loving His enemies (Matt. 5:45)—also sounded warnings against those who would lead people spiritually astray. **“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves”** (Matt. 7:15). He told His disciples privately to **“beware of the doctrine of the Sadducees and the Pharisees”** (Matt. 16: 12). He further castigated the scribes and the Pharisees in Matthew 23. How can we reconcile all of the teachings on love with the warnings and denunciations?

The obvious answer is that loving someone does not mean overlooking faults and errors. The false teacher, for his own good, must be warned. He needs to know that he is taking Satan's part in his efforts to deceive the body of Christ with a teaching that contradicts what the Holy Spirit revealed in the Scriptures. If faithful brethren withdraw from him, it may cause him to rethink his position. But if he does not, love for Christ and His church still causes us to warn brethren so that they will not be persuaded into his error by his smooth words.

Since God is omniscient, did He not know that problems between brethren would occur? We are given a way to solve individual problems (Matt. 18:15-17). But what happens if someone has a reputation for being a false teacher? We are not to receive such a one or bid him Godspeed (2 John 9-11). What about congregations who do so? Is it not right to go to them and discuss it with them? Of course, if they refuse to discuss it, then our options are severely limited. We can continue to fellowship them, knowing they are in error or withhold our fellowship. It is not always easy to determine the best course of action, but offering fellowship to those in error does not seem wise.

Undoubtedly, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees all had some good qualities. Likely, they all believed in Jehovah as the one true and living God. The Sadducees did not believe in angels or the resurrection; so the Pharisees may have had qualms about being very spiritually close with them. It would be difficult to estimate the percentage of things that Jesus and the Pharisees believed alike—80%, maybe 90%?

Jesus, however, called attention to this one little teensy difference: **“In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men”** (Matt. 15:9). People could be in 100% of agreement on what Moses taught in the Law, but if they hold manmade traditions as equally authoritative with the law, then they have destroyed, for all intents and purposes, the validity of the law. In effect, they have set it aside. Jesus was not above pointing this error out in public, which made Him a controversial figure. One did not just openly disagree with “the experts” and not raise eyebrows.

Our Lord was continually rubbing people the wrong way. He did not do so for the fun of it—rather, it was for the truth of it. Luke, for example, records that on the Sabbath day Jesus entered the synagogue and was given the scroll of Isaiah. He read to the Jews a passage concerning Himself and then affirmed it was now fulfilled (Luke 4:15-21). Such a declaration had to be electrifying. At first they were impressed (v. 22), but when He extolled the virtues of a few Gentiles, they angrily turned against Him. Filled with wrath, they “rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led him to the brow of the hill” with a view toward throwing Him off of it, but He passed through the midst of them and escaped (vv. 28-30).

Making a whip and driving the moneychangers out of the temple did not especially endear Him to the rulers of the people (John 2:14-16). It is safe to say that Jesus was never nominated for the “Most Irenic Spirit of the Century” award. He healed on the Sabbath, which violated the traditions of the times and caused the Jews to want to kill Him (John 5:18).

His claims of Deity garnered Him a great deal of hostility, also. Among other things, He said that the Father had committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:22). He claimed: **“I am the light of the world”** (John 8:12). He added: **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”** (John 14:6) and **“...if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins”** (John 8:24). Furthermore, He said that everyone would be judged by His words (John 12:48) and that those who continued in His Word would know the truth (John 8:31-32). Could anyone make statements more controversial than these?

Controversy

Was there ever a time when the apostle Paul was not involved in some kind of ruckus? The Judaizing teachers were always opposing him in places that he went to preach, and he was always trying to straighten out various doctrinal matters when he wrote his epistles. Paul would never make the statement that he would not be involved in controversy because he just wanted to love everyone.

There is such a thing as standing for truth and opposing error. When Christians are doing the Lord's will, they will be attacked by Satan in one form or another. The only way to be at peace upon this earth is not by loving—but by not caring about others. Those in denominations will love it if we say nothing about their errors. Those in the world will appreciate it if we refuse to attack sin. Those in the church who are false teachers will take advantage of our silence if we do not challenge their false doctrines.

Being vigilant and investigating charges can be tedious and time consuming, but we have an obligation to be right in the sight of God. Many congregations have taken the liberal approach of “just loving everyone.” Many of them have split anyway when some in error did not like the errors of others and vied for leadership. Some are so peaceful they are dead and do not know it. Both are useless in saving the souls of the members (1 Tim. 4:16) and therefore useless to the Lord as well.

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Directory of Churches...

-Alabama-

Holly Pond—Church of Christ, Hwy 278 W., P.O. Box 131, Holly Pond, AL 35083, Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., (256) 796-6802, (205) 429-2026.

-England-

Cambridgeshire—Ramsey Church of Christ, meeting at the Rainbow Centre, Ramsey, Huntingdon. Sun. 10, 11 a.m.; Wed. (Phone for venue and time); www.Ramsey-church-of-christ.org. Contact Keith Sisman, 001.44.1487.710552; fax:1487.813264 or Keith.Sisman.net. Research Website of 1,000 years of the British Church of Christ; www.Traces-of-the-kingdom.org and www.Myth-and-Mystery.org.

-Florida-

Ocoee—Ocoee Church of Christ, 2 East Magnolia Street, Ocoee, FL 34761. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7:00 p.m. David Hartbarger, Evangelist, (407) 656-2516, ocoeechurchofchrist@yahoo.com, www.ocoecoc.org.

Pensacola—Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Michael Hatcher, evangelist, (850) 455-7595.

-North Carolina-

Rocky Mount—Scheffield Drive Church of Christ, 3309 Scheffield Dr., Rocky Mount, NC 27802 (252) 937-7997.

-Oklahoma-

Porum— Church of Christ, 8 miles South of I-40 at Hwy 2, Warner exit. Sun. 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. Allen Lawson, evangelist, email: lawson@starnetok.net.

- Tennessee-

Murfreesboro—Church of Christ, 837 Esther Lane, Murfreesboro, TN, Sun. Bible class 9:00 a.m., Worship 10:00 a.m., Fellowship meal 11:00 a.m., Devotional 12:00 p.m.; Wed. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. For directions and other information please visit our website at www.murfreesborochurchofchrist.org. evangelist, Steve Yeatts.

-Texas-

Denton area—Northpoint Church of Christ, 5101 E. University Dr. (Greenbelt Business Park). Mailing address: Northpoint Church of Christ, Greenbelt Business Park, 5101 E. University Dr., Box 12, Denton, TX 76208. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 6:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: 940.323.9797; gmail.com.

Houston area—Spring Church of Christ, 1327 Spring Cypress, P.O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383, (281) 353-2707. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring Contending for the Faith Lectures beginning the last Sunday in February. www.churchesofchrist.com.

Hubbard—105 NE 6th St., Hubbard, TX 76648, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Delbert J. Goines; DJGoines@Valornet.com.

Huntsville—1380 Fish Hatchery Rd. Huntsville, TX 77320. Sun. 9, 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (936) 438-8202.

New Braunfels—225 Saenger Halle Rd. Sun: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. Wed. 7:30 p.m. Lynn Parker, evangelist. (830) 625-9367. www.nbchurchofchrist.com.

Richwood—1600 Brazosport, Richwood, TX. Sun. 9:30; 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (979) 265-4256.

-Wyoming-

Cheyenne—High Plains Church of Christ, 421 E. 8th St., Cheyenne, WY 82007, tel. (307) 638-7466, Sunday: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Tel. (307) 514-3394, evangelist: Roelf L. Ruffner

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