

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Publication No. 211780

Second Class Postage Paid At Mammoth Spring, AR

Volume 19

Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554

May, 1985

No. 5

DID YOU KNOW?

By Mike Pace

Did you know that the church of Christ has no national or international organization? In fact, the church of Christ has no organization whatsoever other than the local neighborhood congregation. Jesus simply did not provide for any officers in his church other than himself as its head, and elders selected by a local congregation to shepherd their own local congregation. Worldwide organizations, international officials, conclaves, conferences and councils which determine doctrine and policy for churches are of man-made origin, and totally unauthorized by Jesus.

Did you know that there are thousands upon thousands of congregations of the church of Christ who carry on world-wide programs of benevolence and evangelization without any state, national or international bureaucracy? Every congregation is completely autonomous, yet when the tornado hit the Wichita Falls, Texas area, churches of Christ sent more than one million dollars of relief, several times more than the entire Inter-Faith agency supplied through its vast organization, and appeals to denominational headquarters -- and most of the relief from the churches of Christ was the very first to arrive in the area.

Did you know that the word KINGDOM is also used in the New Testament to refer to the same thing as the word CHURCH? Words like church, family, kingdom, body and building are used to refer to those who are God's people. The words are not proper names, but rather simple nouns used to help us understand a little better what it is like to be a part of God's people. Church means assembly of people, and God's people share a togetherness; we are also something like a kingdom, with Christ as the king, and every member a citizen; so also, the church is like a family, a body, or a building.

Did you know that one cannot get into the church of Christ by natural birth, by election, or by making application to a "membership committee"? The only way one can get into Christ's church is to be added by God Himself. God adds all saved people to Christ's church, and to no other. When one obeys the gospel, God saves him, and at the selfsame time adds him to the church of Jesus Christ. He is thus a part of the body, a citizen in the kingdom, a member of the divine family. Everyone can be a member of Christ's church, without asking permission of anyone. Every person who really believes in Christ the Savior, who sincerely turns from sin, and who is buried with Christ by baptism unto His death, is in the selfsame moment ushered into Christ's church.

If any of these facts seem strange or surprising to you, or if you would like to know something more specific about anything mentioned above, write to us for the scripture references so you can read these truths from your own Bible.

"Memorials"

By Orville Buchannan

ORDAINED BY GOD - Exodus 17:13, 14: "And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

OFFERINGS OF MEMORIALS - Lev. 2: 1-2: "And when they will make a meat offering unto the Lord. The offering shall be of fine flour, oil and frankincense, and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord."

THE PASSOVER MEMORIAL - Exodus 12:11-14: "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a

token upon the house where you are: and I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be upon you; to destroy you. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever."

MANNA LAID UP AS A MEMORIAL - Exodus 16:32: "And Moses said: This is the thing which the Lord commandeth: Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations: that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt."

STONE OF EPHOD AS MEMORIAL - Exodus 28:12: "And thou shall put the two stones upon the shoulders of the Ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel, and Aaron shall hear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial."

MARY'S TENDER DEED AS A MEMORIAL - Matthew 26:6-13: "There came unto Jesus a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when the disciples saw it, they saying to what purpose is this waste, for this ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor. Jesus said, Why trouble the woman for she hath wrought a good work upon me, for ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

THE LORD'S SUPPER, THE GREATEST MEMORIAL - Luke 22:19-20: "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you". Also Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; I Cor. 11:23-25. The memorial of Jesus giving himself on the cross is the greatest memorial ever given to man!!

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS
P. O. Box 251
Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554
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Publication No. 211780

Congregational Responsibility Toward Elders

By Oran Rhodes

Much emphasis is placed, and properly so, on the qualifications and work of elders. It would seem obvious that the failure to stress the importance of both of these will result in inadequate leadership. The church must have qualified men who are willing to faithfully do the work of elders (I Tim. 3:1). These things are of vital importance to the future of the church, as well as for faithfulness and growth today.

Of similar importance, though not stressed nearly enough, is the responsibility a congregation has toward the elders. If the work is to go well and if we are truly interested in pleasing God, then BOTH the elders and the congregation must properly respond to their respective responsibilities. The failure of a congregation to follow is just as unscriptural and damaging as the failure to lead on the part of the elders. Thus, the responsibility of the congregation needs to be examined scripturally.

The writer of Hebrews says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." (Heb. 13:17). When they are willing to lead us along the pathway that we should follow, we should gladly submit. Elders do not have the authority to make laws, but they do have that authority which God through His word has given them.

We live in a day when submission to authority is an extremely unpopular idea - even among members of the church - but

if the leading is scriptural, then the disciples are to obey. Many times elders feel that a certain teacher or a certain program should be changed for the good of the class or the benefit of the congregational work. They should be able to make the change without feeling that someone is going to be "peeved" about it; for if it is needed, it must be done anyway. The elders have the responsibility to lead scripturally; the members of the congregation have the obligation to follow scripturally.

The apostle Paul places the need to know the elders upon the members of the congregation. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you"; (I Thess. 5:12). Members should not be satisfied to merely know the names and faces of the elders. The dislike many brethren have for their elders often stems from second-hand information and from watching their performance from a distance. It is amazing how many fears are dispelled and misunderstandings are cleared away when one truly knows the person. Elders desire to be friends to each of the entire membership over which they serve. To know them helps us to better understand their thinking and actions.

In I Thessalonians 5:13, Paul continues his discourse by urging that elders be "esteemed highly in love for their works sake." Hours upon hours of an elder's time is spent in the Lord's business. Family, recreation, even livelihood on occasion, are put on the back shelf until some work or problem is resolved. Honor, submission and gratefulness should be every member's feeling toward elders who have this self-denial. This esteem is closely related to our respect for those in authority as is taught in God's Word. Members then should respect the elders, give them encouragement, and should earnestly pray for them.

A warning is given by Paul concerning the congregation's attitude toward elders in I Timothy 5:19 which says, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." Since elders who walk in sinful ways are to be rebuked before the congregation (I Tim. 5:20), it is of tremendous importance that any charge must be upon the oral testimony of two or three witnesses. If such support is lacking, the accusation must not even be taken up or entertained. The reputation of the elder must not be unnecessarily damaged, thus causing his work to suffer.

Christians need to realize that it is necessary for them to perform their duties

toward the elders just as it is necessary for the elders to perform theirs toward the congregation. Every elder has his faults, but collectively they will not make many errors, and our criticism increases the burden of their yoke. Elders have the same emotional capacity for disappointment, discouragement, and grief as they have for satisfaction, optimism and joy. We need love, sympathy and human compassion in addition to grateful appreciation for those serving as overseers of the flock of God. A church led by godly men and composed of brethren with a loving attitude toward those men cannot be shaken by outside pressure or opposition.

I'm Not Leaving The Church

By Douglas F. Parsons

One decision that I have come to in my adult life is that I will never leave the church. What I mean is that I will never leave the people who are the family of God. Yes, they have weaknesses, make mistakes, and commit sins, but I'm not leaving them. Occasionally, someone will say, "Why should I be a member of the church? I'm as good as any of those hypocrites down there!" My response has been "Of course, there are hypocrites in the church. People have always tried to counterfeit that which is of value. Why do people counterfeit twenty dollar bills instead of gum wrappers? Because the currency is worth something!" Even though hypocrisy, materialism, and pride may surface in the life of my brothers and sisters, I'm not leaving!

The reason that I will never leave the church is not due to anything special in me, but something special in Christ. Before He died on the cross He said "I will build my church and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." After his resurrection He promised, "I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." So all through His life, Jesus committed Himself to **people**. Even though we have guilt, pride, and many, many problems, we have the guarantee of divinity that Jesus will never leave us.

I've decided that means several things for my relationship to the church:

I will never leave the church **emotionally**. We must be available to each other to share our lives, to confess our faults, worship, to laugh, to cry and to walk together through the places of life. We must not commit emotional adultery

against each other. We need to be each other's best friend.

I will never leave the church **theologically**. Jesus built one church and He is its head. The purpose of "no creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no message but the gospel and no aim but to save" is a good summary of what the New Testament church was all about. I'm committed to those principles.

I will never leave the church **spiritually**. They are my brothers and sisters in Christ. God is our Father. It is the greatest family on earth. Though sometimes our lives are chipped and broken, we are still the vessels of God's treasure. We must never leave each other.

To love is to never leave one another.

LET YOUR PREACHER BE WHAT GOD INTENDED HIM TO BE — A MAN!

By Dennis R. Smith, Springfield, Mo.

Several articles have appeared recently in brotherhood publications concerning preachers. Some have to do with pay, retirement, insurance, travel expenses, burn-out, or some other problems which they might encounter in their ministry. The following comments are submitted in hopes that some in the brotherhood may read this article and see that the minister should be no more and no less than what God intended for him to be: just a man!

When the Apostle Peter arrived at the home of Cornelius, having been sent by God to further instruct this good man, we find Cornelius, "fell down at his feet and worshipped him" (Acts 10:25). This did not set well with Peter who was just a man and knew that God did not intend for him to be worshipped as a god. Peter told Cornelius, "stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:26). Virtually the same thing happened to Paul and Barnabas as they came into the region of Lycaonia. The people took them for the gods of Jupiter and Mercurius. These men acted as all other men of God should. They, "ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you . . ." (Acts 14:14-15). Equally, the beloved Apostle John, who was exiled on the isle of Patmos, was rebuked by the angel when John fell at his feet to worship him. He replied, "see thou do it not;

for I am thy fellow servant . . . worship God" (Rev. 22:8-9).

Somewhere over the years the religious world has (as some in the Lord's church) elevated their ministers to positions of great height. This is natural since he is called on to assist in times of heartache and trouble. He is also a public figure and is, indeed, the spokesman for God to the local congregation. But in spite of all this, he still remains, **just a man!** He has a position to fill in the kingdom of God and should be respected and honored when he does a good job, but so must any other Christian who has done a good service for the Lord.

Each Christian in the Bible was referred to as a "king and priest" before the Lord (Rev. 1:6). These are high honors and certainly are not limited to just the preacher. In the beginning of the church there were several "positions" which were filled by the Lord Himself: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11)." All of these were given for one great purpose: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12)."

Is it possible that those of us who are ministers (I preached for over 26 years in the same congregation) have created an image which is projected into the world as one, "holier than thou?" Do we leave an appearance of one very pious, timid, soft-spoken and insecure? Do we leave an appearance one who is loud, boastful, always wanting to be seen? What about our appearance? Does it betray us? One man told me recently, "I can spot a preacher a mile away." It is time for everyone to awake to the reality that the minister is, **just a man!** He has passions as do other men; he knows moments of fear; he has certain weaknesses and temptations as do others. For this reason the Bible student can see the wisdom of God in not authorizing His ministers to wear the name, "Reverend," since they can in no wise measure up to Him for whom this great title is reserved (Psalm 111:9).

In view of this, coupled with other Biblical evidence, we then would do well to allow our preachers to be, **just a man!** But being **just a man** does not qualify him to abuse the great name which God has given to all his children. That name is a Christian (Acts 11:26). The preacher must be first and foremost a Christian! His is one of many talents we can be sure!

Yet, we cannot expect too much from him, nor can we allow too little. As a Christian with many talents he is called upon to exercise these in the preaching and teaching of the word of God to the very best of his ability. By the same token other Christians must equally exercise their talents (Matthew 25).

The other side of the coin is this: sometimes preachers are "condemned" (by the brethren) for doing things which might be considered perfectly alright if done by any other man in the congregation. Some preachers have been talked about, and even fired, for engaging in enterprises to supplement their income. Some preachers may work at other jobs out of necessity or simply (as Paul), "not to be chargeable to any man." To this end some ministers own rental property, have businesses, raise cattle or other kinds of livestock in which these are taken care of during their own "free time." But even at this, often it is frowned on (to say the least) and in some cases has become sufficient grounds "to let him go." There are very few ministers today who are not having to do something to supplement their income. Some of the more "higher paid" ministers are on lecture circuits with colleges and universities in order to meet the needs of the family in these times of high inflation. The "free time" of a minister should not be questioned anymore than any other man of the congregation unless (naturally) it is unbecoming to him as a Christian and might risk bringing shame and reproach on the church. Some ministers like to do more with their free time than stamp collect or play golf. I know of some who have most unusual hobbies but who are absolutely dedicated, God-fearing, Word-loving, ministers of the gospel. Some ministers (believe it or not) are good business men; other are good farmers, living in rural areas preaching and teaching the word where only men of their caliber would "dare to go." As far as this is concerned, where would the Lord's church be today without men like this especially as we reflect back to the early days of the Restoration Movement?

The preacher is a man! However good a man he might be or however good a spokesman he might be, he is still, **just a man!** He must stand in judgment and give an account of his deeds. His thoughts, actions, failures and lack of wisdom will be a part of his 'accounting' before the great and righteous judge! What he preached to whom and what he did not preach (when he otherwise had the opportunity) will

also stand against him in the day of judgment. For this reason the preacher must be most careful to preach only those things which God has authorized in His Word. He must be like the Apostle Paul, ". . . keeping his body in subjection: lest that by any means, when he has preached to others, he should not be a castaway," (I Corinthians 9:27).

The sermons of ministers must be well thought out. Before they preach on subjects such as materialism, they must be absolutely sure that they are also free from such thoughts. If their salaries are far above that of the average wage-earner in the congregation, maybe they need to think and pray a long time before they use such a sermon. In like fashion, before they "scald" the congregation on raising children, they better be sure of their own first!

Preachers should not be expected (simply because they are preachers) to get involved in all kinds of political and moral issues which are currently in vogue. They should not be expected to carry the banner and head protest marches against their governments, but they should be expected to, "preach the word," being committed to knowing nothing, "except Jesus Christ and Him crucified," (II Cor. 2:2). Let each of us ministers do what God originally intended for us to do: take care of the pulpit; minister unto the sick and needy; be compassionate on the less fortunate; preach and teach the gospel; be a good father, husband, neighbor; paying all our bills when due; and leave the duties of the magistrate, doctor, psychiatrist, politician, and other positions to those who are better qualified. But, (and if) we must become involved in any of these areas, let it be from the standpoint of the **individual man** and not as God's foremost spokesman and authority. Let us be what God made us to be . . . **JUST MEN!**

CONTRIBUTIONS

CONGREGATIONS

Garfield Church of Christ	\$15.00
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How To Become A Christian

The most important question ever asked is: "*What must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16:30). Then the **HOW** becomes equally as important. Notice the step by step process. First, we must have faith in the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12:2). This faith comes by the hearing of the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17). "*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" (Heb. 11:6). With the belief and trust that Jesus is the Redeemer, we must repent of sins. "*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*" (Acts 17:30). In repentance, we turn from sin, **STOP** serving Satan and **START** serving the Lord. (Matthew 3:8;

Luke 13:3). With this new attitude we are ready to confess our faith, "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" (Rom. 10:9-10). Read Matthew 10:32-33. Acknowledging our faith, repentance and confession, the last step into Christ is baptism. "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" (Gal. 3:27). Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Now that our past sins have been forgiven, the Lord has added us to His church and we are Christians. (Acts 2:47; Acts 11:26).

BECOME A CHRISTIAN

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