

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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SUPPLYING THE FRONT LINES

by Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

We have previously alerted our readers to the fact that the Lord's church is locked in combat against the forces of Satan and his evil allies. Denominationalism, materialism, atheism, liberalism, and lesser forces surround us. Within our own ranks we are plagued with deserters who are going over to the enemy; cowards who refuse to join the fight; traitors to the Lord's cause, who stay in the church, but try to destroy everything which we are fighting to preserve; and the seeming indifference of the masses of members who are supposed to be supporting the troops and supplying the front lines. It is this last group to whom we appeal in this article.

The apostle Paul repeatedly used the terms "war" and "fight" to describe the Christian's role in the Lord's church - His army (Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:1-4). Each one of us was enrolled as a soldier of Christ when we obeyed the gospel. Our duties may vary, just as they would in a physical army, but "no one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who enlisted him as a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:4 NKJV). We need to be sure that we are doing what we can to help win the war, whatever our abilities and duties may be.

Support Troops

Not everyone engaged in a war effort fights on the front lines. Wars cannot be won without support troops helping to supply the front lines with fighting men and supplies for the battles. There is an interesting passage in 1 Samuel 30 regarding support troops. David had gone after the Amalekites to recover some captives and treasure taken in a raid on David's home base at Ziklag. Some in his company were too weary to join in the battle, but David noted that they had performed a valuable service and should share in the spoil. He said, "But

as his part is who goes down to battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike. And so it was, from that day forward; he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day" (1 Samuel 30:24-25, NKJV).

Individual brethren and congregations may not always be on the front lines, but they can provide support of some type for the troops that are. In doing so, they do what they can and earn a right to be honored and to share in the victories. Of course, when called upon to fight off an enemy attack in one's own home or congregation, elders, deacons, Bible school teachers, preachers and every member must arm themselves with the sword of God's word and fight until the victory is won (Ephesians 6:10-17). The purpose of this article is to point out some ways that those who are support troops can help supply the front lines.

Heroes in the Fight

In every war ever fought there have been those individuals and groups who stand out as heroes in combat. The church at Thessalonica was such a group in the first century. Paul said that they "were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything" (1 Thessalonians 1:7-8). A modern day counterpart of this church is the great Knight Arnold Church of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee. In the late 1960s, under the oversight of the Knight Arnold elders and direction of Roy J. Hearn, the Memphis School of Preaching began training and turning out soldiers to man the front lines in this never ending battle against sin and error. For over twenty-five years the Knight Arnold brethren have given sacrificially of their money and time in support of MSOP. Concerned individuals and sister congregations have also been very generous in their support of

this fine work. The present director, Curtis A. Cates, continues in an excellent way, the tradition of training solid dedicated troops to battle face to face the worst enemies of mankind. The Knight Arnold elders (James A. Bobbitt, Bert Embry, Floyd M. Hayes, D. H. Kirby and Harold Mangrum) stand firmly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints and refuse to give one inch to the present digressive efforts to restructure the church and "change" it into just another religious denomination (Jude 3; Galatians 2:5). This is precisely the position of Brother Cates. He is backed by a loyal cadre of instructors (Richard L. Curry, Garland Elkins, J. A. McNutt, Keith Mosher, Billy Bland, E. L. Whitaker and Steve Ellis) who are sending forth sound men, well equipped for the battles they must fight in being true to the Cause for which Jesus Christ gave His life.

A 1992 survey taken at the Memphis School of Preaching and a brotherhood college in the east, also training men to preach, showed that the men who enter MSOP and the training that they receive are both of the highest quality. (This is not to say that an occasional MSOP student may not go astray or be "bad material." Remember Judas.) Still, one hundred percent of the students at MSOP answered some crucial questions as follows: one cannot be a Christian without being a member of the Lord's church; elders have the final authority in optional matters in the local congregation; instrumental music in worship is sinful and will cause one to be lost; persons who are unscripturally divorced and remarried must dissolve such a marriage to be pleasing to God; church discipline should be practiced; we are not saved by grace alone; we must observe the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day, etc. Frequently, between half and three-fourths of the students in the other school denied many of these items. Brethren, the Memphis School of Preaching is one school that is training men to fight and die for the same gospel that you grew up believing! These same men will fight to the death to maintain the New Testament principles of restoring

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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Ted J. Clarke EDITOR

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Christ's church, like the splendid example of the Knight Arnold church in Memphis. MSOP is not the only school of this kind, but there are not many like it, **and none better!**

What You Can Do

Brethren, there are good strong men who want to be on the front lines, "fighting the good fight of faith," but they do not have the financial support needed to attend a school like MSOP. While the school helps several students from its available funds with living expenses (the schooling is free), there are several men each year who cannot attend due to a lack of funds.

As an individual, can you send \$10.00, \$20.00 or more each month till the Lord comes to help train troops for the front lines? Maybe you cannot fight there yourself, but will you help prepare someone else to go? Your regular support is needed, but please do what you can now and in the future. If possible, put the Memphis School of Preaching in your will. Call the school and ask them how you can plan this into your estate [area code (901) 362-5139]. Also, please encourage your elders and congregation to help.

Elders, or men leading in churches without elders, do you not see the urgency to become involved in assisting in this work? Larger congregations can help as the church here in Mammoth Spring, Arkansas, has done for years. We are helping to support usually two or three men with approximately \$100.00 per month for each man. As soon as one man graduates we select another man

to help. Donations can be sent directly to the Memphis School of Preaching, 4400 Knight Arnold Road, Memphis, TN 38118.

Those of you in smaller or rural congregations – perhaps you do not have a lot of money to work with – couldn't you send \$25.00 or \$50.00 each month to help with the war effort? While that may not seem like much, when added together with the support of others it could help send one or more trained men to the front who may be like a David (versus Goliath), a Paul or Timothy. Though you may not be on the front lines yourselves, by this work you will share in the victories through Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Brethren, we are fellow soldiers. The Lord's church needs your help. The Memphis School of Preaching, as a work of the Knight Arnold congregation and assisted by numerous individuals and other congregations, is a work of the Lord's church which is worthy of your help. Let us work now, while we can, and do what we can to save the Lord's church from further apostasy. It would be sad for us to look back in the years to come and wish we had done more – especially if we could have, but did not. Let us keep the good fight going, whether you go to the front or supply the front lines. You will share in the final victory either way.

CHANGES AND DANGERS

(Part One)

by Ted Knight

The winds of change are blowing in almost blizzard like conditions in our world today. Nearly every area of life is being affected in some way by the challenge to change. Politicians are being elected to office because they promise to change things for our betterment. In the economic world we are seeing change; in the military world changes are being proposed which one would not have thought possible just a few years ago. The social and moral changes of our day are shocking and staggering and are being made without serious study being given to their consequences.

The religious world is certainly not exempt from change. The Catholic church is debating issues of celibacy, abortion, the death penalty, women in the priesthood, and many others. Almost every

denomination is locked in serious debate when they gather for their conventions.

The Lord's church is struggling as well with many issues concerning change. It seems that some of our brethren are vigorously promoting change and others are fiercely opposing change. Somehow, there must be a way to determine the right course, not only for the Lord's church but for the whole religious world as well.

What does the word "change" mean? Webster says, "to alter by putting one thing for another or by giving up one thing for something else; to be altered; to make different." W. E. Vine says, "to make other than it is, to transform; to change one thing for another." Therefore, we need to ask ourselves, "Are there some things that we need to give up for something else? Are there some things that we need to make different?"

The religious world has made many changes through the years. Many of those changes are not in keeping with the teaching of God's word. Even in the Lord's church some changes have been made which are in violation of the will of God. Therefore we need to be aware of some of the dangers which are involved with change.

First, there is the danger that we may change some things which God has not given us the authority to change. There are some changes which may seem minor to us and therefore we believe that they are acceptable to God. But, the right or wrong of change is not determined by the greatness of the change. The authority to change is not determined by our likes or dislikes, nor our conveniences or inconveniences. We must respect God's word as our authority.

God has often disapproved of changes that men have made. In I Kings 12:25-33 we find Jeroboam made some changes which may have seemed minor or even better to him, but God was not pleased with those changes. In I Chronicles 13 we learn that Uzzah died when he tried to do a good thing, but that good thing had been forbidden by God. In Leviticus 10 we find Nadab and Abihu paying the price for making a change which they were not authorized to make. In I Kings 13 the young prophet lost his life because God had given him very clear and distinct instructions, but he was convinced by the lies of another prophet to change to another course. Friends, the word of God

is full of examples showing God's displeasure when man changes God's ways for his own. We must be aware of the truth expressed by Isaiah in Isaiah 55:8-9, where it is said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," saith the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'" We must respect God's ways and unless we have been given the freedom to change, we must not do so. It is spiritually fatal to change without the approval of God.

Second, there is the danger of our being too stubborn and hard-headed and refuse to change when change is scriptural and would be beneficial to the cause of Christ. Not all changes are wrong! I remember when most baptisms occurred in a creek or some swimming hole, but now we have convenient baptistries. Sometimes in the past one might respond to the invitation and request baptism, but the baptism didn't take place until a few days later when everyone who had responded during the meeting would be baptized at the same time. We have changed that and it is good that we have done so. We have changed the service times to more conveniently meet the needs of the congregation and that is also good. Some even meet on Thursday evening instead of Wednesday evening, because it is more suitable to the needs of that particular congregation. There is nothing wrong with that. We simply must not be too tradition-bound or stubborn to change a thing that is in the area of expediency, if that change will be good for the cause of Christ. Study carefully such passages as Matthew 15:1-6 and Colossians 2:8. We must exercise every precaution to make sure that we do not make our traditions **LAW!** When we do, we will hinder the cause of Christ.

P.O. Box 1297
Conway, AR 72032

Concerning the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) and each one's responsibility to obey it, remember: There are three things wrong with the statement, "I'm gonna teach somebody someday." "Gonna" is not in the dictionary, "Somebody" is not in the telephone book, and "Someday" is not on the calendar. "Go YE therefore and teach all nations..."

Let us live so that when we die the undertaker will be sorry.

DEER WORSHIP

by Louis Mahaffey

"...They worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." (Romans 1:25)

Hunting season is now in full swing. For those who have never been hunting, or don't understand its attraction, you can't help but feel a twinge of pity. To be in the woods and watch a whitetail buck appear and disappear in the morning fog is a breathless experience. This article is by no means a slur against hunting. No, the writer of this article is in favor of deer hunting. What I am against is deer worship. In some households the problem is not deer worship, but duck worship, or even year-round fish worship.

Worship, simply defined, means to adore, or to give devotion. Do you give more time, energy and money to hunting than you do the Lord? Do you adore the creature more than the Creator? It is important to realize that the Ambassador Paul in the above quote combined **worship and service** in his condemning of idol worship. "and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." Thus, what we serve, (the extreme time, energy and money given to our pursuits) is also what we worship.

*"Let all things be done decently and in Order." (1 Cor. 14:40)** This verse of Sacred Scripture should be kept close to the heart of all who love the outdoors. Our Holy Lord created the outdoors just for us. He wants us to be spellbound at His omnipotence. It is for our good that He has shown us His majesty. Here is the conclusion of the matter. Be in the woods at dawn but be with the church at the proper time for Bible study and worship, alert and focused on God. Listen to the silence broken as the woods come alive and feel your heart tremble as the buck moves into the opening. But realize all this comes from your Lord who died on the cross for you. Give devotion to Him by worshipping with the church and taking the Lord's supper, His body, His blood, for the Lord's supper is the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love. Let ALL things be done decently and in order. For our soul's sake, let us make sure we adore the Creator more than the creature.

108 Meade
Lincoln, AR 72744
501/824-3730

[*Ed. note: While 1 Corinthians 14:40 appears in the context of worship in this chapter, the principle surely applies in a general way for the author's intention.]

IS IT A LIE OR SOMETHING ELSE?

by Jerry Moffitt

Recall that David sinned against Uriah the Hittite by committing adultery with Bathsheba. God told David that the sword would not depart from his house. After Absalom murdered Ammon, Absalom tries to usurp the throne of David. So, not only did Absalom kill his own brother, he now tries to remove the kingdom from his father, David.

David has to flee Jerusalem from his son, and he learns that Ahithophel, the great counselor, has joined with the conspirators (2 Sam. 15:31). David prays about it and sends Hushai to Absalom, instructing him to pretend that he is on their side. Hushai is to try and defeat the counsel of Ahithophel (2 Sam. 16:18-19). It seems God is involved, ordaining that they would heed the feigned counsel of Hushai (2 Sam. 17:14). It all works. Ahithophel's advice is abhorred and Hushai deceives Absalom. David wins the civil war.

The skeptic and the situation-ethics advocate would argue that for one reason or another God condoned lying. One would argue that such disproves that God, especially a moral God, wrote the Bible. The other, the situationist would say that it proves that God's laws on lying and deceit could be suspended in a just cause, proving situation ethics is biblical.

First, we would point out that great heroes of faith, though inspired, are never sinless (Rom. 3:23). And a mark of inspira-

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tion is that the Bible tells things as they were. It paints portraits of Bible heroes "with the warts on." David could sin by telling Hushai to lie and deceive. If so, David did wrong. That nullifies situation ethics and refutes skeptical notions. The Bible would fill many volumes if it had to pause each time a sin was committed and remind the readers that it was sin. So, on occasion Abraham and David lied, Noah got drunk (Gen. 9:21), and Peter was weak in faith (Gal. 2:11).

However, in this case this writer does not accuse David of lying. Another principle seems to be at work. This same principle was operational when God set an ambush behind Ai (Jos. 8:2). It was involved when Gideon deceived the Midianites into supposing all Israel was around them. Such things are not lying and deceit; **they are acts of war.** They are what the French call "tricks of war." They are stratagems, tactics, maneuvers, ploys, and subterfuges. They are ruses and feints to trick the enemy. And it is true, God sedulously uses such things (2 The. 2:11), and it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18).

I am, therefore, not sure in **some** of these cases that Bible heroes lied. Was it a lie, or was it stratagem? Was it a lie or was it military subterfuge? Not all killing is murder; not all confiscation of goods is stealing, and not all subterfuge, whether verbal or behavioral, is lying. However, if it was a lie, it was wrong, no matter the situation.

P.O. Box 1275
Portland, TX 78374

WHERE DO YOU FIT IN?

A national survey of churches in the United States revealed the following about church members:

- 10% cannot be found anywhere.
- 20% never attend a service.
- 25% admit they never pray.
- 35% admit they never read God's word.
- 40% never contribute to the church or its missions.
- 60% never read or study the Bible lessons.
- 70% never attend the Sunday evening service.
- 75% never assume any responsibility in their church.
- 95% never win a soul to Christ.
- But
- 100% expect to go to heaven.

IF THE BIBLE IS NOT A DIVINE PATTERN

by Max Patterson

There are some among us that are saying there is no divine blueprint or pattern in the Bible for us today. If this is true, consider the following:

1. "Hold fast the form (pattern) of sound words, which you have heard of me" II Tim. 1:13. If there is no pattern, how could one do this?

2. "And the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same you commit to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" II Tim. 2:2. If there is no divine blueprint, how can one do this?

3. "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good" I Thess. 5:21. How can one do this if there is no pattern?

4. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try (test) the spirits whether they are of God" I John 4:1. How is it possible to obey this verse in any way if there is no divine blueprint?

5. "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed" John 8:31. If there is no pattern how could one know if or when one is continuing (abiding, dwelling) in His word?

6. "He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" John 12:48. If the word of God makes no demands, or shows no pattern to be followed, how can God condemn that person who did not follow in the day of judgment?

7. "Earnestly contend for the faith" Jude 3. How can one do this, if one cannot decide what that objective standard is?

Paul said he wrote, "whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" Eph. 3:3, 4. Paul obviously thought we could understand. In fact, that is the very reason he wrote — in order that we might understand.

To deny that there is a pattern or blueprint is to try to absolve man of any responsibility to faithful obedience. Paul was thankful to God for the Romans who had "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine (that plan of salvation, or that scheme of redemption) which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness" Rom. 6:17, 18.

902 Lariat Dr.
Neosho, MO 64850

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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