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PAPER COMPLETES THIRTY — FIVE YEARS OF PUBLICATION

By Clovis Ragsdale

The December issue completes thirty-five years of publication for the Fulton County Gospel News. When we began in January of 1953 we had in mind a small paper for the immediate area. The late brother Boyd Morgan originated the idea of a paper to encourage the church in Fulton County to work together to establish new congregations. Also, strengthen the church in the work of preaching the gospel in this region. We were successful in establishing three new congregations. Viola and Union Hill in Fulton County and Winona, Missouri.

The paper began under the oversight of the elders of the Welcome Hill Church of Christ. Later the eldership in Mammoth Spring assumed the oversight of the paper and has continued till the present.

The paper was mailed to just a few hundred at first. Soon we began to receive requests for many people in other counties and states. This has continued until the present. We now mail well over five thousand copies to States. At first it was addressed by hand, but now we use modern day methods. The cost of publication has increased greatly due to higher postal rates and cost of paper and addressing machines. The paper is free to all who desire to receive it.

The policy of the paper has been to keep before its readers the answer to life's greatest question, what must I do to be saved in eternity? We do not discuss brotherhood problems and we prefer articles that are plain and simple and not too lengthy.

We are grateful to many who have made the paper a success and thus have made the paper grow and continue these

many years. We are especially grateful to brother Boyd Morgan for the original idea to print the paper; to Wesley Hylton who rescued the paper at one time when we had decided to stop publication and to Richard England who improved the paper in content and many details of publication. Also, to many who contributed articles as well to many congregations and individuals who have supported the paper financially.

It is our prayers that this good work will continue to be successful in years to come. Your continued support will be needed to make this possible.

GIVING

By Richard England

Giving of what one possess has always been an important part of the life of God's people. It also has been the test of faith and sincerity which many have failed to pass. In Matthew 19:16-22 an apparently dedicated and morally good man who had accumulated much of the world's goods was instructed of the Lord to sell all he had, give to the poor and follow Jesus. The man went away "sorrowful." He was unwilling to part with his material things in order to obtain eternal life. Such is the case of many people. Although willing to abide by many of the commandments, live a good moral life and be an honour to one's parents, some will not part with their money, even for Christ. James says "rust" of the silver and gold will be a witness against those who have obtained it by dishonesty and kept it for their own personal pleasure. (Jas. 5:1-6) Jesus says that those who trust in uncertain riches

can hardly (Meaning they can't) enter into the kingdom. (Mark 10:24) Paul wrote: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. 6:9) Notice here, it is those "that will be rich," not necessarily those that are, but those who have longings for wealth of the world. Paul immediately follows this with "the love of money is the root of all evil." (v. 10) One may be guilty of this sin even though he is a pauper.

When one becomes willing to give of that which he has, to whom shall he give? To one who is in need. (Eph. 4:28) To the man that asks for assistance. (Lk. 6:30) To those who teach the gospel. (Gal. 6:6) To a treasury for work that is common to others of the Lord's people. (1 Cor. 16:1, 2) To as many as we have opportunity to help. (Gal. 6:10) In fulfilling these obligations, it can be said that we are giving to the Lord himself. (Matt. 25:40)

For the man who is willing to give and comes into contact with an opportunity, the next question would be: how much should one give? Contrary to the opinion of many religious leaders today, the Bible does not teach us that we are to give a tenth of our income, and beyond that we have no obligation. We are not under the law of the tithe which is a part of the old will or testament. We are under a new will or testament of Jesus Christ. Under the new law, giving is governed by attitude of heart. 1 Timothy 6:18 charges the rich to be "ready willing to fill a need when it arises." We are not to give "grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7) The more we prosper, the more we should give (1 Cor. 16:1,2) Our giving should be according to plans we make ahead of time, or as Paul put it, as one "purposeth in his heart." (2 Cor. 9:7) The blessings we receive from giving are proportionate to our liberality. (2 Cor. 9:6) Liberality is measured by willingness and self sacrifice and not in dollars and cents. (2 Cor. 8:1-5)

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GIVING. . . .

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This is why it could be said of the widow who gave only two mites that she gave more than all the rich people. (Mk. 12: 41 - 44)

God does not dramatically strike people dead before the church today for lying about their gifts as He did in Acts 6, but many will be eternally lost for failing to give to the Lord's work as they should. No man on the face of the earth knows your personal circumstances and attitude of heart like God does. But, be assured God will bring it all into judgment. (2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 16:27)

CONTRIBUTIONS

Congregations

Agnos Church of Christ	15.00
Jeff Church of Christ	20.00
Viola Church of Christ	10.00
Gamaliel Church of Christ	10.00
Pilot Church of Christ	20.00
Clarkridge Church of Christ	25.00
Hatfield Church of Christ	25.00
Garfield Church of Christ	25.00
Elizabeth Church of Christ	10.00
Maple Grove Church of Christ	250.00
Marionville Church of Christ	10.00
Dellhalf Church of Christ	20.00

Individuals

Lela Blue (Salem, AR)	10.00
Ruth Deaton (Puducuh, KY)	5.00
Bob McGoldrick (West Plains, MO)	10.00
Ralph Sanders (New Palestine, IN)	5.00

What About Fasting?

By Allen Ashlock

What is all this talk about, FASTING? It seems that there is an element in the church today that is very interested in fasting. We are seeing whole congregations engaging in public fasts. It is publicly advertised and promoted. On most occasions it is associated with some sort of fund raising program. We believe that many of the individuals involved in such are sincere and perhaps well-meaning. However, as Christians we need to take a closer look at this subject and be sure that we are not jumping into something without proper study.

It should be clear to all that fasting is a Bible subject. It is mentioned quite frequently in the Scriptures. Christ was engaged in a fast for forty days (Matt 4:2). Christ placed some regulations on fasting (Matt. 6:16, 17, 18; 9:14,15; Mk. 2:19). We learn in Luke 18:12 that Zaccheus fasted twice each week. Cornelius who was a very good man fasted (Acts 10:30). When Barnabas and Saul were chosen and sent out to preach the Gospel there was fasting (Acts 13:2). Yes, indeed fasting is a Biblical subject.

However, the question is not whether fasting is a Biblical subject but, what of fasting and the Christian life today in 1988? There were many things done and practiced in the New Testament that are not done today. For example, in New Testament times men walked most everywhere to get to their destinations. In New Testament times foot washing was common because of the mode of traveling. In New Testament times the dress of both men and women was quite different than it is today. In New Testament times miracles were prevalent but today they are not. So, it is not enough to say that fasting was in New Testament times and therefore it should be preached and practiced today. We must discern from the New Testament whether or not fasting is a command for Christians for all time.

It is very important to observe the teaching of our blessed Lord relative to fasting. Jesus warned His disciples against

the error taught by the Pharisees relative to fasting. "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast . . . But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; that thou be not seen of men to fast, . . . and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall recompense thee." (Matt. 6:16 - 18). Our blessed Lord took fasting out of the public domain and public show and declared that it was to be a matter of private, personal devotion to God.

So much could be said and needs to be said about this topic. However, the following observations and conclusions should be studied by all. (1) Jesus Christ did not command fasting for the Church for all time. He simply placed regulations on a practice already being observed by many. (2). That if people are going to observe it at all they should do so in private. That they were not to reveal it to others and that it was to be done for the benefit of one's own spiritual well-being. We repeat, fasting is not an ordinance of the church. It has not been commanded in the Christian age. There are no rebukes or condemnations in Scripture for failing to fast. There is no special blessing in it so that all members of the church must engage therein. One may find fasting a great source of strength while another may not.

It concerns us greatly to see some brethren today promoting public fasts in order to promote some pet program. Some build new buildings and they enjoin the church to fast. Some are seeking to raise vast sums of money for this or that worthy goal and they promote public fasts to help with the project. The conclusion that must be drawn from the Scriptures is that fasting is in the matter of private, personal, devotions and should remain there. Those brethren engaging in promotional projects of this or that and who are using fasting as a tool need to rethink their position and study again what the Lord declared in Matthew 6:16-18.

Let's all be diligent students of the Word and let us practice what we teach. May God help us all to be faithful and true to Him.



Your most dangerous and deadly enemy is sin. Shun sin as you would a rattlesnake.

AUTHORITY AND APPLICATION

By Bill Graddy

Two aspects of the church are -- God and man.

God, through Christ, established the church (Matthew 16:18). Christ purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28). The organization of the church from the divine side is perfect (Ephesians 4:11-13). The New Testament is the law of the church and is perfect and complete (2 Timothy 3:16-17). From the divine side, the church is a corporate body united in all its parts for the edification and salvation of man (Acts 2:47).

As members of the church, we are imperfect personally (1 John 1:10). As a result, we may or may not have a congregation as the New Testament teaches in organization and purity. Just because we are not perfect, this does not exclude and exempt us from moving toward full maturity in Christ (Matthew 5:48; Ephesians 4:15). To do less than our best is spiritual suicide (Romans 12:1-2).

A strong tendency exists to intermingle and mix-up the divine and human sides of the church. We must discern the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:29). God, through Christ, has given us all things we need to obtain eternal life (2 Peter 1:3; James 1:17). From the divine side there are not any exceptions or deviations. The human element must not be imposed on the divine side. Before making a human application (expediency) we must have a divine principle (lawful) (1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23). Inquire before doing, does the New Testament authorize the? Before implementing a practice, where is the scripture for said practice? Both study and honesty will be needed. Study to find the authority and be honest in applying the principle, not human wisdom! A failure to have a scriptural principle for our applications has given us expediciencies that are not lawful! "Isms and injunctions" of all kinds are the result of such fuzzy thinking.

Let us challenge one another to develop our skills to become faithful members, teachers, song leaders, preachers, deacons, and elders. This will be one way

we can help the human side of the church so as to let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:16). "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11).

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Biblical Addiction

By Jack Gray

Addiction is a word that usually has terrible connotations. It suggests a bondage from which one cannot release himself. To the Christian it brings to mind the coils of the serpent. At the very best it is a pitiable plight.

Sometimes it is a struggle with tobacco and anyone thinks that it is easy to quit smoking has never been addicted. They may have toyed with it a little but it was never really that important to them. Once the deep craving for nicotine has been established, it is a terrible taskmaster; and some lose their souls because of it, because they stand self-condemned by their own consciences in regard to it. Romans 14:14 and 23 make it very clear that we must not live a self-condemned life. Sometimes the culprit is alcohol. Solomon knew how pleasant it could be, yet he said that the time comes when "At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder" (Prov. 23:32). Drinking does such terrible things to people. It wrecks homes and destroys lives. Yet there are those who repent in shame and sorrow time after time; and yet in half a lifetime are really never free from liquor's enslavement. In fact, just one look at the life and struggles of a real alcoholic should be enough to make anyone never take that first drink.

Drugs are even more addictive. Some of their effects are both accumulative and reoccurring. You can have all the bad effects at a later date, without even taking the drug. It tears at our hearts to see what it does to the lives of its victims.

Sin is a terrible master; yet we all have a master. Paul said, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yielded yourselves servants to

obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16). So we choose our own master.

We are also taught in New Testament Christianity not to allow things other than Jesus to control our lives. The apostle declared, "I will not be brought under the power of any," in speaking of habits of the flesh. (I Cor. 6:12); and Solomon emphasized that he who controls himself is greater than he who conquers a city. (Prov. 16:32). Self-control, therefore, is truly one of the Christian graces as indicated in II Peter 1:6.

Yet with this background we find a most remarkable statement in I Corinthians 16:15 concerning the house of Stephanas "... they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." This is Biblical addiction! We need to give ourselves completely to Jesus as sinners give their bodies to alcohol or drugs.

Sometimes we simply fail to see that Christianity was an all-consuming passion with the early Christians. It was not a manner of convenience. It didn't matter if they had a headache. The busy activities of life were not permitted to stand in the way. They were addicted. There was a deep craving in their souls that compelled them to serve Jesus.

Sadly many Christians today have lost that spirit. We spend our time explaining why we are the exception in regard to "forsake not the assembly" or "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." We are looking for loopholes in regard to true liberality and presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice. We want to be involved; but we are not sure we want to be THAT involved.

It is time, therefore, to call God's people back to Biblical addiction. Let's relearn the application of Galatians 2:20 and what it should mean in our lives to say: "I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Beginning today, let's be addicted to Jesus.

Man is not altogether a creature of environment. He may rise above it or he may sink beneath it.

On Taking God For Granted

By Steve Williams

Imagine this scenario. Parents of a teenage girl are distraught. Their daughter sits at home hour after hour, day after day, week after week, month after month, -- waiting by the telephone. She waits for her boyfriend to call her. Her boyfriend calls her from time to time, but his calls have no pattern of regularity. He might call her three or four times in one day when he has a problem to discuss with her. Then he might not call her for weeks at a time. The parents of this girl are upset, because they are unable to help their daughter see that she is being taken for granted. The parents want her to dump this inconsiderate boy and find a new boyfriend who will treat her properly.

The analogy between this little story and the prayer life of many Christians is obvious. Are we taking God for granted? When you go to God in prayer after a long drought in your prayer life, do you ever stop to think about what your attitude implies? Every time we bow our head in prayer, we expect God to be there to listen, -- and he is. Do we deserve such eternal vigilance from God? Sometimes our prayers ought to begin with confession to God for our neglect, coupled with thankfulness for his promise, "I will never fail you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5; Deut. 31:6, 8; Josh. 1:5).

Paul commands us to be "constant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12). This does not mean that we must be praying every moment, because that is impossible. It does not mean everything we do is worship. The "everything we do is worship" teaching destroys the distinction of worship from other activities in life, as pantheism destroys a distinction between God and his creation. Being "constant in prayer" means to be "faithful in prayer" (Rom. 12:12; NIV), to "be devoted to prayer" (McCord), or to "continue steadfastly in prayer" (Col. 4:2). Paul is telling us to be regular in our prayer habits. We expect God to be there every time we pray, so God has a right to expect regularity from his people. Let us not take God for granted. Let us pray regularly and often.



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).

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).

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