

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

Volume 27

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

November, 1993

No. 11

DANCING WITH WOLVES

by Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

Yes, I know that the movie with Kevin Costner is properly titled, "Dances With Wolves." However, this article is not about living with the plains Indians and cavorting about with four-footed wolves. There is no joy in having to write on the topic herein discussed, but I could not preach the whole counsel of God by ignoring it (Acts 20:20, 27).

In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord warned, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them..." (Matthew 7:15-16). Since there are some who want to belittle anything which is not in the gospels, we want to make a special point that these words were spoken directly by the Lord! Note also that Christ gives this as a general admonition to all of God's people, not just a few select leaders (Matthew 5:1-2). Later, Jesus did use a similar expression in sending forth the apostles (Matthew 10:16; Luke 10:3); and Paul warned the Ephesian elders in like manner about the encroachments of "grievous wolves," entering the flock (the church) to do their destructive work (Acts 20:28-30). All Christians have the duty to watch for wolves!

The picture which Jesus paints with this figure ought to be clear to all. Men and women will pose as faithful members of the Lord's church, appearing to be as meek and harmless as sheep in the midst of other sheep, as in a local congregation. In reality these people are **wolves disguised as sheep**. Such people will not spare the flock. They care not for God's way nor for the spiritual welfare of others. They are savage and vicious, wanting only to satisfy their own hunger for flesh and blood. They will destroy individual Christian lives and tear apart the church if they are not identified and stopped. It was concerning these "wolves" that Jesus said, "Beware," and Paul said, "Take heed."

Are You Watching?

With all of the religious division and contradictory teaching that exists in so-called Christianity and the Lord's church, we might properly ask if anyone is taking seriously what the Lord said. If all of the sheep are supposed to be on the lookout (Matthew 7:15), and elders have an especially strong responsibility as shepherds of the flock (Acts 20:28-32), why are there so many wolves in our midst? Why are so many being led into the woods of religious error and lost or destroyed? Why are local churches being weakened or ruined by wolves in sheep's clothing coming in and scattering the flock? **Christians, elders, preachers - are you watching?**

The few who are watching are frequently styled as "policemen, watchdogs, alarmists, or radicals." Even if some have cried, "Wolf!" when there was no danger, that is no reason to deny what the Lord said. Great numbers of Christians, including many elders and preachers, ignore these passages, saying that we have no obligation to be looking out for wolves in sheep's clothing. Such brethren are either ignorant of what the Scriptures teach on this matter, or they are wolves in disguise. **Brethren, both Christ and Paul say we do have such responsibilities!** Read these verses above!

We cannot escape our obligation by saying, "We can't judge a man's heart. We don't always know what he believes or teaches on the various issues of contention." Well, don't be so lazy - find out what that person believes and teaches! Ask the individuals personally and double check with others who may know them well and will not cover up for any false teaching they may do. Do not be afraid to ask men to document what they say they believe and teach by sermon tapes, written articles, or by providing definitive answers to specific questions. If someone hedges and hesitates to state precisely his position, "Beware; take heed." You

had better pull his wool to see if it is attached, before he pulls the wool over your eyes. There are plenty of ways to detect wolves in sheep's clothing. Think about it for a minute - would Jesus have told us to look out for them if it were not possible to spot them? Is He really our Lord if we do not obey Him in this (Luke 6:46)?

Identifying the Wolves

Even "Little Red Riding Hood" knew how to identify a wolf. A big nose, big ears, and big teeth are hard to hide when a wolf tries to pose as a grandma, or as a sheep. If brethren, especially elders, will look seriously they can detect spiritual wolves in sheep's clothing.

As previously mentioned, **beware of men who refuse to answer specifically and clearly** what they believe and teach on any crucial issue. Wolves do not want to be detected by those who can expose and answer their false teaching. Accordingly, they try to hide their true beliefs, often by teaching different positions on the same issue, keeping concerned brethren confused and wondering. Why shouldn't they do so? **They are not honest men!** If they were, they would not be posing as sheep when they are really wolves. The apostle Paul told us that such men act as "angels of light" and "ministers of righteousness," when they are actually agents for Satan (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Jesus commended the church in Ephesus for putting on trial false apostles and exposing their deceit (Revelation 2:2). Why then are elders in the Lord's church **afraid to do what Jesus praised? It is wrong to fear men over God!** Read John 12:42-43; 5:44; Acts 5:29; 18:9-10; Galatians 1:10; Matthew 10:28. We will be held to account for ignoring these Scriptures.

Wolves will generally appear very meek and innocent when attempting to influence the sheep. False teachers are as sweet as sugar when speaking to an unsuspecting or sympathetic audience. However, when identified as wolves and they have their false teaching exposed, they bare their fangs and tear into their

(Continued on page 4)

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

. . . is a monthly publication distributed free of charge to any who care to receive it. We will be happy to add any names to the regular mailing list. If you send in a name be SURE to include the ZIP CODE. It must be with each address according to the Postal regulations. This paper is supported by unsolicited contributions for which we are grateful. If you care to know the financial status and expenses, that information will be furnished upon request. Mail all address corrections to:

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

P. O. Box 251

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

Ted J. Clarke EDITOR

Publication No. 211780

CHANGES AND DANGERS

(Part Two)

by Ted Knight

In our first article we noted two dangers which we need to be aware of when we are considering changing things: (1) There is the danger that we may change some things which God has not given us the authority to change. (2) We may be too stubborn and refuse to change when change would be best for the cause of Christ.

In this article I want us to consider some very important matters regarding change that will help us to determine whether change would be advisable or not.

First, **GOD DOES NOT CHANGE.** In Mal. 3:6 it is said, "*For I am the Lord, I change not.*"

Second, **JESUS CHRIST DOES NOT CHANGE.** The writer of the book of Hebrews tell us, "*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.*"

Third, **GOD'S WORD DOES NOT CHANGE.** The Psalmist wrote, "*Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in Heaven.*" Psa. 119:89.

My friends, if God doesn't change, Christ doesn't change, and God's word doesn't change, **should we not be very careful in making changes?** If, as we proclaim, we have been following God, Christ, and the Bible through all these years, then I believe that we should be very, very careful when we consider changes.

I suggest that there are **five** very important questions which we should consider when we are thinking about changes.

First, **WHAT DO WE NEED TO CHANGE?** Shall we change what we have taught doctrinally? Most people say No! and yet many of the very things which they propose to change are indeed doctrinal issues. Issues such as the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship, the role of women in the church, marriage-divorce, re-marriage, the AD 70 theory, special music in worship, elders having no authority except by example, salvation by grace alone, baptism not being essential to salvation, are indeed doctrinal issues and not matters of judgment. We are not free to change God's way in any of these areas unless our past actions have been in transgression of God's way.

Shall we change our methods? If we have found a better method of doing what the Lord has told us to do, by all means change it if we are still within scriptural bounds and it will help us to reach more people with the saving gospel of Christ. The Jule Miller filmstrips have been used to teach thousands of people the gospel of Christ, but now we have those same lessons on video. A change has been made in the method but not in the lessons themselves and that change is good. I know of no one who objects to a change in methods as long as those changes are within scriptural bounds. Maybe we need a better definition of "**methods**" because it seems that what one person considers a "**method**" is considered a matter of scripture to another person. Brethren, let's be honest, it isn't difficult to make a distinction between what is doctrinal and what is judgmental and concerns only our method of doing things.

Second, **WHY DO WE NEED TO CHANGE?** Are we seeking the favor of men? Or, are we honestly seeking better ways and means of reaching the world with the gospel of Christ? What is our motive in seeking change? I am fully convinced that some of those who are proposing change have absolutely no idea whether their proposal is scriptural or unscriptural, **they just want to change!** If our only concern is to please men we should read carefully what Paul wrote in Gal. 1:10: "*For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*" Our one and **only** motive in seeking change should be to do a better job of saving the lost and building up the church of Christ. Let's examine our hearts honestly and find our what our motives really are.

Third, **WHAT STANDARD OF AUTHORITY SHALL GUIDE US THROUGH OUR CHANGES?** How are we going to determine the correctness of our changes? Here is what I am hearing from some quarters today: "We must change some things because that is what the young people want." Or, "If we don't make some changes our people are going to leave."

Good people, there is **one and only one** standard of authority and that is **God's word!** God's word is **truth (John 17:17).** This truth will make men free (**John 8:32**). We will be judged by His word (**John 12:48**). When God has spoken, that **settles the issue!** We have no more right to change things than David, Nadab and Abihu, the young prophet, Noah, or anyone else did. It may sound old and corny to some, especially the younger generation, but we still must "**speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent**" or, as Peter says, "*If any speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.*" 1 (Pet. 4:11).

Fourth, **ARE OUR CHANGES DIVISIVE?** Will our changes strengthen or weaken? Will they unite or divide? Will they do more harm than good? I believe that if we would all follow the principle given by Paul in Eph. 4:1-3 many of the issues which are hurting us could be resolved easily and quickly. Note especially **verse 3**, "*Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*" In verses 1, 2 he tells us to walk in a certain way. We are to walk (1) Worthy of our vocation, (2) with all lowliness and meekness, (3) with longsuffering, (4) forbearing one another in love. Then, he challenges us to strive for, work for, lean over backward in order to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. That means that I will not introduce anything in the area of opinion even, even if a thing is not wrong within itself, if the introduction of that is going to disrupt the unity and peace of the church. I may get my way, but if I cause strife and division in the church in order to get it, **it is wrong, terribly wrong!** Brethren, here is one area where we are having most of our internal problems. Some things are being proposed which may not be wrong in themselves, but there are many objections and some of us seem to have an attitude that says, "**We are going to do it anyway whether they like it or not.**" May God help us to overcome such an unChristlike attitude.

Fifth, **ARE OUR CHANGES OFFENSIVE?** Do you remember what Paul taught in **Rom. 14** and **1 Cor. 8:13**? My beloved

brethren, I would rather forget about any change that I might have desired, than to see a brother or sister become so discouraged or offended by my proposed change that they would not serve the Lord faithfully.

If every person in the religious world would resolve to follow the example of Noah, about whom it was said, *"Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him, so did he,"* we would not be having the problems that we are having religiously today. May we all be determined to follow what is said about the way to success in **Joshua 1:7-8**; *"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then shalt have good success."*

P.O. Box 1297
Conway, AR 72032

JESUS DID NOT QUIT

Jesus did not quit meeting with his disciples because Peter was fickle at times. He did not quit preaching and living right because some of his brethren were unforgiving and unkind. He did not quit his post of leadership because he had in his presence the adulterous woman, a gang of Pharisees, or narrow-minded demon worshippers. Jesus did not quit!

Have you quit? What is the reason for it? Any reason you might name, Jesus could have given the same. He had every reason to be discouraged. His own disciples were so slow to learn. His enemies were so bent on his destruction. But he did not quit. When the end of his earthly life was in sight, he said to His Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Will you stand before the judgment bar of God and have to admit that you are a quitter? Eternal life is promised to those who endure to the end. There will be no consolation in the judgment day to point back to your baptism unless you can also point back to a life of faithful endurance.

- Selected

RESPECT FOR GOD

by Gary McDade

Society, in the midst of the throes of militant humanism, is losing respect for God. Simply defined, humanism is "a philosophy that asserts the dignity and worth of man and his capacity for self-realization through reason and that often rejects supernaturalism." The latter phrase is the most objectionable as well as the most prominent feature of humanism. The holocaust for which the Nazi party was responsible that took upwards of six million lives, is a heinous illustration of humanistic philosophy. "Hitler stated numerous times that Christianity and its notion of charity should be 'replaced by the ethic of strength over weakness.'" (Francis A. Shaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* p. 151.) It is sad that most people detest the holocaust as one of the most inhumane events of modern times and at the same time accept the humanistic philosophy that prompted it.

Genuine respect for God is obtained by considering His nature. Long ago Job said, "For he is not a man, as I am..." (Job 9:32). Mankind has tried to elevate himself to such great heights that God seems to be more of an equal than is actually the case. The Psalmist gives a masterful treatment to the sovereignty of God in Psalm 50, "The mighty God, even the lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. ...I am God, even thy God" (verses 1-3, 7). God isn't subject to man. He says, "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof" (verse 12).

The lofty nature of God is extolled by Isaiah when He says, "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'" (Isa. 55:8, 9). His power is so great that He knows what is in man. A Psalm of David reads, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitteing and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasseth my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For

there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Psa. 139:1-6).

It is true that men may not have the respect for God the Bible demands, but it is also true that God is still enthroned in heaven (Acts 7:49). He remains the Creator of heaven and earth (Gen. 1). He is the giver of every good and perfect gift (Jas. 1:17). He bestows His blessings upon not only the good but also upon the evil (Mk. 5:43-48). Of considerable interest to fallen, sinful man is the love God displayed in sending His sinless Son to die for the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29; 3:16). He offers eternal blessings for the righteous and promises everlasting death for the disobedient (Mt. 25:46). If the world ever needed to learn anything, it needs to learn respect for God. "Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21).

WHY DIDN'T I?

I went to see by friend today.

We talked

- About clothes
- About politics
- About children
- About food

I wanted to talk

- About Jesus
- About love
- About faith
- About eternity

Why didn't I?

Anon.

CONTRIBUTIONS

CHURCHES

Viola Church of Christ, Viola, Ar.	\$10.00
Church of Christ, Elizabeth, Ar.	15.00
Dellhalf Church of Christ, Myrtle, Mo.	20.00
Agnos Church of Christ, Agnos, Ar.	40.00
Moko Church of Christ, Moko, Ar.	25.00
Church of Christ, Moody, Mo.	25.00
Clarkridge Church of Christ	50.00
Clarkridge, Ar.	
Welcome Hill Church of Christ	10.00
Mammoth Spring, Ar.	
Pilot Church of Christ	40.00
Mammoth Spring, Ar.	
Jeff Church of Christ, Thayer, Mo.	25.00
Church of Christ, Garfield, Ar.	35.00

INDIVIDUALS

M/M Pete Phillips, Franklin, Ar.	\$10.00
Mr. Horton W. Pierce	25.00
Newport News, Va.	
Edrie Stephens, Mtn. Grove, Mo.	20.00

(Continued from page 1)

opponents as viciously as any real wolf backed into a corner. Truly, Jesus used the proper metaphor to describe such men.

Christ also noted that we can identify these wolves by their fruits (Matthew 7:16). Because they disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness, it may at times appear that they are really doing good works. **Do not be deceived by such appearances**, for it is the bottom line that counts. Nothing can be "good fruit" if it supports false teaching and keeps men from learning the truth of God's word. Roman Catholics and Seventh-Day Adventists do a great deal of relief work in social areas, Mormons sponsor TV ads and programs that appear to promote biblical family values, but none of these groups teach the truth of the Scripture about what one must do to be saved and other doctrinal matters. No matter how much good men seem to do, **if they do not honor God's word and teach its truths, they are wolves in sheep's clothing** (John 8:31-32; 17:17). Second Timothy 3:16-17 teaches that the word of God is the standard for teaching and doing the truth, and it is the standard by which to identify wolves (cf. Isaiah 8:20). Jesus pointed out that we can know the truth, **so we can also know religious error and those who teach it!**

Dancing With Wolves

All Christians, not just elders and preachers, have the ability to spot these spiritual predators. However, it happens that instead of identifying, exposing, and refusing to fellowship wolves in sheep's clothing, many are "cuddling up" to them, inviting them to enter in among the flock where they can do what wolves do - kill and destroy, scatter and wreak havoc. Literal wolves tear at flesh and blood; these spiritual counterparts rip at one's faith and maim the soul. Wolves in sheep's clothing are prowling about in the Lord's church in increasingly large numbers. Some are lone wolves; others run with various packs. Jesus said they are a real danger.

Christian - elder - preacher - are you one of those who are dancing with wolves, rather than crying out and protecting yourself and others? You cannot be true to Christ and be merrily waltzing along with destroyers of "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). As Christians and church leaders foxtrot (or wolfrot) through the body of Christ with these false teachers, their influence

is spread along with their erroneous doctrines. Leaders at one church say, "Well, brother Wolf must be all right, some of our biggest congregations are using him." So they use him, and then others use him because they did, and on and on it goes.

We are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11). We must identify, mark, and avoid false teachers (Romans 16:17-18). We cannot use or aid those who do not teach the doctrines of Christ (2 John 9-11). This includes what Jesus taught and what He taught the inspired writers of His New Testament to teach (John 16:12; 1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Instead of whirling and twirling with these false brethren, we need to sound the warning and heed the Lord's word in protecting ourselves and our brethren from the dangers of wolves. Elders who do not watch, warn, and protect the flocks, whom God has given to them as shepherds, will answer for their failures on the Day of Judgment. Members need to encourage elders and preachers to watch for and to expose these wolves, and then to support them when they have the courage to take a stand, even if the wolf is the leader of the pack.

No individual Christian is exempt from these commandments to watch for and warn others about wolves in our midst. This applies to members of college boards and administrators; editors of gospel papers, magazines, etc.; lectureship directors; leaders in other such type organizations that have control over teaching and preaching through Bible school curriculum, etc.; as well as leaders in the Lord's church. All such persons have an obligation to watch for, warn about, and to identify wolves in the Lord's church. These are serious matters. Some may laugh it off, others may shrug and say it's not up to them to decide these things - but, those who are now dancing with wolves in the church may one day be two-stepping the hot foot with them in hell.

"For a parent to require a child to wash his face and keep his body clean, and not require him to learn and obey the Bible, is to teach him that the body is worth more than the soul... For a parent to require a child to learn spelling and reading and not require him to study the Bible is to teach him that it is much more important to be qualified to live in this world than to be fitted to live in heaven."

- David Lipscomb

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; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (1 Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 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; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

"YOU CAN HELP WITH POSTAGE"
MOVING?
 Be sure to send us
 your change of address



POSTMASTER -
 Mail all address changes to:
 CHURCH OF CHRIST
 P.O. BOX 251
 MAMMOTH SPRING, AR, 72554

Second Class Postage
 Paid At
 Mammoth Spring, AR
 72554
 Publication # 211780