

# Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

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## Concerning Preachers And Pastors

It has been my experience that every congregation of the Lord's body wants Elders as soon as men are qualified for that office. But I am constrained to ask, "Why?" It is evident by our misapplication of those men and that office that the answer to my question must simply be, "Because the Bible teaches it." But why does the Bible teach it? It isn't that there just must be Elders — Elders for Elders sake. It is because of the nature of the work that elders are required. In many congregations, the "work" of the elders consists of making a budget and attending "business meetings," and dealing with temporal problems of the local congregation. This is all right. It is the work of the Elders. The Bishops of the New Testament church were to oversee, shepherd, feed, watch for, protect, rule over, be examples. The elders (pastors, bishops - they all refer to the same office in the New Testament) are charged by God with these duties. This is why there are to be elders.

The preacher, on the other hand, is to **preach!**

Someone may ask "where is the conflict and the cause for concern?" In too many churches the work of the elders has been shoved off on the preacher, or he has **usurped** it! Brethren, this ought not to be. Let's put the elders back over the church where they should be and the preacher back in his study and pulpit proclaiming the truth, where he should be.

In my present sphere of knowledge it is hard to find a congregation where elders are pastoring and preachers are preaching. Think with me for a moment.

When someone is ill or in the hospital, who is expected to be the first person there? That's right. The Preacher. But

have we not read James 5:14...."call for the elders...." who is the first to be called upon for a problem confronting a family? Right again — the preacher! Who is the first person usually to receive complaints about the ineffectiveness of some phase of the church's program? The preacher! Who is the one to whom the members go with problems, petty and serious? The preacher! Why? It is just like Paul said to Timothy, a preacher, in II Timothy 4:5, ".....do the work of an elder...."Oops! Slip of the pen there. Force of habit, I guess. That should read "evangelist" instead of "elder" The work of an evangelist? "PREACH THE WORD" BE INSTANT IN SEASON, OUT OF SEASON; REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT WITH ALL LONG-SUFFERING AND DOCTRINE. (II Tim. 4:2)

More to come. . . . .

### SINCERITY VERSUS HYPOCRISY

by Paul Southern

*Christian Responsibility.* Too many Christians are satisfied with mediocrity. Taking the middle of the road, they settle down to an easy pace of second-rate living. The Christian's righteousness must surpass second-rate satisfaction. Jesus said: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20.) No shabby spiritual standard is consistent with gospel devotion. Mature personalities accept the Lord's challenge and dare the glorious vision. The person who senses the goodness of God gladly accepts a superior sense of responsibility to the Lord and to his fellowmen. The divine discipline demands that mature Christians have superior humility and human understanding. Such lives are positive and dynamic because they have partaken of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4).

*Importance of Sincerity.* Although it should go without saying, some Christians have never realized that sincerity is a mark of maturity. Jesus emphasized the importance of taking "heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your

Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 6:1). Mature persons are not four-flushers. They do not resort to hypocritical exercises in a vain effort to prove their piety. No mask of maturity can deceive the Lord, Duplicity destroys devotion, for a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8).

*Human Frailties.* The two leading human frailties are vanity and ambition. An exaggerated inferiority feeling leads to neurotic behavior because it gives the ego an abnormally strong striving for power. The smaller a person himself feels the more desperately will he struggle to "put himself on top." Behind a tremendous ambition there may lurk a deep inferiority feeling. A genuine ambition is a mark of maturity, but anti-social ambition is destructive to one's spiritually and emotional well-being.

*Hypocrisy Denounced.* In view of Christ's denunciation of Pharisaical hypocrisy each Christian should ask himself: "Am I really interested in doing God's will and serving humanity, or am I simply cultivating an exaggerated ambition?" Playing church is a wholesome pastime for little children, but when they become men they "put away childish things" (I Corinthians 13:11). Sincere performers in the great drama of life do not have to make up. Mature worshippers in the Lord's church do not wear hypocritical masks and costumes as play actors do (Cf. Matthew 23). "God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

Here is the cause of all our evils, our not knowing the scriptures. —Sel.

## IS IT A MATTER OF CHOICE?

The religious field is overflowing with such liberality that preachers are extending choices to men where God never allowed any choice. These men offer such enticing options to attract a following but the choice means that converts are not following the Lord! There are some things upon which God has firmly legislated, and the matter was then closed. Man was not given the privilege of changing them. He must either accept what God decreed, or pay the penalty for rebelling against God's authority. God has never tendered to man the right to stake out the grounds for reconciliation, or devise his own plan for justification. God alone operates in that field!

### Is the Church a Matter of Choice?

Many rousing revivalists have called on men to "join the church of your choice." This leaves the impression that it is perfectly all right with God for man to choose among various churches. But God does not have a heterogeneous assortment of churches, and our salvation is not a matter of playing "eenie, meenie, miney, moe." God does not allow us to go shopping among a variety of divine organizations to find the right shade of piety, righteousness, devotion and fervor. God has never extended to man a choice in churches. Where would a preacher find scriptural grounds for thanking God "for so many different churches so that each may have the church of his choice?"

How many churches did Jesus say he would build (Matt. 16:18)? Christ gave Himself for how many churches (Eph. 5:35)? How many churches did the blood of Christ purchase (Acts 20:28)? Jesus Christ is head of how many bodies (Eph. 1:22-23)? Yet Paul says that body is the church (Col. 1:18), and there is but one body (Eph. 4:4). Now, isn't it clear that only one church was built by the Lord, and that only one church today exists by His divine authority? Therefore, where has God permitted man any choice in this matter?

### Is Church Membership a Matter of Choice?

Along with the "church of your choice" idea, there was developed the practice of churches exercising a choice as to membership applicants. So a common practice arose of "voting them in." But where did God give man a choice as to whom he would have enter this divine institution?

Fallible men sit in judgment over the souls of men in the practice, and feel they have a choice in the vote they cast. Have they considered that their choice shows utter contempt for God's stated work in this matter? "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47). Who will contend that man has a choice in who shall be admitted into the "house of God, the church of the living God" (1 Tim. 3:14)? Is it man's choice or God's decision?

Man has the idea that he can be saved from sins, and then shop around for a church to "join". But God has never left that to man's choice. He has set forth that man must "be born of water and of the Spirit" (Jno. 3:5). This makes one a child of God, and necessarily in God's family, or house. Paul confirms this in saying, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:26-27). One who accepts the testimony of the Spirit and believes in Christ is thus begotten of the Spirit. Then in obedience in baptism, he is born of water. This is the spiritual birth into the family of God, which is the church. Where has God extended any choice as to which divine family he will "join"?

### Is the Mode of Baptism a Matter of Choice?

Some preachers have extended man a choice as to which "mode of baptism" he receives. On request they will administer a "baptism" by an immersion, by pouring or by sprinkling. It is left to the choice of the candidate. But where has God made this a matter of choice? Baptism is a command which the Lord set forth to be complied with in complete trusting faith. And the very nature of the act is clearly revealed. "Buried with him by baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." (Col 2:12) Does this sound like God saying, "Take your pick as to baptismal modes"? Any sane person will readily see that sprinkling and pouring are acts ordained of men, but not of God! Further we read, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4). Unless it is a burial, it is not scriptural baptism. But it must also be a planting (Rom. 6:5).

This alone will "obey the form of doctrine delivered." (Rom. 6:17.) Does man's choice supercede God's instructions?

### Is the Name a Matter of Choice?

Many have extended to people the choice of a name to be worn in religion. Party names of rival sects and factions are blandly excused with "There's nothing in a name anyway." But this God has never sanctioned! Names have always had real and vital significance with Him. He has not allowed man a choice in the matter of names. Notice the importance attached to the name of Jesus Christ. "And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21). "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Luke 24:47). "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43). "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). How then can any contend that one name is a s good as another? Who has given men a choice regarding names?

Even at the first proclamation of the gospel, Peter commanded, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:38). Later at Samaria the people heard the gospel; "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." (Acts 8:12). Peter preached the gospel to Cornelius and his house, "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." (Acts 10:48.) To Saul of Tarsus, Ananias said, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). In view of so much which God has said about that name, who would extend a choice to man, and contend there is nothing in a name?

Every name in religion other than that given by the Lord is an effrontery unto God decrees! No religious body can glorify God through these divisive party names worn by sects. "But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name."

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## IS IT A MATTER OF CHOICE?

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(1Pet. 4:16 ASV). "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." (Col. 3:17). When men arrogantly attach human names to religious people, "Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called? (Jas. 2:7). "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:9-11.) Does this sound like God is giving man a choice where the name is concerned?

### Is the Church Creed a Matter of Choice?

Preachers have offered to man a choice in the creed that he accepts to govern him. Placed out for acceptance is the "Articles of Faith," "Catechism," "Book of Common Prayer," "Discipline," "Manual," and many others. In fact, man finds so many creed books that it is difficult to choose the one that offers the most. But God has never given man any such choice! He plainly warns, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 Jno. 9-11). There is not much choice in this. The doctrine of Christ offers little latitude for improvisation! Paul stated, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:8). There is no room for choice. You must accept that original doctrine or pay the terrible consequences!

Every church creed devised by man must be by-passed by one who would please God. There is no need, and no place, for human creeds in the worship and service to God. The Bible alone is sufficient and complete. "All Scripture is by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly

furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In His revelation God "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." (2 Pet. 1:3). Where does this all-sufficiency leave any room for human creeds? Where is there room for any choice?

Yes, there is a realm where God has allowed man a choice. He issued the challenge, "Choose ye this day whom ye shall serve!" We can either serve God or Satan.

But there is no other choice offered. We have the choice of believing in Christ or continuing in unbelief. However, Jesus said, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (Jno. 8:24). You can choose to obey the Lord, or you can refuse obedience. But will you turn and read carefully 2 Thes. 1:7-9 before you decide to refuse!

DILLARD THURMAN

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### WHAT SHALL THE CHURCH OF THE NEXT GENERATION BE LIKE?

This question is of deeper concern to thoughtful men in our brotherhood than almost any other that I know. It was brought into sharp focus at the recent Freed-Hardeman College lectureship, for that school has done more through the years to stem the tide of extreme movements within the church than any other to my knowledge. Her stand has always been strong and clearcut. Both her faculty and lectureship speakers cry unashamed for the Old Paths. They are also speaking boldly against the liberalistic, modernistic teachings and practices that some are espousing. In these matters, they share my concern....and I share theirs.

Here are some of the areas of potential danger that were especially pointed out at the recent lectureship by men such as Guy N. Woods, Gus Nichols and others. These are areas where attacks are being made upon the church: 1. Basic Doctrines: Some no longer strongly opposed to instrumental music in worship; some hold that the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day is a matter of tradition; other espouse modern day miracles; compromise is apparent concerning social drinking and the modern dance.

2. Attitudes Toward the Church: It is implied that the church is only a denomination among denominations; that we are all wrong on some points; that the

principle of disobedience is the same, so we must not judge other religious people; that some saved people are found in various groups; and that we do not have anything that others do not have.

3. Organization Of The Church: One eldership being in oversight of programs with the buildings of other congregations; the organization of committees (not work groups) within the congregation who made decisions and handle finances; the elevation of deacons to do the work and take the oversight of elders.

4. Youth Meetings And Campus Movements: The great symbolism employed with dim lights, holding hands etc. in order to have an emotional experience; the use of silent prayers (private prayers in public); burning crosses or symbols of sin; testimonials of never have known Jesus before although a Christian for many years; of no longer being satisfied with regular services of the church (they are too drab and unexciting).

5. Means of Communications: Neither Biblical nor traditional expressions any longer convey proper thought; great stress being placed on the generation gap; youth must be appealed to with a special message, a peculiar jargon.

6. Ridicule Of Conservative Brethren: They are called "five-steppers", "Jesus freaks", "radicals" etc.; people are told, "Don't let anyone tell you that you have to go to church to worship God"; the church is ridiculed as an institution and traditional practices made fun of.

All of these items are not found in one place; but they are all straws in the wind. Without question there are those who want to change the image of the church before the next generation. Whether they succeed may well depend upon how clearly we make our voices heard. As long as I remain your editor, mine shall continue to be loud and clear.

-----Jack Gray

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## Contributions For May

Elizabeth Church of Christ	\$5.00
Viola Church of Christ	5.00
Agnos Church of Christ	5.00
Jim Stark	1.00
Ring Church of Christ	5.00
Opal Gleghorn	2.00



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EDITORS : Clovis Ragsdale and James E. Henley

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## News

A Gospel Meeting will begin at the Thayer Church of Christ, Thayer, Missouri June 23rd through the 29th. Charles Coil will be the speaker. Brother Coil is well known through this area for his outstanding ability to proclaim the Gospel.

There will be a Gospel Meeting at the Welcome Hill Church of Christ June the 16th through the 22nd. John Dale of Mayfield, Kentucky will be the speaker. Services will be at 7:30 each evening. All are invited to attend.

The work here in Mammoth Spring continues to grow both in attendance and contributions. Enthusiasm is especially high in our Bible School, as the dedicated Bible class teacher here continue to improve our Bible School program. We thank God for their ceaseless efforts.

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## Something To Think About

Clovis Ragsdale

In Matt. 7:21 we find a sobering statement made by our Lord while he was giving the sermon on the Mount, He said, "not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven." With so many ideas and doctrines being taught and practiced in our time we would wonder if people are paying enough attention to searching the scriptures to actually find out what the "will of the Lord" really consists of.

As long as men insist on manuals,

creeds, etc. instead of taking the Bible, for their source of guidance, their chances of knowing the will of the Lord will be in doubt. While preaching in Berea, Paul said of the people of that town, that they searched the scriptures to see if the things he was preaching were so. There is a great need today for people to search their Bibles to see if what is being taught is in harmony with what the Bible teaches. With so much conflict in what is being taught some one must surely not be teaching the "will of the Lord".

In this busy day few find time to do much searching of the Scriptures. More time is spent caring for the social part of man's life than for the soul Remember that Jesus said that only those who do his Father's will are to be accepted in his kingdom.

In reading the attendance and offering record that is found on the walls of most church buildings, we note an improvement in the amount of money being contributed into the treasury of the Lord's Church. Most congregations are averaging more than one dollar per person attending. We are growing up somewhat in this phase of Christian service. With inflation being what it is, it is high time brethren realize that it now takes much more to carry on the work of the church. Maintenance of buildings, preachers salaries, caring for the needy, just about all phases of the work of the church, now costs more than a few years ago.

Members who are living on fixed incomes are not receiving as much prosperity as those who are able to hold good jobs. Brethren who are making more than ever before have a greater responsibility to see that the work of the church is supported as it should be. In the eighth chapter of second Corinthians, Paul teaches the need for equality in supplying the needs of the church. This equality is based on those who are prospering to give more to take up the slack for those who are not able to give in a substantial amount. In this chapter Paul is suggesting to the Corinthian brethren that they should come to the aid of the brethren at Jerusalem who were in dire circumstances. The church is a band of loving brethren. Where one lack the other should supply, that all may be equally provided. In order for the church today to continue to grow and meet its obligations brethren who are prospering will have to make greater sacrifices.

## Follow Thou Me

Somewhere along the line we seem to become more acutely aware of life's imperfections. It may be early, or it may be late; but, inevitably, the failures of the human race loom large and forbidding. It is only natural at that point to become highly critical. However, much of our outlook on life depends upon how we look in. Perhaps we are prone to gauge the failures of others through the eyes of our own ineffectiveness.

Even in the church there has never been a perfect group of Christians. The letters to the churches reveal the many flaws of character that persisted even when the apostles were circulating among people. And yet the association and Christian fellowship were considered to be valuable and worthwhile. Over and over again Paul urged the individual to live up to the greatness of his calling. And without exception that exhortation was based on the promise that one had obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered. The mould given by God always remained perfect even though the heart might falter.

And so each man must look first to his own heart before he can condemn others. It could be that our discouragement with our brethren stems from our personal failure to make any contribution to the good of the whole. Furthermore, it might be that our own inertia is just the balance that is preventing the forward progress of the Lord's work. When Peter showed undue interest in John's destiny, the Lord said to him: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

—J.H.McCaleb.

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Arkansas 72554

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Postage Paid

CLOVIS RAGSDALE  
Route 3  
Mammoth Spring, Arkansas