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TAKE A STAND!

by Ted J. Clarke

In 1 Kings 18, God's prophet, Elijah, came to a confrontation with Ahab, King of Israel, and his prophets. Ahab and his prophets were worshipers of the pagan god, Baal. The children of Israel were supposed to be servants of the one true God (Deuteronomy 5:6,7), but they had been trying to serve God a little and Baal a little. Israel did not see their service to God as an exclusive matter. It was to this attitude that Elijah addressed himself, saying,

"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." (1 Kings 18:21).

No doubt the lack of response was very disappointing to both God and Elijah. There will always be some people who have to check and see which way the wind is blowing before they choose a side. They do not want to pick a loser or be stuck with an unpopular position. Perhaps a majority of those who resist taking a side do so because they do not want to be involved in a confrontation regarding their position. Joshua had told Israel in his farewell address that they had to make choices regarding their religious preferences, and he told them that he had chosen the Lord God who delivered them from Egyptian bondage (Joshua 24:14,15). Israel had initially chosen to follow God, but they did not like the separation which exclusive service to God demanded, and tried to serve other religious interests. Elijah insisted that they make a choice, implying that they could not serve both God and Baal, but at this point the people were too cowardly to choose. Israel really did make a choice not to serve God alone. Because of their spiritual adultery, God sent them into Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17:1-18). Israel's failure to choose to serve God exclusively meant that they chose to reject the covenant which God had made with them. Jesus revealed the consequences of such indecision when he taught, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30).

The world is full of religious people like those Israelites in 1 Kings 18. There will always be the normal amount of people-pleasers, those who are concerned about being popular. We will always have people who are professing a general type of religion, who do not know enough about the Bible to justify their faith. There is also an ample supply of those today who will not make a decision because they do not want to be confronted regarding that decision. But Jesus said that all such people who refuse to make a decision to stand with him **are against him!** (cf. Matthew 12:30) You cannot straddle the gospel fence. Either you are standing with Jesus on His side, or you are against Him. You may wish that it were otherwise, but Christ's words are clear enough on this matter.

A number of times during his personal ministry the Lord addressed the matter of worrying more about what men think of us than what God thinks of us. In John 5:44 he asked, "How can ye believe, which receive honor of one another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" When we worry about what others think, rather than what God thinks, it is a hindrance to our faith. The apostle John later speaks in his gospel of those Jews who believed on Jesus but would not confess their faith and take a stand with Christ. Why did they refuse to take the side of Jesus? John explains, "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42,43). These men may not have felt that they really denied Jesus, but a refusal to confess their faith was a statement of opposition. "He that is not with me is against me..."

The great apostle Paul also spoke of these matters in his epistles. "For do I now persuade (seek the favor of - American Standard Version) men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). In 1 Thessalonians 2:4 he said, "...we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts." Paul was always content to stand with the Lord, regardless

of what the rest of the world thought and no matter how he was treated by others (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-28). Both the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul went to their deaths because they took their stand with God and His holy word. When Jesus tells us to take up our crosses and follow Him daily, can we truly be satisfied with doing any less (Luke 9:23)? When Paul pleads with us to follow him, even as he followed Christ, does he not mean for us to stand with him and Jesus even at the cost of our lives (1 Corinthians 11:1)? Can we worry about what men think about our master's commands? Not if we want to please the Lord!

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TED CLARKE ASSUMES EDITORSHIP

Beginning with the September issue of the Fulton County Gospel News, Ted J. Clarke will begin his responsibilities as editor. As was noted in the June 1991 issue, the Eddy Gilpin family will be moving to Tanzania, East Africa to begin their work with Chimala Mission. Brother Clarke will serve as both minister for the Mammoth Spring Church of Christ, and as editor for this periodical.

Brother Clarke brings with him years of experience as a gospel preacher. He began preaching on a part-time basis in 1968, and full-time in 1972. He is a graduate of both the Memphis School of Preaching and the Alabama Christian School of Religion. He and his wife, Sherrie, have two sons, one daughter, and four grandchildren. They come to the Mammoth Spring area from Demopolis, Alabama, where they have served with the Lord's church for the past four years.

Brother Clarke is a sound gospel preacher, experienced writer, and Christian gentleman. His strong stand for the truth in a forthright yet loving manner will enable this publication to continue in its stand for right as it has over its some thirty-eight year history.

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS
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Take a Stand!

(Continued from page 1)

One cannot take a stand with the Lord unless that person is willing to confront others and be confronted. Read Matthew, chapters 21 through 23, and note the different confrontations which the Lord experienced in those events. He confronted the moneychangers in the temple; the chief priests and elders confronted Him regarding His authority and the Lord countered them with His own questions; both the Pharisees and Sadducees questioned Him and He gladly met their challenges; and finally, the scribes and Pharisees received some of the strongest challenges that our Lord ever uttered. Did Christ love these people? Indeed, He was going to die for them as well as for you and me (John 3:16). It was His love that compelled Him to confront these men in religious and moral error and try to get them to stand with Him. We may also note in Acts, chapters 17 through 19, the apostle Paul was busily confronting those who needed to take a stand with the Lord. Paul was again imitating Jesus, just as he tells us to do.

First Peter 3:15 commands us to be ready to answer for the stand that we take. Those who fear to be questioned will not take a stand. Those who stand with the Lord never need to fear (Hebrews 13:5,6)! Brethren, we have no need to be ashamed about our faith, if we are standing with the Lord! There is no need to apologize for insisting that one must be baptized (immersed in water) in order to be saved. Jesus said it in Mark 16:16 and we are doing nothing more than standing with him when we repeat it. One does not need to hang one's head when speaking out against the use of instru-

mental music in Christian worship. There is no Bible authority for it and we cannot do in the name of (authority of) Christ. Why be embarrassed about such things? If Christ does not authorize it, we are standing with Him when we reject it. Why cringe when someone asks whether we believe that there are saved people in the denominations? Jesus said that He would build His church and Paul says that there is one body (church - Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4). Furthermore, if salvation is in Christ (2 Timothy 2:10) and Jesus is the Saviour of His body (which is the church), how can one be saved outside of Christ's church (Ephesians 5:23)?

It is not unloving of us to take a stand, as long as we speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). When we fail to take a stand on God's word, we neither love God nor our fellowman, because the gospel is the only hope of salvation (Romans 1:16). All of us want to be popular or well liked. But, we must desire to be popular with God, rather than to sacrifice doing God's will in order to be popular with men. In Ephesians 6:10-17 the apostle Paul encourages us to "put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." The weapon which will enable us to stand is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The battle for truth is a never ending one. We may become tired and seek for rest, but we can never surrender nor quit. The encouragement that Paul gave the church at Corinth needs to be repeated over and over again today. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Finally, remember the Lord's statement about our final confrontation, **with God!** Rather than fearing our fellowman and separation from him, we had better fear what God can do to us eternally (Matthew 10:28). Paul reminds us that we shall all give account for what we have done and have not done, bad and good (2 Corinthians 5:10; James 4:17). Those who think that they can take Jesus and ignore what His words say will be sadly mistaken. Jesus warned the Jews of His day -

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38)

One cannot separate Christ from His words. We can reject Jesus but the words He has spoken will still be our judge (John 12:48). We can claim to receive Jesus, but if we refuse to take a stand with him and His words, he will be ashamed of us and reject our claims

of faith in Him. "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)? What will your answer be to that, if you have failed to take your stand in God's word? Brethren, we have withstood the onslaughts of false teaching which have sought to destroy the Lord's church for years. We can continue to withstand all of the false and divisive teachings in the religious world today, but only if we clothe and arm ourselves as soldiers of the cross (Ephesians 6:10-17). If we stand **together** with God's word and each other, nothing can defeat us! We will also stand together around God's throne in the eternal heavens. What motivation to **take a stand!**

Bring up your children and they won't pull down your name.

Learning to live is a lesson many people never learn in a lifetime.

The sharp man points the way.

Your dreams will not come true unless you wake up.

Jealousy is a monster whose hunger is increased by feeding.

You cannot leave footprints on the sands of time if you travel only on paved highways.

Some people are like a tire with a slow leak - it takes a lot of pumping to keep them inflated.

The severest pain is a wounded heart.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Did Humpty Dumpty Really Fall?

by Eddy Gilpin

The words of this renowned nursery rhyme reflect a principle that is being propagated in the religious world today. The tenet of the "Impossibility of Apostasy" is a damnable doctrine that seeks to rob man of the armor which the Bible says must be donned by every child of God in order to "stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). The poem states:

"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall;
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall."

No one ever questions whether or not Humpty Dumpty actually fell. One would be thought ludicrous who would raise such an objection. Mother Goose said that Humpty fell and that is enough for every interested individual. However, when, through inspiration, Almighty God, the Creator of Heaven and earth, says that "Judas by transgression fell" (Acts 1:24), man begins to deny, reject and re-align this divine declaration.

Scriptures abound which warn against one turning from the right way back into the service of Satan. If such is not possible, then why do such warnings exist within the pages of Holy Writ? Notice, for example, such passages as the following:

Ezekiel 18:24 "But when the **RIGHT-EOUS TURNETH AWAY FROM HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND COMMITTETH INIQUITY,** and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: **IN HIS TRESPASS THAT HE HATH TRESPASSED, AND IN HIS SIN THAT HE HATH SINNED, IN THEM SHALL HE DIE.**"

Exodus 32:33 "And the Lord said unto Moses, **WHOSOEVER** hath sinned against me, him will I **BLOT OUT OF MY BOOK.**"

(Note—One cannot be blotted out of a book in which his name was never written. Also note that his name must have been there in order for it to be blotted out.)

I Corinthians 9:27 "But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, **I MYSELF SHOULD BE A CASTAWAY.**"

(Note—This was written by Paul the apostle, gospel preacher, Christian, and staunch servant of the Most High God.)

I Corinthians 10:12 "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth **TAKE HEED LEST HE FALL.**"

Hebrews 2:1 "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, **LEST AT ANY TIME WE SHOULD LET THEM SLIP.**"

Hebrews 3:12 "Take heed, **BRETHREN,** lest there be in **ANY OF YOU** an evil heart of unbelief in **DEPARTING FROM THE LIVING GOD.**"

(Notice again that Christians are being addressed.)

II John 8 "Look to yourselves, that **WE LOSE NOT** those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

(Note—This passage was penned by John the apostle to faithful Christians.)

Many other passages could be cited. However, any one of these should be enough for any honest, open-minded individual. These warnings are there for a reason. If apostasy is impossible these warnings would be but wasted words. Mother Goose says that Humpty Dumpty fell, and says it only once. The Lord proclaims a multitude of times that a child of God can fall. Man accepts the word of Mother Goose, but rejects the word of God. These things should not be.

The Bible contains not only warnings against apostasy, but also examples of those who did apostatize. These are given in order that one might know the consequence of such action, and avoid it. One such example (that of Judas Iscariot—Acts 1:24) has already been cited. Notice some others:

Matthew 13:22 "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and **HE BECOMETH UNFRUITFUL.**"

Luke 8:13 "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, **RECEIVE** the word with joy; and these have no root, which **FOR A WHILE BELIEVE,** and in time of temptation **FALL AWAY.**"

Galatians 5:4 "Christ is become of no effect unto you, **WHOSOEVER OF YOU** are justified by the law; **YE ARE FALLEN FROM GRACE.**"
(Note—Paul penned these words to the Christians of Galatia.)

I Timothy 1:19 "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away **CONCERNING FAITH HAVE MADE SHIPWRECK.**"

I Timothy 4:1 "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times **SOME SHALL DEPART FROM THE FAITH,** giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils."

I Timothy 5:12 "Having damnation, because **THEY HAVE CAST OFF THEIR FIRST FAITH.**"

One prominent example that must be noted is that of Simon. Acts 8:13 states: "Then Simon himself **BELIEVED** also; and when he was **BAPTIZED,** he continued with Philip..." Notice that he believed and was baptized. According to what Jesus stated, "He that **BELIEVETH** and is **BAPTIZED** shall be **SAVED**" (Mk. 16:16). Simon was a Christian, one saved from his past sins. Next, notice the actions of Simon, the rebuke of Peter, the consequences of Simon's actions, and the command given to him as recorded in Acts 8:18-23:

"And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.' But Peter said unto him, **THY MONEY PERISH WITH THEE,** because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: **FOR THY HEART IS NOT RIGHT** in the sight of God. **REPENT** therefore of this **THY WICKEDNESS,** and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be **FORGIVEN THEE.** For I perceive that **THOU ART IN THE GALL OF BITTERNESS, AND IN THE BOND OF INIQUITY.**"

As has been mentioned, Simon was a Christian. However, he did that which was sinful and faced eternal damnation (being "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity") should he fail to repent and ask God's forgiveness. Simon was honest enough to see his lost condition (even though he was a child of God), and did just what was commanded of him. He stands as a prime example of the fact that a child of God can so sin as to be eternally lost.

Although such warnings and examples as have been mentioned are clear, many refuse to recognize what the Bible says concerning this vital subject. Many attempt to justify the doctrine of "Once saved, always saved" by arraying scripture against scripture. However, the Bible does not contradict itself. Therefore, such attempts are futile. The scriptures are too plain and too numerous to allow such endeavors to succeed.

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Salvation is conditional. Man has a part to do in the bringing about of the salvation of his soul. Salvation from past sins is brought about through obedience to the gospel. The gospel plan of salvation is clearly stated. One must: HEAR the word of God (Rom. 10:17); BELIEVE that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn. 8:24); REPENT of his sins (Lk. 13:3); and be BAPTIZED for the remission of past sins (Acts 2:38). Eternal salvation is obtained ("in the world to come" - Mk. 10:30) through obedience to the gospel and faithfulness to the Lord and His cause (Rev. 2:10).

The Bible addresses the possibility of one's falling from grace. Possibility does not imply probability. The Bible does not state that one WILL fall, but that one CAN fall. As the saying goes, "To be forewarned is to be forearmed." As the Bible says, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for IF ye do these things, YE SHALL NEVER FALL" (II Pet. 1:10).

Paul wrote, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). The concept of the "Impossibility of Apostasy" strips the soldier of his armor by stating that he can never fall victim to defeat after he has entered the war. Such reasoning falls short of both revealed sense and common sense.

Yes, Humpty Dumpty really fell, according to the nursery rhyme. No one will deny that. But many people flock to deny that Judas, Hymeneus, Alexander, Demas, and others fell. Why is the word of Mother Goose accepted and believed and the word of Almighty God refused and rejected? It is a sad trend indeed when the all-authoritative word of God is pushed to the side by the same common sense that will respect and believe a children's verse. The possibility of apostasy does exist. Therefore, one should be wary of "the wiles of the devil" lest he "depart from the faith" and be "fallen from grace."

Grandmother could remember her husband's first kiss, but granddaughter can hardly remember her first husband.

Too many people are like wheelbarrows -not much good unless pushed, and very easily upset.

A man may not be what the world thinks he is. He may not be what he thinks he is. But, what he thinks, he is!
(Prov. 23:7)

Your character cannot be essentially injured except by yourself.

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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