

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Second Class Postage Paid at Mammoth Spring, Ark.

VOLUME 12

Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554

August 1978

Number 91

Threat of Liberalism The Lord's Prayer for Unity

By Ordell Heavin

The Lord's church has always had to face dangers from within and from without (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 2 Tim. 4:1-3). Christians are always just one generation from apostasy. We must always stress the need to walk in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7).

Today the churches of Christ face the serious menace of the demon called liberalism. Its threat grows as time goes by, and unless defeated the church can be swept into apostasy. Individual congregations, Christian publications, schools for training preachers, and colleges must take heed to walk circumspectly lest they depart from their original concern for and commitment to God's absolute truth.

Deep dedication to God's truth is ever needed. There is ever a threat by the "wheeler-dealer-promoters," who show little regard for the church that Christ gave his life for, to lead us away from the straight path of truth. The statement of Jesus in Mark 7:7 still has application, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." There are still those "that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." (Gal. 1:7) Therefore, we must ever stand firm on the basics of fundamental soundness in the gospel. Only be holding to the straight course in the Truth can we be freed from the paralysis of liberalism.

There is much evidence present to the threat of liberalism. The powerful emphasis of "what does the Bible say" is once again being replaced by, "Is this acceptable to the people about us?" Even among those who know better comes an appeal for "cheap grace" and not the deeply based teaching of the commands of Christ. Others appear to be wilfully ignorant as they "wrest the scriptures" (2 Pet. 3:16), and go about "seeking their own righteousness." (Rom. 1:1-3) While these speak so often of the liberty and freedom in Christ, they become the slaves of error (2 Pet. 2:17-22).

In Paul's letters to both Timothy and Titus, Christians are exhorted to use wholesome words. In 1 Cor. 1:18-25; Col. 2:8-10 we are admonished to shun human philosophy, traditions of men, and false pride as we cling more closely to Christ

(Continued on Page 4)

By Harold Turner

In John 17:20-21, after praying for the apostles, Jesus said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

For the most part, no doubt, those who believe in Christ are shocked at the boldness of so many in our world today who claim to disbelieve in God. In many of our educational systems man and the world about him are not considered a product of creation, but rather a result of chance evolution. For the most part our world is not a Bible believing world. Even in our nation the name of God and Christ are little more than curse words to a vast majority. The Bible is classified among books of myths and fables. And the idea of Christianity and church means little more than some social or fraternal order to many. Why is there so much mockery and unbelief in our nation, which once was respectively considered a Christian nation?

There are, no doubt, many things contributing to this, but the words of Jesus in the above prayer may contain a major key. His prayer expresses a concern "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me." But what was he praying for that might contribute to this end? His prayer is for all who will believe on him through the words of the apostles. The prayer was that "They all may be one." A type of oneness that exists between Christ and His Father. Jesus wants all believers to be united as one, and upon this basis there is hope that the world may believe that He is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. But what hope is there for the world believing this great truth when those claiming to believe are divided into 300 to 400 different groups, each teaching and practicing their own distinctive doctrines. J. Edgar Hoover is quoted as having said that the biggest curse on our nation is religious divisions. Even the atheist realizes that such divisions could not be of a God intelligent enough to create this world and all things therein.

There are multitudes trying to justify religious divisions as being approved of God. One of the leading evangelists in our nation said, "I couldn't envision one

church in the United States, unless the nation became a dictatorship." He also added, "I am against the uniting of denominations into one super-church. You see, various church bodies are indicative of differences in human personality and the minor variations in the theological understanding. Neither logically, nor Biblically, could they be squeezed into one repressive mold."

It's upon the basis of such indoctrination that many have come to believe it impossible for all to be united as one. Did Jesus pray for the impossible? He prayed for all to be one. This can happen, and the Lord made provisions for it to happen, but it can never happen when approached from the standpoint that human personalities and understandings differ, and therefore we need different churches. There can never be unity as long as it is approached from the human point of view. It's true that human beings are the objective of this unity, however, this unity must first begin with the individual and the Lord.

In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." To follow Christ I must bring my personalities and understandings into harmony with Christ. My personality is not in harmony with his personality. Does this mean that I am justified in being divided from Christ? My opinions or understandings differ from those of Christ. Does this mean that I am justified by having my own opinion about how I will serve God? The gospel of Christ is designed to change my personality and understanding. One of the first approaches to becoming a Christian and living the Christian life is to realize that I am out of harmony. It's not God and others that are out of harmony with me, but I am the one out of harmony, and who needs to change. The devil has effectively indoctrinated the world to believe that everyone has a right to his own opinion in religion. But where does the Bible teach this? Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself."

Not only did Jesus pray for unity, but he taught us how unity is possible. In 1 Cor. 1:10 the Bible states, "Now I

(Continued on Page 3)

**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 Number. 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 of its financial status and expenses, that information will be furnished upon request.

EDITORS: Erwin Cowen
and Harold Turner

A True Friend

By Lavern Stewart

Everyone needs friends. Everyone needs a truly good friend. A friend and an acquaintance are not the same thing. The word friend came from a word which means "to love." In view of this we can understand what the Bible says: "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." (Prov. 17:17) Another passage says: "And there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." (Prov. 18:24) Since a friend is one who loves at all times, then he would not forsake us in our time of need. Do you have such a friend?

I know of one who desires to be your friend. He is one that evil men sought to ridicule by calling him the friend of publicans and sinners (Luke 7:34), yet their effort to deride the Saviour was actually a true statement that honored him.

Jesus tells us what genuine friendship is in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus did this for us. Moreover, He has promised not to forsake us in our time of need (Heb. 13:5) — He is the friend that "loves at all times" and "sticks closer than a brother."

To have Jesus as our friend we must do the things that He has commanded: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John 15:14) Since this friend loves us enough to give His life for us, we must in return love Him enough to live our life for Him. The Bible plainly states that one does not love Jesus if he does not obey Him (1 John 5:2-3), "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."

Envy is blind and knows nothing except to depreciate that which is excellent in others.

Explaining (?) the Bible

By Glynn V. Purdy

Jesus authorized the apostles to go "teach all nations," and then to baptize those who believed the word. There was a man in Acts 8, who did not understand what he read in the Bible, but the preacher did not "explain" it to him, he just began at the same Scripture and "preached unto him Jesus." The man understood the word and obeyed it, then he went on his way rejoicing.

During the first one hundred fifty years of the Restoration, most people were not educated according to today's standards, yet they understood the Bible and obeyed it by the thousands! The preachers of that day preached Jesus, rather than to explain what God meant to say but did not know how. Philip went into the city of Samaria and "preached Jesus," the people understood and were baptized, both men and women (Acts 8:5-12). Men taught, read and understood the Bible and obeyed its precepts.

Now we have our scholars (?). For several hundred years the denominations, and before this Romanism, have been "explaining" that God did not mean what he said, and the "clergy" had to interpret what God meant to the "laymen." Members of the church had little problem for they were taught to "study" for ourselves. Now our "scholars" (?) are doing the very same thing in the Lord's church. Some are talking about the prerogatives of the "innocent" and the "guilty" parties in divorce and remarriage. Others are saying that God does not consider sin in one's life before baptism! Then why be baptized? Some say that it matters not how many times a person has been married and divorced, which ever woman he is with when he is baptized; she is his wife! Every one in the past years knew that one had to repent, and give up all sin before he could come to God. Now just get yourself baptized in sin and keep right on in it as baptism now sanctifies sin. The best of two worlds: all the sin we want and eternal life too! We never expected to hear such from our "scholars". We knew of "once saved always saved", "sprinkling for baptism", "join the church of your choice", "nothing in a name", instrumental music in the worship", "praying for the dead", and dozens of other false things, but did you ever think this would get into the church? I surely did not, and it is still hard to believe. Now an elder does not even need to be married, much less have believing children. Children now means "child" and can be proved from the Old Testament they say! The same place the denominations get instrumental music. We can now go anywhere in the Bible to find authority for what we want to do, or not do!

As for me and my house, we believe and will continue to teach and practice the truth, that God said what He meant and meant what He said. I shall continue to call your attention to this fact, then the rest is between you and God. If you have a complaint take it to God, it is HIS word.

There is always a simple, clear, comprehensive and safe course in the Bible for every sincere seeker of truth to follow; then why take a doubtful and unsafe course? Christ is our Saviour, He gave the method of salvation, it is His church, He accepts and rejects, why should we refuse His terms of pardon? The Bible teaches the same thing it did when I became a Christian, and when I began to preach. I have no authority to explain away God's word, but on the contrary, I must preach the truth to be delivered from the blood of the hearers! God created man, and sent him a message in the Bible. No one knows better what man can understand than God. Then do you believe that God would send man a law, demand that He either obey it or be damned, yet clothe it in such language that man can not understand and obey it? No, I didn't think you believed that! The watch words are STUDY and OBEY. You need no help to do either or both. Watch those who say to you, "Yes, I know the Bible teaches that, BUT...", then when they get through butting the word of God around, it matters not what you do, or whether you do anything or not. Study for yourself.

God's word needs no explaining, but it does need "rightly dividing" or "handling aright." We need to study the Bible, or hear it taught enough to know who is speaking, under what dispensation it was given, to whom it was spoken, the subject under discussion, and then we need to study all the material God has given on the subject. Any responsible person can understand God's will, and can either accept it or reject it. But no person has the right to change the message to suit himself!

"Worry is like a rocking chair. It will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere."

What you are is God's gift to you, what you make of yourself is your gift to him."

Don't let yourself worry when you are doing your best.

Don't let yourself think evil of a friend until you have all the facts.

Don't let yourself waste time on peevish and peevish matters.

Don't let yourself harbor bitterness in your heart toward God or man.

The Lord's Prayer (Cont.)

beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Notice that this appeal is made in the "Name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Too, this clearly shows that unity is possible. It's possible for all to speak the same thing, to have the same mind, and judgment, and to be perfectly joined together. The basis and guidelines for this unity is expressed in the words: "That ye all speak the same thing." But, is this possible? Only when we do as God commands: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Peter 4:11) If we limit our teaching and preaching to the scriptures only we can all speak the same thing. But here again we have a problem, for many are taught that we can't all see the Bible alike, and that people interpret the scriptures differently.

In 2 Peter 1:20-21 we are told, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." These holy men, which God selected to write the Bible, weren't permitted to write their interpretation of what they thought God might want man to understand. They were to write only what the Spirit directed them to write. Where do men get the idea that they have the right to interpret it today? The many contradicting interpretations of the scriptures should be evidence that we don't have this right today any more than did those who wrote the scriptures. If any man speak, let him speak as he interprets the oracles of God. This is the basic and major cause of the problem of divisions today. The only sure word we have is the scriptures. If men today were more concerned about proving all things (1 Thess. 5:21), as God commands us to do, rather than ignoring and accepting all things, progress could be made toward the unity for which Jesus prayed.

Religious divisions are the work of Satan, they are sinful and wrong. Paul shows this in 1 Cor. 3:3-4, saying, "For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal." Here Paul shows that divisions are carnal, and in Rom. 8:6-7 he shows the seriousness of being carnal: "For to be carnally minded is death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The person

who advocates and supports divisions is carnally minded, and to be such is to be against God, and refusing to be in subjection to His law.

Divisions are based upon the idea that each has a right to his own opinion, and has the right to walk by his own rules, while the Bible teaches us that we must deny ourselves, and walk by the same rule, the gospel of Christ.

Unity is possible among all, but not upon the basis of human creeds and doctrines. Every human creed, doctrine, name, and practice must be abandoned, and the gospel of Christ embraced as the only rule for faith and practice. No denomination can exist by holding only the gospel for Christ for its rule of faith and practice. For then it would cease to be a denomination, and become only the church we read about in the Bible. Every denomination holds to beliefs and practices, names and organizations which are in addition to the Bible.

When we all walk by the same rule, the gospel, there will be unity. Notice this in 1 John 1:7, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." This clearly shows that if we walk in the light we will have fellowship. Where there is not fellowship one with another, then it's obvious that someone is not walking in the light. Too, we notice that this fellowship is not closing our eyes to the differences, letting each walk by his own rule, but rather a fellowship based upon both walking in the light, by the same rule.

Jesus prayed that all believers might be united as one. He also stated in John 10:16, "And there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." In Eph. 2:16 God's plan is to reconcile both Jew and Gentile unto himself in one body. In Col. 3:15 Paul states that we are called in one body. And in 1 Cor. 12:13 he tells us that we are all baptized into one body. The Bible doesn't teach numerous bodies, but one, see Eph. 4:4, and 1 Cor. 12:20. Too, the Bible teaches there to be but one faith (Eph. 4:5), one gospel (Gal. 1:6-8), and one baptism (Eph. 4:5).

Jesus died to save the world from sin, but men cannot be saved unless they believe with all their heart that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. The Lord's prayer is that we might all be one, that the world might believe this great truth. Let's each have the courage to carefully and honestly examine the things we believe and practice, and get back to the gospel as the only foundation upon which we can build a life that pleases God. And the only foundation upon which unity can exist.

Don't let yourself imagine that good intentions are satisfying excuses.

Ask for the Old Paths

By Richard J. Bonner

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." (Jeremiah 6:16)

The prophet Jeremiah delivered this message to the kingdom of Judah in the seventh century before Christ. Jeremiah was reared in the little village of Anathoth, a short distance north of Jerusalem; but as a young man he moved his residence to the city of Jerusalem where for forty years he was the messenger of God during the last period of Judah's apostasy. He witnessed his nation pass from the happy, prosperous condition under Josiah to their state of iniquity under the last four godless kings. He lived to see the mighty armies of Babylon sweep mercilessly over the Jews and destroy Jerusalem, the very soul and center of their nation.

This great prophet made every effort possible to save the Jewish nation. He warned them of their sins and pointed out the consequences which they would suffer. Had they listened to Jeremiah, they could have avoided the calamity which befell them. They were destroyed because they sowed the seed of their own destruction. The Bible says, "For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The Bible also says, "The wages of sin is death." The nation of Judah did not heed the message of Jeremiah and thus were destroyed.

"Ask for the old paths" was the refraining theme of the prophet's message. The "old paths" would simply refer to God's way, or his law. The Jewish nation had substituted their way for God's way. Probably they thought that God's standard was too old fashioned and not modern enough for the times. They chose to follow their own wisdom and walk according to the dictates of their conscience. The courageous prophet described the law of God as being "the good way," and he promised the people saying, "ye shall find rest for your souls." They rejected and said, "We will not walk therein."

This should serve as a great lesson for us today as we find ourselves in very similar circumstances to that of Judah. Because of sin the world is heading for destruction. This is, indeed, a time to "ask for the old paths." Let not God's way be substituted with the human conscience, opinions, denominational creeds, or anything else.

Threat of Liberalism (Cont.)

and the pure gospel. Liberalism is actually anything that diverts one from the simple message of our Lord. Therefore we must ever go back to the original source rather than to our guidelines, projects or promotional schemes. We don't need to follow "promoters" today, but we must follow loyally our Lord.

Today we are plagued by liberal writers who have abandoned "sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3-4), because they "receive not the love of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:10). Paul aptly described these people in Rom. 3:18: "There is no fear of God before their eyes." We must make a distinction between truth and error. This "anything goes" is really "everything goes." Why have so many become so soft on error? When did this "Jesus minus authority thing take hold?" There are some today misusing Mark 9:38-40 (as sectarians have always done) to uphold error and the softness toward error. The fact that this passage is often cited toward this view indicates that liberalism is a growing problem in the church. The very heart of our teaching must be: "does it glorify God and his word?" "Will it make the church stronger in the Lord?" "Is it New Testament teaching?" "Can we as Christians truly push this idea?" We dare not allow ourselves to be spiritually blackmailed by those who have a project, program, or plan of their own invention and demand that we back it financially or be labeled "Anti."

The bishops must watch over the congregation, and feed the flock only spiritual food (Acts 20:28). Did you ever wonder why the words "take heed" are used so much in the word? They suggest dangers, and the possibility of being led astray. We must use care to "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11), and "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3), and cease seeking the "vain glory of men" (1 John 2:15-17). Then the creeping paralysis of liberalism can be stopped. May we have the courage to always "tell it as it is" without apology. "Preach the word." (2 Tim. 4:1-2)

CONTRIBUTIONS

Churches of Christ:

| | |
|-----------|---------|
| Agnos | \$ 5.00 |
| Big Pond | 12.00 |
| Elizabeth | 5.00 |
| Garfield | 15.00 |
| Jeff | 10.00 |
| Sturkie | 5.00 |
| Viola | 5.00 |
| Williford | 5.00 |

Individuals:

| | |
|-------------------------|---------|
| Joseph & Edith Robinson | \$20.00 |
| Mrs. Dwane Taylor | 5.00 |
| Bessie Matthews | 5.00 |
| Crystal Horton | 5.00 |
| Eva Downey | 5.00 |
| A member of the church | 5.00 |

What is the Assembly in Hebrews 10:25?

By Harold Turner

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25)

This scripture has aroused at least two important questions: To what assembling does the writer make reference? and, to what approaching day does the writer make reference?

There have been three days suggested for consideration: the first day of the week worship assembly; the day of the destruction of Jerusalem; and the day of Christ's second coming.

Some have associated Hebrews 10:25 with Matthew 24:31 and 2 Thessalonians 2:2. This association is based upon the use of the Greek word 'Episunagoge', which is used in these three passages. This association leads to the conclusion that the assembling or gathering is at the second coming of Christ, as Matthew would show: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." However, we must keep in mind that the literal meaning of 'episunagoge' is: an assembling together, or a gathering together. There isn't the slightest implication that the use of this word demands the same assembling or gathering.

It might be noted that in Matthew 24:31 the gathering together is done by the angels: "They shall gather together his elect." And in Hebrews 10:25 these are admonished to "Not forsake the assembling of themselves together." This assembling is something these Christians were to do themselves. This denotes a clear distinction between these two passages.

Another point that may help us to distinguish the assembly and the day in Hebrews 10:25 is in the statement, "as the manner of some is." "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is..." As the manner of some is what? Obviously some were forsaking the assembling together. The word, manner, is translated from the Greek word, Ethos, and is defined by Vines as: "a habit, custom (akin to the verb etho, to be accustomed), is always translated "custom in the R.V." The word, forsaking is translated from the Greek word, enkataleipo, defined as: to leave down in. The word suggests a negligence in steadfastness. The Hebrew Christians were not to leave down in the assembling of themselves together, as the habit, or custom, of some. The assembling was some gathering that was at that time, and had been taking place

prior to that time. Since some at that time had the habit of forsaking this assembling, we can rule out the idea of this assembly, or gathering being associated with the second coming of Christ.

Various scriptures show that Christians did assembly together upon the first day of the week for worship. In 1 Cor. 11:18, 20 we have these two expressions: "When ye come together in the church." and "When ye come together therefore into one place." Both references are used in regards to their coming together to break bread. This is also seen in Acts 20:7: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..." Also in Acts 11:26 Barnabas and Saul for "a whole year they assembled themselves with the church..." Too, in James 2:2, "For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring..."

From the above we know that there was an assembly of the church upon the first day of the week, where they gathered together to break bread and worship God. Hebrews 10:25 speaks of an assembly that Christians were not to grow lax in keeping, and were warned not to follow the manner or habit some had in forsaking this assembly.

When Christ returns there will be many that will desire to forsake the gathering. But every person will stand before the Lord and be judged. This day cannot be forsaken nor avoided. We may forsake the assembling of ourselves together for worship, but we will not forsake the assembly at the judgment. The writer of Hebrews continues (10:26-31) to show that this negligent attitude toward the worship of our God is a most serious practice. May God help us to be steadfast, unmoveable in our service to the Lord. And as we see the day (first day of the week) approaching, may we encourage others not to be negligent in worship.

