

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Second Class Postage Paid At Mammoth Spring, Ark.

Volume 13

Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554

September 1979

Number 22

One Thing Lacking

By Lavern Stewart

If you were asked to name one thing most needful among God's children, what would you name? I would name ZEAL. It was a lack of zeal that was the undoing of the brethren at Laodicea. Of them Jesus said, "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spue thee out of my mouth . . . As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." (Revelation 3:14-19.)

Zeal means, "eager interest and enthusiasm, ardent endeavor or devotion." Webster further says it means "fervor." Concerning fervor, Paul said, "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." (Rom. 12:11.) We are told in Titus 2:14, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Zeal will go far in causing a man to propagate a cause he believes to be right. Too, his zeal will provoke others. In 2 Cor. 9:2 Paul said, "For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very man."

We need not be afraid of being TOO zealous for the Lord. Even God's wrath can be turned by zeal. Notice Numbers 25:11-13, "Phineas, . . . hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them. Behold I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God."

"To work out our life's problems we need to add love, subtract hate, multiply good, and divide between truth and error."

Prove All Things

By W. L. Totty

"You go your way, and I'll go mine; and we will all get along together" is the idea of the most of the religious world today. However, such an idea is not taught in the word of God.

The apostle Paul, writing to the church at Thessalonica, said we are to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good." (1 Thess. 5:21.) There are some things to be accepted as good and some to be rejected as being evil.

According to Webster, to prove means to try, to ascertain, by an experiment or be a standard; to test; to know by trial; to evince, establish or ascertain, by argument, testimony, or other evidences; to ascertain or establish the genuineness or validity of.

In I John 4:1, the apostle John wrote, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." I cannot think of any other age when there were more false prophets than there are in our age. Just about every day one reads in the news media about some new cult that has arisen; and it is imperative that we try them, put them to test, by the only standard for proving the genuineness of the various religions. The Bible, the word of God, is the only standard to which we may go in order to ascertain whether these various doctrines and theories are the truth of God and thus to be accepted by mankind.

We often are reprimanded these days for using argumentation in setting about to "prove all things"; but our Lord Jesus Christ, when he was about his Father's business here on earth, was found in the temple amidst the doctors of the law, "both hearing them, and asking them questions." (Luke 2:46.) We are also told that the apostle Paul, when he was in Thessalonica, "three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures." (Acts 17:2.) Some of Webster's definitions of the meaning of the transitive verb "reason" are, "to discuss or present the reasons for or against; to debate; argue; to explain,

support, justify, etc., by adducing reasons." At Corinth Paul "reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath" (Acts 18:4); and while he was in Athens, it is said of him: "therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him." (Acts 17:17.) So, we see there is nothing wrong with contradicting others' views and disputing with them when one can adduce biblical reasons for disagreement.

Of course, Paul also encountered some who did not want to hear the truth; for instance, "as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come", when Felix sent him away and said he would hear him again when he had a more convenient season. (Acts 24:25.) Whether or not Felix ever found a convenient season to listen to reason, we are not told. Even though he brought Paul into his presence often, the Bible says that on those occasions he was hoping for a bribe. We have too many people today who are like Felix in that they are looking for a more convenient season to "prove all things." They are not ready yet to "hold fast to that which is good."

Since Paul labored throughout his ministry to "reason" with both the Jews and the Gentiles, we should feel no shame to be found debating the cause of Christ with our religious neighbors. Paul told us to be imitators, or followers, of him (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17); and if we are too fainthearted to follow him in all things, as he followed Christ (1 Cor. 11:1), then we cannot be Christ's followers.

Jesus himself used this method to verify the genuineness of his authority. He called the attention of the Jews to the fact that it was written in their law that the testimony of two men is true (John 8:17; Deut. 17:6) and then made an argument based upon that law: "I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." (John 8:18.)

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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EDITORS: Erwin Cowen
and Harold Turner

CONTRIBUTIONS

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"Try to obtain all the facts before forming or expressing an opinion."

"Patience is the ability to idle your motor when you feel like stripping your gears."

"The one man who is worse than a quitter is the man who is afraid to begin."

"Great opportunities come to those who make the most of small ones."

"Don't think your Bible is dry inside because it is dusty outside."

"It is impossible to have a real hope of heaven and be deeply engrossed in the pleasures of earth."

Contacting The Blood

By Harold Turner

One of the most shocking experiences of life is when one comes face to face with the reality that he is guilty of sin before God. Such was the experience Paul encountered on his journey to Damascus (Acts 9:1-11). This was an experience that caused Paul to see himself as "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," and as the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:13,15).

One may not become greatly alarmed about his wrong doing until he clearly sees what his sins have done and are doing. Isaiah shows that sins erect a barrier between man and God, and that they cause God to hide his face from us that he will not hear us (Isa. 59:2). In Rom. 5:12 Paul shows the seriousness of sin by saying, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Sin does not enrich life to make it better, rather it robs us of the fullness of life, and brings death.

But the real seriousness of our sins is pictured at the judgment scene. Some day we are going to give an account for our sins. No one will escape the judgment. In 2 Cor. 5:10 Paul wrote, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he that done, whether it be good or bad." "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:15.) "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." (Rev. 21:8.) Paul assures us that the wages of sin is death. (Rom. 6:23). Sin must be accounted for.

When we face God in judgment our destiny will not be determined by placing our good deeds in one side of a balance and our evil deeds in the other, and if the good out weighs the bad we will be saved. Jesus shows that this is not the basis in Matt. 7:21-23. He shows that only those who do God's will are going to be saved eternally. In 2 Thess. 1:7-9 Paul shows that Jesus will take vengeance on all that obey not the gospel. The Bible assures us that "There is none righteous, no, not one: . . . there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Rom. 3:10,12.) "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23.) If we are depending on our own goodness to get us to heaven, we have no hope at all.

It would be sad indeed if the Bible only announced our sinful, condemned condition, and did not show us how we could be delivered from this situation. The gospel shows us that there is hope, and a way by which we can be saved. In 1 Tim 2:4 the Bible assures us that God wants all to be saved. Too, in Rom. 5:6-9 Paul wrote, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly . . . God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being not justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him . . ." This shows that we were helpless to save ourselves apart from Christ. Our only hope depended upon action from God. It was "Not by works or righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us . . ." (Titus 3:5.) And in Eph. 4:4,5 Paul said, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved:).

Our sins demanded that a price be paid, and Jesus paid that price with his own blood. Our salvation depends upon the blood of Christ, and without it we have no hope. In 1 Peter 1:18,19, Peter said, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The idea of redemption is that of purchasing a slave and giving him freedom. We were enslaved to sin (Rom 6:16-20). The blood not only redeems us, but provides us forgiveness as well. In Eph. 1:7 Paul said, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." In Rev. 1:5 John wrote that Jesus, "washed us from our sins in his own blood." These passages, along with many others (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9:22, 1 John 1:7; Heb. 9:14; Rom. 5:9) show that our salvation from sin depends upon the blood of Christ. Just as we must contact some cleansing agent to cleanse our physical body, we must also contact the only cleansing agent, the blood of Christ, to cleanse our soul from the filth of sin.

Since the cleansing of our soul depends upon its being washed in the blood of Christ, how is this done? There is obviously something that one must do to contact the blood. In 1 Peter 1:22, Peter said, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth . . ." And, in Rom.

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Contacting The Blood (Cont.)

6:17-18, Paul said, "But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." These passages suggest some action on the part of man before the blood is applied to purify the soul.

In Rom. 6:3 Paul shows us the point of contact with the blood. He said, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" We are baptized into the death of Christ. In John 19:33-34 we learn that his blood was shed in his death. Since his blood was shed in his death, and we are baptized into his death, it is in the act of baptism that we come in contact with blood. In Matt. 26:28 Jesus said that his blood was shed "for the remission of sins." In Acts 2:38 men were commanded to be baptized "for the remission of sins." Remission of sins is in the blood, and remission of sins is in baptism. How can this be? We are baptized into the death of Christ where the blood was shed for the remission of sins. Too, in Rev. 1:5 we are told that Jesus washes us from our sins in his own blood. And in Acts 22:16 Saul was told to be baptized to wash away his sins. The blood washes away sins, and baptism washes away sins. How can this be? We are baptized into the death of Christ, where the blood that washes away our sins, was shed.

Too, it might be observed that in Rom. 6:3 Paul said, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ . . . "We are baptized into Christ, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1:7.) Redemption and forgiveness are in Christ, and we are baptized into Christ. This, too, shows that we contact the redemptive blood when we are baptized into Christ.

Another Scripture that shows where one contacts the blood is in Colossians 2:11-13. Here Paul wrote, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." In the first part of this reading Paul speaks about the circumcision of Christ, which is the operation that cuts off the old sinful man. He then shows where this operation takes place, in baptism. And then shows that this operation accomplished the forgiveness of all

trespasses. The operation of God involves applying the blood to wash away our sins, and it takes place when we are buried into the death of Christ by baptism.

The above Scripture (Col. 2:12) shows that baptism is an action of faith. We are buried by faith in view of the promise of God to remove our sins. Baptism is not an act by which one earns or merits salvation, but is rather the expression of one's faith in the blood of Christ to save him. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . ." Mark 16:16

Apart from the blood of Christ every person stands separated from God, and some day each one will have to face the judgment and answer for himself. Since man is helpless to save himself, he must look to Christ for his salvation. Jesus willingly offered his blood to purchase all who will accept his sacrifice. He has clearly revealed, through the gospel, how man may be washed in the blood. The point of contact is baptism. We are baptized into his death where the blood was shed; the blood washes away our sins, and we are raised to walk in a newness of life. The way has been provided, and the decision is left to each of us. To reject the blood is to reject the only hope of salvation. What will your decision be?

"A successful man is one who has tried, not cried; who has worked, not dodged; who has shouldered responsibility, not evaded it; who has gotten under the burden instead of standing off, looking on and giving advice."

"The foolish and the dead never change their opinion!"

"Don't think your Bible is dry inside because it is dusty outside."

"Great opportunities come to those who make the most of small ones."

"Keep busy, the mind you save may be your own."

"The people who think they are ahead of the times are merely off the track."

"No one can be caught in places he does not visit."

"Opportunity does not batter the door off the hinges when it knocks."

"The greatest waste in the world is the difference in what we are and in what we could become."

Communications

By Ted Knight

In our previous article we discussed the wisdom of good communications between the leadership and the membership of the church. It was pointed out that there must be effort put forth by all concerned in order to achieve and maintain proper communications.

In this article we will discuss the value of good communications between the elders and deacons of the church. It has been said that the church will grow only if it is led as it should be. In order for this to be done there must exist a spirit of cooperation and desire for progress on the part of the elders and deacons.

Quite often deacons and forgotten men in the Lord's church. They are asked to serve in that office but seldom are given specific duties and responsibilities to fulfill. They become deacons in name only. Such is a tragedy because there is a critical need for men who meet the qualifications given by the Holy Spirit, to serve, wait upon, and minister as directed in the New Testament.

There are some misconceptions concerning the work of deacons. Some would have us believe that the Bible teaches that elders are to oversee the spiritual matters of the church while the deacons are in charge of all other matters. The word of God teaches no such thing. Some deacons resent elders making almost any decision without first consulting them. Again, there is no scriptural basis for such an argument.

Without resorting to a lengthy discussing of the work of deacons, let it be said simply that they are servants, ministers, helpers who assist the elders in doing their work that God wants done. In order to do this work effectively they must be kept abreast of the plans and programs of work in which they are expected to be involved. There are many, many areas of service where the deacons may be of invaluable assistance to the elders in carrying out the duties resting upon them. Effectively using the deacons will free the elders to spend more time feeding the flock and shepherding God's sheep. This does not mean that elders are shirking their responsibilities at all, but that they are following God's plan for his work.

Give to the world the best you have and the best will come back to you."

Prove All Things (Cont.)

Too often we have people who would prefer to spend time speculation and theorizing about some principle of God's law instead of going to the Bible itself, our standard for judging all things pertaining to godliness, to establish the truth. But an opinion of one is no better than another; and yours is no better than mine. I have on occasions sat in Bible classes and listened to some scripture that is taken out of context to justify some peculiar idea that one may have. It has been said that one can prove anything by the Bible if one takes a passage out of context and isolates it; and I suppose that could very well be true. However, we must like the Bereans; we must receive the word that is taught us, then study to know whether it is true; i.e., put it to the test; try it; prove it.

One often hears criticism today about the preaching that is done in the church because, some say, "you are not answering the questions people are asking." That type critic seems to be searching for something other than salvation. He may be searching for justification, perhaps, by some philosophy of men, and could be classed with those described in II Timothy 3:5, as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" and is "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Usually, that type person is never content to make an earnest, systematic study of the Bible to actually learn the will of God. He is so "hung up" on his "questions" that he fails to realize that a systematic, persistent, daily study of the Bible will enable him to "prove all things." Such a person may avidly read everything he can find written by some theologian pertaining to his "questions" but does very little toward actually reading and studying the Bible itself.

As we "prove all things" let us then abandon that which proves to be of men and thus of the devil, and "hold fast that which is good."

"Spare the rod when Junior is willful and disobedient, and when he grows up he'll probably carry one."

"In dealing with their children, many parents give in because they give out."

"Marriage is like a small—they both grow with proper love and nourishment."

"There are no hopeless situations: there are only men who grow hopeless about them."

OUR ATTITUDE

By Terry Frizzell

We use the word "attitude" to describe our feelings toward things, and to refer to our disposition, our actions and reactions toward the problems of life.

We must not let things of this life, such as: poor health, old age, poverty, or family troubles cause us to form the wrong attitude.

We must form the proper attitude toward things of a religious nature. What is your attitude toward the truth? Do you love the truth? Are you ashamed of it? The apostle Paul said that he was not ashamed of the truth, and then gave his reason—"... it is the power of God unto salvation..." (Romans 1:16.) Are you willing to teach the truth to others? This is the responsibility of every Christian. You must have the proper attitude toward those who are lost.

What is your attitude toward error? Do you tolerate it? encourage it? or by contending for the truth contend against error? Jude 3 teaches us to contend earnestly for the truth. Do you defend those who teach error? We are to work to try to save them from their error 2 Tim. 2:26

Your attitude toward sin is also important. In 1 John 2:15 we are taught—"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." How can we love the world and the sin that is in the world and at the same time love God? Jesus said that we cannot do this Matt. 6:24. We are also taught in 1 Thess. 5:22 to "Abstain from all appearances of evil."

What is your attitude toward the work of the church? Is it, "let someone else do it, they can do it better than I, and they have more time?" Is it, "I want to do just as little as I can and still do just enough to get to heaven?" or do we have the attitude expressed by Paul in Rom. 1:15 where he said, "So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."

What is your attitude toward worship? Are you careless, indifferent, and only attend once in a while? Do you think of it only as a necessity so you can miss hell? Or do you have the attitude expressed by Psalms 122:1? "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord."

What is your attitude toward your brother? Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35.) Are you showing the world that you are a disciple

of Christ, or can the world see that you are not really what you say you are?

Now, what about your attitude toward your own soul? It is up to you to grow spiritually after you become a Christian. If you refuse to put forth the efforts to grow it is a sign that you do not care for your own soul.

Be careful of your attitude in this life, because it will determine your eternal destiny.

This cannot help but build better relations between elders and deacons and the entire church will be profited as a result.

Deacons, communicate with the elders. When given an assignment, do your best to fulfill that assignment as efficiently as possible. Be helpers to the elders. Your office is one of service, not oversight. If you have a complaint concerning the work, talk to the elders about it.

Elders and deacons talking and listening to one another will do a much better job of leading the church of God.

Elders, talk to the deacons. Assign specific duties to them and let them perform their work without interfering with them. Establish definite periods of time to meet with the deacons to discuss with them the work of the church and whether it is being efficiently taken care of. Ask for their suggestions and listen to their ideas. Encourage them to speak freely and offer suggestions to them about the work.

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS
JAN 10 1964