

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Volume 12

Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554

Second Class Postage Paid at Mammoth Spring, Ark.

January 1973

Number 25

"I Would Not Have Offered God's Word to Them"

"Down in the human heart
Crushed by the tempter
Feelings lie buried
That grace can restore."

THESE FEW WORDS, sung absent-mindedly by a hardened American Communist, were the turning point in his life. He was standing at the kitchen sink with his back to his wife, when she suddenly burst into loud weeping, and cried out, "I know there is a Jesus Christ, and I know He loves me." He turned to her with an oath and commanded her to be quiet.

They were disciplined Communist Party members who had gone to school to learn rioting and sabotage. They had turned their backs on all that was decent, had been jailed for openly defying the law and were working with youth groups to turn young people away from Christ.

But the power of the Spirit of God, which men cannot observe, was already at work. This woman began to read the Bible in secret. Even though it was the dead of winter in the state of New York, the urgency to repent and receive forgiveness was so great that she **INSISTED ON BREAKING THE RIVER ICE AND WAS BAPTIZED** in the freezing cold water. Four months later her husband repented and sought the same forgiveness.

I WOULD NEVER HAVE OFFERED GOD'S WORD TO THESE PEOPLE.

Four years ago my husband invited a loud, rough, coarse, vulgar man to the Sunday night service. This man was so profane and so violent that his fellow workers called him "Earthquake".

Exactly three weeks after this visit, "Earthquake" was baptized. He stopped his profanity immediately. He told us later that he had a headache for six weeks because he had stopped his daily drinking. But the remark that cut me to the heart was, "June, you people just don't know what you have here. You have the thing that the rest of the world is dying for and you don't even know it."

I WOULD NOT HAVE OFFERED GOD'S WORD TO THIS MAN.

A close friend told us why he became a Christian. He had married a lovely girl, after allowing her to believe he would

become a Christian in a short time. Deep in his heart he knew he was deceiving her. After their marriage he lived with the delusion that if he could make her sin, that would prove that her religion was only social and a shallow pretense in her life.

He began to drink, to gamble and to swear. He refused to attend worship with her and finally refused to take her in the car. He deliberately took a job far out in the woods to keep her away from church. But she found a way to worship and by walking two miles every Sunday she could catch a ride to services. She walked and carried her baby and never missed except during the deep snows.

Through all this trial she never reproached him, but treated him with love and warmth and kindness. Driven to desperation to prove her faith false, he began to stay out all night and to spend the food money for liquor. One night after a vicious brawl, he staggered into the house bruised and bleeding. She tenderly washed his cuts and bruises and wept over his battered face. And suddenly he knew! As sharp as a knife in his heart was the knowledge that there was a God and that his wife drew her strength from Him. It had never been a pretense with her, but a belief so strong that it gave her the courage to endure living with a devil for a husband.

With his tongue still furry in his mouth and the bruises dark and mottled upon his face, he dressed on Sunday morning to go to church with her. She showed no surprise. And all through the service God's gift of repentance was his and he could scarcely restrain himself until he could confess his belief, be baptized and receive full cleansing of his guilt.

I WOULD NEVER HAVE OFFERED GOD'S GIFT TO THIS MAN.

This is a lesson to me. Jesus said that He came to call sinners to repentance. Those who need His grace most are those who are sinful or FULL of sin. Only the Word of God can work in these dark hearts—pulling, prodding, hurting and bringing a full recognition of sin and an agonizing awareness of guilt. This suffering causes the sorrow which is

(Continued on Page 4)

What Is Happening In the Church?

I am convinced that the vast majority of members of the church are neither legalists nor liberals. Yet it is a fact that this great majority of brethren sometimes constitutes a "silent majority." When legalism ("anti-ism") threatened the church in the early 1950's, good men sat by in silence until it did untold harm to the body of Christ. Liberalism is now menacing the church and otherwise faithful brethren are sitting by in silence while it works its harm.

In order for men to be faithful to God, they must speak out boldly to challenge every false way. Keeping silence with the truth is sin! Faithful elders, preachers and members of the church must cease being a "silent majority" when the truth of God is mocked and begin to speak out for that truth!

There is an exclusiveness about truth. If a statement is true, its opposite is not true. Since the Word of God is truth, whatever is contrary to its revealed propositional truth is false—whether that contrary statement is made by a Hindu or a false brother. There is also an exclusiveness about the practice of truth. (Cf. II Cor. 6:14). Those who believe and know the truth cannot be in spiritual fellowship with error. We must be willing to practice truth as the people of God even if to do so is costly. Even if it sets one against family, old friends or once-faithful brethren.

In our time of disregard for truth, there are many among us who have ignored the fact that God requires us to be a separate people with regard to the truth and its practice. Liberal brethren are talking about possible grounds of fellowship with sectarians. Members of the church have been allowed to flaunt clear Bible teaching about divorce and remarriage. People who curse, drink, dance, dress immodestly and engage in dishonest businesses are allowed to retain membership in local churches. Every taught member of the Lord's church knows that such things are sinful, but they are allowed anyway! What is wrong?

For one thing, some Christians appear to be oblivious to what is going on in the church. With so many warnings being

(Continued on Page 2)

The 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 James E. Henley.

What Is Happening—(Cont.)

sounded against liberalism by faithful brethren, one wonders whether some brethren are not wilfully hiding their heads in the sand. Liberal brethren do not announce their false positions so as to call attention to themselves, but they can be recognized—frequently by what they DO NOT SAY. They will not take a stand for one faith, one church, one baptism, etc. They will not oppose denominationalism, instrumental music, etc. In a time when these issues are so crucial, any man who is unwilling to take a firm stand on them automatically makes himself suspect to faithful brethren!

But perhaps the primary problem in the church's struggle with liberalism is that of a half-converted and half-taught membership which does not love the Lord and His church enough. Nobody likes to have to take issue with people, but we must do so at times because of principles involved. I seriously wonder how many of us love the Lord and His church enough that we would be willing to risk ourselves for them. If there is anything in the world to which a child of God ought to feel such strong devotion, it should be Christ and His body! (Matt. 6:33).

That great "silent majority" in the church must quit keeping silence and (1) preach the Word in all its purity and simplicity, (2) live lives which are examples of the Gospel's power at work and (3) cry out against departures from the faith. May God grant us the courage to speak and live His truth!

—Rubel Shelly

"OUR DOUBTS are traitors... And make us lose the good we oft might win... By FEARING TO ATTEMPT.

—Shakespeare

I'm a Hard-Shelled Fundamentalist

A recent newspaper carried a column by Dick Kleiner, a Hollywood reporter, announcing the upcoming release of a new film entitled, "The Rebel Jesus." It purports to be the story of Jesus after his crucifixion. "It... advances the theory that He survived the cross, was healed, went back to his ministry and lived for years..." I am aware of the danger of hasty criticism of an unseen product, but if the new story is correct, "The Rebel Jesus" will out-blaspheme even the super-blasphemous "Superstar" and is companion, "Godspell."

Kleiner begins his article by saying, "There's bound to be some angry words from some nervous pulpits when 'The Rebel Jesus' is released." I can't speak for my pulpit, but for myself I can say that it indeed makes me angry to see such profane and intellectually bankrupt commercialization of the life of my Lord, the Son of God. If Kleiner is suggesting by "nervous pulpits" that preachers will fear the effects the film will have on believers, he can forget it. Houston and Buchanan, producers of the film, should be nervous, however, for tampering with inspired history.

Buchanan predicts, "Hard-shelled fundamentalists will be offended, because we differ from what is in the Bible." That makes me a "hard-shelled fundamentalist," a rather prejudicial label, to say the least. It offends me because it offends my Lord.

"It's all our own story, although lots of people have postulated the thesis that Jesus survived the cross," Buchanan admitted. Yes, and had they done their homework, they would know that the "swoon" theory (that Jesus did not die, but only "swooned" on the cross), invented a number of years ago by infidels to explain the resurrection accounts, has been abandoned by most of them long since. It required more faith than the resurrection.

Maybe I am being a bit too hard on Buchanan and Houston. After all, what can one expect from men who have never produced anything more artistic than exploitation films of hoodlums and motorcycle gangs? Excellent qualifications for a film about our Lord, agreed?

Dub McClish

—VOICE FROM THE PEW—

Now I sit me down to sleep
The sermon's long and subject deep.
If he should quit before I wake,
Somebody give me a little shake.

Selected

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ—No. 2

"of that we all are witnesses"
(Acts 2:32)

In the first article it was shown that the empty tomb is a proof that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is historical. This article will deal with the second proof: WITNESSES. As we say "Seeing is believing." As C. T. Craig said, "The early Christians did not believe in the resurrection of Christ because they could not find his dead body. They believed because they did find a living Christ."¹ This was not true for all the disciples, but it was certainly true for some.

Mary Magdalene was the first to see him. She thought he was the gardener; but when he said her name, she cried, "Master." That night Jesus appeared to several disciples who were behind locked doors, since they were afraid of the Jews. Thomas was not with them, but the same thing happened eight days later, and then Thomas believed. Paul summed up this argument by saying, "he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles." (1 Cor. 15:4-7) The reason apostolic preaching did not use the women's testimony for evidence is that "outside Christian circles, the evidence of women would have been dismissed as of little value."²

One other interesting point that arises in this discussion is the nature of Jesus' resurrected body. He apparently appeared at will. He was not limited by normal material bounds, because the apostles were behind locked doors when he appeared to them. Paul explains this as follows: "So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable... It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Cor. 15:42-44) His body had a different nature, as ours will also. Most important though is that it was "imperishable." When Lazarus was raised from the dead, his body was not changed. Lazarus had to die again. But "Christ being raised from the dead will never die again." (Rom. 6:9)

I believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ into an imperishable form, because there were witnesses.

¹ Quoted by F. F. Bruce, THE SPREADING FLAME. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), p. 62.

² IBID., p. 63.

Steve Williams

The Alien Sinner and His Prayers

Glynn V. Purdy

MODERN PRACTICE

In Most religions today, the alien sinner is instructed in so many words, to "pray through". Therefore he is often brought to what was called the mourner's bench in former years. There he is on his own to plead with God to accept his prayer for obedience! How sad, for the sinner to plead with God to save him, when God has told him what to do to be saved! How sad, the preacher is going to the God of heaven with a message from the sinner, when God told him to go to the sinner with the Gospel of salvation! The wisdom of men still versus the wisdom of God, I Cor. 1:18-28.

IF THE ALIEN SINNER IS TO PRAY, FOR WHAT SHOULD HE PRAY?

Not for sanctification; God's word obeyed will sanctify him, Jo. 17:17. Not for repentance; God commands him to repent, Acts 17:30. Not for God to be willing to save him, God is willing to save all men, 2 Pet. 3:9. Not for mercy; for man must forsake his sins for mercy, Prov. 28:13. Not to purify his heart; the heart is purified by obedient faith, Acts 15:9. Not for religion; this is what man does, James 1:27. Not for God to accept him; for God accepts all who work righteousness, Acts 10:34-35 and righteousness is revealed in the Gospel of Christ, Rom. 1:16-17. Not for remission of sins; for God says that he is to repent and be baptized for this, Acts 2:38. Not to be made clean; for he is made clean by the word of God, John 15:3. Not for pardon; for he must forsake his wicked ways for this, Isa. 55:7. Not for God to send saving power; for the Gospel of Christ is this saving power, Rom. 1:16. Not for conversion; for the law of the Lord converts the soul, Ps. 19:7. Not for the new birth; for he is conceived by the Gospel, I Cor. 4:15 and baptized in water to rise into the new life, Rom. 6:3-5. Not for salvation; for this comes by hearing the words of God, Acts 11:14, James 1:21. Not for faith; for faith comes from hearing the word of God, Rom. 10:17. Not for God to love him; for God does love him, John 3:16. Not for grace; for grace has appeared to all men through God's word, teaching them what to do, Titus 2:11-12. Not for the Holy Spirit; for the world can not receive him, John 14:16-17. Not for God to be reconciled to him; for he is to be reconciled to God, 2 Cor. 5:20. Not for understanding; for understanding comes from God's word, Ps. 119:130. Not for light, for light also

What Is Evaluation?

1. When you evaluate anything, you make an appraisal of its merit or value. This appraisal is made before you act.

2. Evaluation is just as necessary as though preparation, or presentation.

(THE TEACHER ASKS)

1. Regarding the pupils: (A) Did they learn? (B) What were their reactions? (C) Were they interested? (D) Did they take part eagerly? (E) Did they ask questions? (F) Did their answers to my questions reveal they were learning? (G) Are they growing spiritually?

2. Regarding the presentation: (A) Was the lesson plan correct? (B) Were the parts of the plan in the right proportion? (C) Was the class room, or the environment, conducive to learning? (D) Were my methods the right ones?

3. How about Me? (A) Did I work as hard as I should have worked on that lesson? (B) What did I leave undone? (C) What did I do that I should not have done? (D) Was the lesson the most effective one I ever taught? If so WHY? (E) What can I do to make my teaching more effective;

Thus does the growing teacher evaluate. (1) the pupil (2) the lesson (3) SELF.

comes from God's word, Ps. 119:130. Not much left is there? So should the alien sinner pray at all?

WHO SHOULD NOT PRAY?

Paul had prayed and fasted for three days and nights, after Christ told him (Acts 9:9-11; Acts 9:6) what he should do. A preacher was to tell him what to do to be saved. So when the preacher whom God sent, found him praying, he told him to "arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins", Acts 22:16. He needed to obey, not pray. God "heareth not sinners, but if any man be a worshipper of God and doeth his will, him he heareth", John 9:31. God is far from the wicked, but hears the prayers of the righteous, Prov. 15:39. The prayers and sacrifices of the wicked are abomination to God, Prov. 15:8 & 28:9. Those who regard iniquity in the heart, God will not hear Ps. 66:18. The ONLY record we have of God answering the prayer of an alien sinner was to put him in touch with a man who would tell him what to do to be saved. To this extent this is true today. If a person is honest and sincere in his search for salvation no doubt God will allow him to read or hear the truth. Read Acts 10 & 11 for how God handled the case of a sincere man. Prayer is not, never has been and never will be, a substitute for obedience, neither is ignorance. Then why not learn and obey God's law and be saved!

Christians Should Be Optimistic

By M. Norvel Young

Try this experiment: "Take a sheet of paper and put a line down the center of it. On the top left side write "Negative" and on the top right side write "Positive." Then make a log of your topics of conversation for a week's time. You will help yourself discover whether you are spreading optimism or pessimism. Check each conversation and keep a box score on yourself. Are you the one in a group that harps on the negative? Are you the one who concentrates on the ugly, the false, the impure, the things of ill repute?

The gospel is "Good News." Christ came to bring hope, light, immortality, and abundant life.

Joy characterized the disciples after the resurrection. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice. Let your forbearance be known unto all men," Paul exhorted.

Paul said "the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit," (Rom. 14:17). Jesus said, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full," (John. 16:24). "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joys may be in you, and that your joy may be full," (John 15:11). Even Jesus' walk to the cross was "for the joy that was set before him," (Heb. 12:2).

Of course there is room for pointing out error and sin, but the real Christian is basically confident that God loves him and has saved him and those who trust and obey him. He looks even at what is wrong in a spirit of hope. He sees the cancer of sin but he knows that the Great Physician can cure this disease.

Jesus taught that even those who mourn should be happy, for they "shall be comforted." He encouraged those persecuted for righteousness' sake to be happy "because theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He taught those who are falsely accused on account of him to rejoice and be glad "for great is your reward in heaven." I could go on and on with scriptures which teach that Christians should be optimistic. They should encourage one another to be ready to do good at every opportunity.

In a time when the media bring us every hour so much pessimistic news, we need to emphasize the basic optimism of the gospel of Christ. It is so much easier to describe what is wrong with the church or with the world than it is to prescribe the solution. It is so much easier to find fault than to help cure the fault. Negative criticism alone is never enough. To build a building or a city or a church or a single

(Continued on Page 4)

Christians Should Be (Cont.)

life requires confident hope. To do it well requires enthusiasm

In listening to sermons, lectures and in reading articles in journals and bulletins, I am impressed with how prone we are to find fault and how slow we are to commend and encourage. Some recent studies in learning response indicate that students learn more rapidly when they are commended for their successes than when they are penalized for their failures. Yet in education we have traditionally concentrated on penalizing the students who made a poor showing on their tests rather than commending them on the learning that had taken place.

I think we could have learned this principle from Jesus and Paul. The penalty is always there for those who disobey but the stress is on the love and joy which can be ours in Christ. The Christians in Corinth were terribly lacking in so many virtues yet Paul could thank God "always" for them because of the grace of God which had been given them in Christ. He could say some encouraging things in spite of their errors and weaknesses. His optimism was not rooted in their native goodness but in the goodness and power of God.

Real joy comes from a right relationship with God through Christ, the relationship of father and child. When we know we are truly loved by God and that Christ is our ever-present Helper, we will find a sense of security and deep joy.

Begin today to exude more optimism in your home, in your work, and in your church. Talk and write with more commendation for what you find that is good. This will not erase the bad, but it will enable you to withstand it better and to combat it. Morale is a big factor in the effectiveness of an army or a church or a family. Satan doesn't mind our pointing to sin, if we do it exclusively and offer no visible solution. He knows that parents who do no more than nag at their children will not succeed in helping them overcome evil. He knows that preachers who are content to concentrate on what is wrong without encouraging the true and the good and the lovely will discourage a church's growth. The devil must be resisted with the gospel. Mere criticism will not deter him. He can use it to spread discouragement and despair. The thing he fears most is the impact of an optimistic enthusiastic person who "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Such a person not only sees the problem of sin in human life, but he gets involved in helping provide the solution.

Thousands of Christians and hundreds of churches are discouraged today. They are weak and they know a lot about what is wrong with the world and with

My Job and I

- A. I am a worker for the Lord 1.
the Lord. Am I doing the work for which I am best fitted?
- B. My Evaluation of My Spiritual Qualifications
 2. Am I thoroughly committed to the Christian work entrusted to me, willing to make the sacrifices necessary for success?
 3. Am I an active, supporting member of my local Congregation?
 4. In my home life am I a christian, as shown in my relationship with the members of my family?
 5. In public are my dress, words, actions, and general behavior such as to bring honor to my Lord?
- C. My evaluation of my efforts.
 6. Do I devote at least one hour to my work each week, not counting Sunday or the time given to preparation for Sunday?
 7. Am I always fully prepared for my work on Sunday?
 8. Am I present at least 15 minutes before Bible class time?
 9. Do I make it a rule to begin and stop on time in Bible Class?
 10. Am I satisfied that I am doing my best in the work of a Bible Class Teacher?

CONTRIBUTIONS

R. F. Lawyer	\$5.00
O. T. Russell	2.00
Agnos Church of Christ	5.00
Viola Church of Christ	5.00
Elizabeth Church of Christ	5.00
Sturkie Church of Christ	5.00
Georgie Ragsdale	5.00
Dellhalf Church of Christ	5.00
Billy Joe Gooden	3.00
Eva Downey	3.00
Sitka Church of Christ	5.00

themselves. Just telling them over and over how bad they are and how evil the times are will not rejuvenate them. They need men and women who are filled with the love of God to share their hope with them. They need more encouragement, more inspiration, more optimistic hope.

Shall you and I try to build up their morale? Many are surrendering because they become so despondent. Giving them more bad news, even if true, is not likely to solve their problem.

Let's encourage them as Paul did the early Christians, assuring them that if they are steadfast, immovable, and abound in the work of the Lord their labor is not in vain.

I Would Not Have (Cont.)

followed by the repentance that must precede forgiveness.

Do you remember resisting the call of God with all your strength? Can you recall the agony in your heart before you whispered, "Yes, I'm coming, I'm coming"? And do you remember the tremendous relief after your confession of faith and baptism, as the weight of guilt and disobedience lifted from your soul? You experienced the healing, soothing, loving, forgiving presence of God, and the certain knowledge that you belonged to Him.

It is at this point that the need to share this forgiveness with others is so great.

And it is here that we must learn that we are only the sowers of the seed and that it is God's power, not our power, that accomplishes miracles of changing hearts and lives.

He gives the gift of repentance. WE CANNOT GIVE THIS GIFT, NOR CAN WE DECIDE WHO IS WORTHY TO RECEIVE IT BECAUSE WE CANNOT KNOW THE HEARTS OF OTHER MEN.

But we do know the heart of God, as Paul wrote, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (II Corinthians 4:6, 7).

by June Nichols
from the "Christian Woman" 1965

—A Prayer—

Give me a task too big,
Too hard for human hands.
Then I shall come at length
To lean on Thee;
And leaning, find my strength.
—Wilbur Humphrey Fowler

Rosa Ragsdale
Marmoth Springs, Arkansas