

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Second Class Postage Paid at Mammoth Spring, Ark.

Volume 11

Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554

December 1970

Number 12

Great Decision

By Clovis Ragsdale

The making of a decision, especially the right decision, is one of the most important subjects that can engage our attention. As we observe people with their problems and experiences, the more we are impressed with the necessity of making decisions and making them promptly. The Bible records many instances of men who made momentous decisions. Some of these decisions were wrong ones. When Lot chose to pitch his tents toward Sodom, Gen. 3:11, he chose what seemed at the time to be the best decision. It proved to be the opposite. He was able to escape from this decision with only a part of his family intact. The decision of Demas to forsake Paul because of his love for the present world is an example of a wrong decision. 2 Tim. 4:10. Yet with these and many other examples of unwise decisions people go on making wrong decisions which endanger their souls for time and eternity.

Not all the decisions found in the Bible were wrong decisions. When Moses chose to suffer afflictions with his people rather than to enjoy the pleasures of Pharaoh's courts, he earned the respect of all. The decision of the prodigal son to return to his father's house was a wise decision. The decision of Joshua, as recorded in Joshua 24:14, is a decision that we all have to make in the sense we choose whether we will serve God or Satan. The great leader of Israel was concerned about the people who showed signs of turning from God and serving idols. One day he called the people together and asked to make a decision. "Choose ye this day whom ye shall serve". Joshua went on to say that as for me and my house, we shall serve Jehovah.

All will agree that Joshua made the right decision, but many who read this article cannot say as did Joshua that they have chosen to serve the Lord. To you who are putting off making the decision to serve your Lord, I urge you not to put off making this important decision any longer. Life is too uncertain to risk putting off that which we know must be done in order to have a hope for that home in Heaven, and for spending eternity with the Savior.

Many have passed into eternity unprepared to face the judgment because

(Cont. on page 4)

Just Roll With The Punch

By Reuel Lemmons, Editor
Firm Foundation

We heard a preacher say the other day that he did not intend to quit preaching because he had learned to "just roll with the punch!"

We think we understood what he meant. Every religious group is lamenting the number of preachers who are turning to secular profession. Alarming figures are filtering down. Priests are quitting by the thousands. Denominational "pastors" are leaving in droves. Churches of Christ are losing them too.

We do not believe they are quitting because the work is too hard and demanding. Preachers are not afraid of hard work and long hours. Many of them do a full day's work after most folks have punched the time clock and gone home. That's not it.

A few, but not many, may be forced into it by financial circumstances. Some love money like other folks do. Some have large families with great needs to supply. Any man with the brains and education that most preachers have to have to preach for the brethren can make more money at most anything else. But this is not the primary reason why they quit.

Most all who quit the pulpit do so because they are disturbed and discouraged. They are a study in frustration itself. Try as they may they can see no satisfaction in what they are doing. They try to change people. And all people know the Bible demands change. But there is little or no change. They try to enthuse but there is little enthusiasm. They try to inspire loyalty to the Lord and to the church, and come up with a fairly good Sunday morning attendance at church — when the fish aren't biting.

This is not to say that preachers are not to blame. Some don't love the people and their actions and sermons show it. Some don't study. Some don't exercise leadership that inspires. The preachers are human and they make human mistakes. Some are plain lazy. Usually they are not able to see their own faults.

But churches could help with a lot of these problems if they would. Some church members want the preacher to be a baby-sitter with the weak members. Some don't like his Bible class and others don't like the way his wife dresses. Some

go to the hospital and are piqued because he did not come to hold their hand. The tale of estrangement is endless on both sides.

There are a lot of things that the churches do, and that churches want preachers to do, that had just as well be left undone. "Made-work" does not grow a strong church, and "preachers chores" do not grow strong preachers. We say the preacher is a minister. Minister of what? Minister to whom? Elders are supposed to be shepherds of the sheep. Preachers would give their lives to preaching the gospel but most of them despise "church work." After all when you believe that men have eternal souls that are lost in sin, and that only the gospel can save them, there isn't much inspiration in running the mimeograph.

We suppose some quit because they were in the wrong pew in the first place. Unless one is fully converted himself, and dedicated almost beyond understanding, he can hardly do a good job as a preacher. C. R. Nichol once told us preacher boys in A.C.C., "Boys, if you can do anything else in the world, don't preach. He was right. Unless there is laid on a heart an unbearable burden for lost souls he is ill fitted for the task of wrestling the Devil for them.

Churches should be mindful of the preachers' problems and help them. Members may not like the preacher personally, and they may prefer to listen to someone else, but this preacher happens to be doing the preaching right now. If he is true to the book, a congregation can overlook a lot of other faults. A preacher needs to know that the people are behind him. He needs to know, if you are going to put him in the place of a preacher, that you will bring some lost souls for him to try to convert. Many preachers quit because it is plain that the membership has quit first. A draggy, disinterested, lazy membership is fully as bad as a draggy, disinterested, lazy preacher.

The command of the Holy Spirit to a gospel preacher is to "preach the word." Preachers should be content to do that. If the word won't straighten out people and things the preacher can't. When one has

(Cont. on page 4)

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: Clovis Ragsdale
and James E. Henley.

What Is The Worship

PREACHING

In the first congregation of the Lord's church, Acts 2, we learn that they "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine", which means that they had to KNOW the "apostles' doctrine", Acts 2:42. When another congregation of the Lord's church met to worship "Paul preached unto them", Acts 20:7. So in the Church of Christ today there is PREACHING from the "apostles' doctrine", now written in the New Testament. In most congregations there is a "sermon" each Sunday, in the A.M. and P.M. On a week night, mostly Wednesday night, there is BIBLE STUDY, often divided into classes where there is a verse by verse study of the Bible. Each Sunday morning before the worship hour, there is a study period, again by age groups, where each is taught the Bible on the proper level of understanding. Often at night on Sunday also, there is a study period of classes before the worship hour. The Bible, God's will, is taught at every opportunity to all ages in the Church of Christ. You are invited to study with us at any time.

SINGING

Singing praises to God is a PART of worship to him. This you will find in the Church of Christ. The WHOLE congregation sings as EACH is instructed to SING, Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16. If you worship God, no "choir" can any more sing FOR you than they can be baptized for you, or contribute, or pray for you. So in the Church of Christ EACH obeys the commands of his Lord as we are taught that NO ONE else can do it for us. When you visit, YOU are invited to sing

(Cont. on page 3)

"Ye Shall Receive Power"

When some who claim the power to work miracles are asked to work miracles, they sometimes say: "I never said that I could work miracles. I said that Jesus is the same today as he was yesterday and that his life is in me. Therefore, under his direction and control, my members are but instruments for his continuing work. Thus it is not out from me as a source but through me as a vessel."

We recognize that the miracle workers in the Bible were but instruments in the hands of God. Thus Peter said that it was not through his own power or godliness but through the power of God that the miracles were wrought. However, the instrument had the power even through the power was from God. For Jesus had told the apostles: "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). "And many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (Acts 2:43). Although the miraculous gifts were from God they were gifts which were gifts given unto men. Thus if men today have miraculous gifts, they have power to work miracles. They cannot excuse their failures by saying that they do not have the power, and that they do not claim to work miracles.

Jesus Christ is the same today, yesterday and forever (Heb. 13:8). However, this does not mean that he must grant miraculous power to men today because he granted it to them in the first century. Enoch walked with God and he did not see death (Heb. 11:5), but this does not mean that it is not appointed unto us to die. God created the first man and woman by miracles but he perpetuates the human race through natural law. God revealed and confirmed the gospel through miracles but he perpetuates the word of truth through the seed-line; the spiritual seed, the word of God. Jesus Christ was on earth in the first century but he is not born of a virgin

each generation, nor does each generation see him in his personal ministry, and his resurrection. The apostles and prophets were set in the foundation of the church in the first century (Eph. 2:20-23), but they are not set in anew in every generation.

Our Savior today has the same attitude toward us. He is the same divine Son of God today that he was in the first century. This does not mean that we have the power which was given unto the apostles and the prophets. Even in the first century the sameness of Jesus did not mean that all were apostles, or prophets, or healers, or workers of other kinds of miracles. In fact, not all Christians in the first century had power to work miracles.

If the sameness of Jesus means that we have power to work miracles, we should be able to work the wide variety of miracles which Jesus wrought. Do they cure lepers, restore ears, withered hands, cure the halt and the maimed, walk on water, multiply loaves and fishes? Are their so-called healing miracles instantaneous? perfect? Are the diseases organic and not merely functional disorders? Can they be performed even when the sick person does not have faith? Are they public? Are they used to support truth instead of error? Do they require a special atmosphere? Are any of them miraculously delivered from jail?

The sameness of God does not mean that God does not reach different stages in his work for and with man. God's work for man's salvation culminated in Christ with the revelation and confirmation of the gospel. We today have that gospel and the hope which it brings into life. God does not have to send Christ each generation in order to make available to us the way of salvation. This faith has once for all been delivered unto the saints.

James D. Bales.

It is quite possible to work without results, but never will there be results without work.

Man's destiny is never determined by chance. It is determined by his choices all through life.

When opportunity knocks, about all some folks do is complain about the noise.

Thrift is common sense applied to spending.

CONTRIBUTIONS:

Ring Church of Christ	\$5.00
Viola Church of Christ	5.00
Mrs. F. C. Martin	3.00
Dellhalf Church of Christ	5.00
Agnos Church of Christ	5.00
Sturkie Church of Christ	5.00
Wheeling Church of Christ	5.00
Franklin Church of Christ	30.00
Elizabeth Church of Christ	5.00
Edrie Stephens	5.00
Eva Downey	3.00
Fred Conner	2.00

Some Things No Man Can Do

NO MAN can be saved without the gospel of Christ, for the gospel is the power of God to save man, Romans 1:16.

NO MAN can be saved by faith only, for the Bible teaches that man is NOT saved by faith ONLY, James 2:24

NO MAN can write a creed to govern the Lord's church for the Bible is all that is needed, II Tim. 3:16-17, or accepted, Gal. 1:8-9.

NO MAN has any authority concerning the Lord's church, for He has all authority, Matt. 28:18.

NO MAN can be saved out of the church, for all the saved are added to the church, Acts 2:47.

NO MAN can be saved out of the church for the same act which saves him puts him in Christ, or the church, Rom. 6:3-4, Mark 16:15-16, Eph. 1:22-23.

NO MAN can be saved without attending the services of the Lord's church, for he is commanded to NOT forsake the assembly, Heb. 10:25.

NO MAN can be saved without contributing to the Lord's cause upon the first day of the week, for he is commanded to do so, I Cor. 16:2.

NO MAN can be saved without eating the Lord's supper upon the first day of the week, for he is commanded to do so, I Cor. 11:23-29, Acts 20:7.

NO MAN can be saved by the law of Moses for it was fulfilled at the death of Christ and is not now valid, Col. 2:14, Gal. 3:16-28, Heb. 9:16-17.

NO MAN can preach a different gospel from the one Paul preached and not be condemned, Gal. 1:8-9.

NO MAN can be saved a different way from what the Bible teaches, for God is no respecter of persons, Acts 10:34-35.

NO MAN can be saved without being baptized, for baptism is one of the acts by which he is saved, I Peter 3:21.

NO MAN can be saved out of Christ, for all spiritual blessings are in Christ, Eph. 1:3.

NO MAN can go to heaven except he dies in Christ, and he cannot die in Christ unless he has entered Christ, Gal. 3:26-27, Rev. 14:13.

NO MAN can enter Christ unless he is baptized, for we are baptized into Christ, Rom. 6:3-4, Gal. 3:26-27.

NO MAN can be saved without the blood of Christ (I Pet. 1:18-19) and the blood was shed in his death and we are baptized into his death, Rom. 6:3.

NO MAN can pray his or any other man's alien sins away, for God commands that one must be baptized and "wash away" such sins, Acts 22:16.

NO MAN can have the complete assurance of salvation before death, for he can fall away at any time, Heb. 3:12, Matt. 10:22.

How They Did It

THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER

Due to the fact that Paul was the first preacher mentioned in the New Testament to have gone into Macedonia of Europe, we believe that the jailer knew nothing of Christ. We are to hear the Gospel, believe it, repent, confess Christ and then be baptized to become a Christian. So when this jailer asked, "Sirs what must I do to be saved?", Acts 16:30, it was necessary to begin at the beginning! Faith comes by HEARING the word of God, Rom. 10:17, so in order for him to have faith, they "spoke unto him the word of the Lord", Verse 32. He believed this word, Verse 34. He repented, did the works of repentance, Verse 33. Then he was baptized, Verse 34, which is for the "remission of sins", Acts 2:38.

THOSE IN ACTS 2

In the second chapter of Acts there were "Jews and proselytes out of every nation under heaven", Verses 5-10. These had come together to keep the feast of Pentecost which was authorized under the law of Moses. These had crucified Christ, therefore did not believe him to be the Son of God. The apostles preached to them that they did believe, and believing, asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?", Verse 37. These BELIEVING Jews were told to, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit", Acts 2:38. Jesus said that this would be preached, beginning at Jerusalem, Luke 24:46-47. The Holy Spirit instructed the apostles to preach this, Acts 2:4. Those who were baptized were added to the church, Acts 2:47.

SAUL, OR PAUL

Saul thought that he ought to do many things, that he later learned were contrary to the commands of Jesus, Acts 26:9-11. Though he had a clear conscience, he still was wrong, Acts 23:1. Jesus appeared to him that he might be an apostle and believe in him, Acts 9:3-6. One had to see Christ to be an apostle, Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 15:8. Saul was told to go into Damascus and THERE it would be TOLD him that "thou must DO", Acts 9:6. While he waited for these instructions, what he MUST DO, he spent the time in PRAYING and FASTING (three days), Acts 9:9, 11. This is ALL he knew to do. So he had BELIEVED AND REPENTED, we know by his deeds. So when the preacher, Ananias, whom God sent to tell him what he MUST DO, arrived, knowing that he believed and had repented, he told him this, "And now (Cont. on page 4)

What is the Worship (Cont.)

with the WHOLE congregation if you wish to do so. It was not until 770 A. D., more than seven-hundred years after the Lord established His church, that instruments of music were introduced into any church and this was not the Lord's church.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

In the church of the New Testament the disciples came together "upon the first day of the week" for the purpose of "breaking bread" (the Lord's supper). Therefore in the Church of Christ the Lord's supper is a part of the worship upon the first day of each week, Acts 20:7. This is following the "apostles' doctrine" by example.

PRAYING

There is public and private prayer mentioned in the Bible and examples of such. The early church continued steadfastly "in prayer", Acts 2:42. Then prayer is, and should be, a part of every service of the church of Christ. Jesus and the apostles TAUGHT us to PRAY and pray we do!

CONTRIBUTION

As has been pointed out, the early church was instructed to give, "each" one, "upon the first day of the week", as "God had prospered" each, I Cor. 16:2. EACH was to "purpose in his heart", his OWN heart, NO ONE else was to tell him HOW MUCH to give, 2 Cor. 9:7. In harmony with this Scripture, EACH member of the Church of Christ, lays by in store upon the first day of the week as God has prospered him and the Lord's works is supported JUST LIKE God WANTS it done! THERE IS NO AUTHORITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR COLLECTING MONEY ANY OTHER WAY OR AT ANY OTHER TIME! These five items of worship are ALL that are authorized in the New Testament! The Church of Christ stands ready to read to you from your Bible, every thing we teach, or practice, or ask you to believe and practice. We know that you can agree with us on this, because in so doing you are agreeing with God. A friendly smile, a warm hand shake, a cordial welcome, a humble attitude and a sincere desire to serve, awaits you at the church of Christ! MAY WE PROVE IT AT YOUR CONVENIENCE?

IF THE CHURCH DOES NOT MISS YOU WHEN YOU ARE ABSENT... IT IS PROBABLY MORE A REFLECTION ON YOU THAN ON THE CHURCH.

Seed After Its Kind

A farmer goes into the field in the spring. He plants corn. What may he expect to reap from this planting? Corn, of course! An arboriculturist plants an orchard of apple trees. Can he ever expect to pick peaches from this orchard? Of course not! We know he will pick apples because we are fully aware of the laws of nature. They state that all things reproduce after their respective kinds. This is in accord with the command of Jehovah in Genesis 1:11; "And God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth."

Today men seek to learn and obey the will of God and rightly so. But a religious world of confusion and division is not from God. If God is not its author, then we cannot accept the existence of this division and expect to please God. But what can we do about it? Christ teachers in Mark 4 that God's word is a seed that is planted in the hearts of men. What can we expect? God's laws of reproduction prove that if we plant the pure seed we will reap the same harvest that came from the planting of the seed in the first century. This is why men today are pleading for a restoration of the first century Christianity. They know that if they plant only the word of God they will surely restore only the first century church. If something else is brought forth we know that something else has been planted. This is the law of reproduction.

Why do you not sit down to study what is taught and practiced by the religious group you are associated with? What name does it wear? Is it a name worn by the first century church? If not, certainly something new has been added. What type of worship is practiced? Did the early Christians practice their religion in this manner? If not, a different seed has been planted. "What," you say, "is wrong with a different seed being planted?" The danger of this is found when Christ says, "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up."

Are you a member of the first century church? Remember, "By their fruits ye shall know them." —Richard E. Stevens.

Great Decision (Cont.)

they put off doing that which they knew to do and probably intended to do. Paul told the Corinthians that now is the day of salvation, 2 Cor. 6:2. The decision to change your way of life, to confess the name of Christ before men, and to be buried with your Lord in baptism, is the most important decision in the life of anyone. It must not be taken lightly in view of the magnitude of the decision.

This May Be Someone You Know

A confession by someone you may know: "I'm curious, and I'm ashamed. I wonder who has supported the church for the last number of years in the community where I live. I was in the hospital, and a preacher and the members of the church visited me, but I have been too busy to go to church since that time. My son attended the Bible school and wanted to be baptized. The preacher came to the house and talked to him on Sunday night, he was baptized. But I had too many things to do to start attending. Then my daughter wanted to be married in the church building. Again the preacher assisted in every possible way, and a group of church members provided all the music necessary; and some of the ladies had a shower for her in which she received so many nice things. But, I still could see no need of bothering to start attending services; who was I to be needed?"

Then, last week my wife became ill. Some of the ladies from the church sat with her through several nights. The preacher called and offered his services and the services of the whole congregation. Then my wife died. Members of the Church cleaned the house and provided food for those who came from a distance for the funeral. The preacher again was called upon to render help in the greatest hour of need I have ever experienced. A group of singers also helped with the most beautiful songs I have ever heard.

As I sit here tonight, I wonder who has supported the church. Had it not been for them there would have been no church, no building, no preacher, and no members to provide the help I needed. How much I owe to those who have made it possible for me to avail myself of the services of the church which I had not supported.

Yes, I am ashamed. I have not done my part when I could have done so much. Now I find myself unable to do nearly as much as I would like to do. I have wasted my life and finances and my opportunities. Had others done no more than I have done, the community in which I have lived would know nothing of the Church.

You, perhaps, are interested in my identity. I will not tell you my name, for I am ashamed. But, I can tell you this much: I was once a member of the church as a young man. Then, I left home and finally came here to live with my wife and baby. I have been all these years, an erring member who refused to work for the Lord. You will not recognize me from this of course — for there are so many others just like me . . ."

Erring church members.

Just Roll With the Punch (Cont.)

preached the word he has done his duty and fulfilled his responsibility. Let us be content with that. Making people obey it is not the preacher's job. Realizing this is the first step in becoming able to roll with the punch.

The more a preacher works in a certain routine, in certain people the less exciting and challenging his life becomes. It is hard to see one's life as a challenging exciting experience if he is locked in a routine situation with little prospect for accomplishment or real personal fulfillment. Isolated from the lost as he is, without any real prospect of reaching those he set his life to reach, the average preacher entertains secret thought, even if he never vocalizes it, of turning to something else. It is especially hard for a preacher to learn to roll with the punch.

How They Did It (Cont.)

why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord", Acts 22:16. He still had his sins, even after believing, repenting, fasting and praying, for they STILL needed to be "washed away" in baptism, for Jesus said that "He that believeth AND is baptized shall be saved", Mark 16:16. Baptism is ONE of the things which "SAVES" us, 1 Pet. 3:21.

THE EPHESIANS

These men had been taught the "baptism of John", Acts 18:25. But John's baptism was no good after the baptism of Christ became valid after Christ's death. So when Paul learned that they had been taught, believed and had repented, he ASKED about their baptism. When he learned that they had been baptized according to the baptism of John the baptizer, he properly explained John's baptism and ONLY for the law of Moses, or until Christ died, when his will came into force. Read, Acts 19:1-6; Heb. 9:16-17; Gal 3:16-29. PLEASE STUDY THIS IN YOUR OWN BIBLE! HAVE YOU DONE THIS?

Memphis, Tenn. 38103
 Home 3
 743-1111