

SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" — John 5:39.



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so' — Acts 17:11

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

H. E. Phillips

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BUILDING BY GRACE UPON THE RIGHT FOUNDATION

It is important to build upon the right foundation for eternity. Millions are making no effort at all upon any foundation. Many are trying to build spiritually upon some foundation, but upon the wrong one. Some have found the right foundation, but are doing very little building. Others have the right foundation, but they take no heed how they build thereupon. A few have the right foundation and are building upon it as the word of God teaches.

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:10,11).

Paul declared that he had laid the foundation "according to a wise master-builder," he did not decide what foundation to lay. It was according to the "grace of God" which was given to him. The grace of God is that unearned kindness extended to man. It refers to different things in the word of God. In the passage under consideration, the grace of God given to Paul enabled him to lay the foundation and obviously refers to the revelation of the Son of God. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem

to them which were apostles before me . . ." (Galatians 1:15-17). In chapter 2 Paul tells of his experience in Jerusalem with the apostles. "... when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter" ... "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision" (Galatians 2:7, 9).

Again, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: how that by revelation he made know unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:2-5). Verse 7 speaks of the gift of the grace of God given unto him by the effectual working of his power. And in verse 8: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

When Paul said he had laid the foundation, and there is no other, he laid it according to the "grace of God which is given unto me." In Acts 20: 32 Paul said: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Again, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11,12).

The only foundation upon which one can build spiritually is from the revelation given by Paul concerning Jesus Christ, who is the foundation (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11). Since the only foundation to be laid is Jesus Christ, and since Paul has already laid the foundation, and no man can lay another, we must build only upon the revelation given to Paul concerning Christ.

Some religious leaders try to lay another foundation by speaking things of Christ not revealed to Paul by the

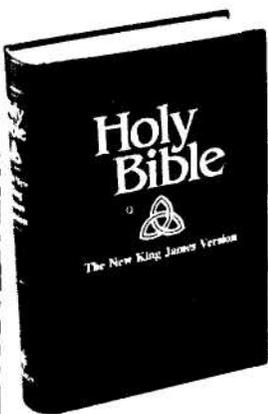
grace of God given to him. They try to cut off both ends of this revelation by denying the virgin birth of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ from the grave is rejected. In effect this takes away the foundation laid by Paul and substitutes another in the name of Christ. Now spiritual building upon a foundation of this kind is not worth the time it takes to speak of it. If one is to build to please God, he must build upon this foundation; he cannot build upon any other.

That foundation laid by Paul, according to the grace of God given unto him — the revelation of His Son — must include the facts of his Sonship and his "all authority" in heaven and earth. He must be accepted as King of kings and Lord of lords. His word must be believed and obeyed in full.

It is not enough to claim to believe in the Christ Paul declared and then disregard the word of Christ that came to us by the apostles whom he had chosen and empowered with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven (Acts 1:2; 1 Peter 1:12). We hear many today who claim to believe in this Christ, yet they totally disregard the word of Christ when it does not suit their purpose. These are not building upon the foundation of the word of God of which we have been speaking. They will be lost! We must take heed how we build upon this foundation, which was laid by the grace of God.

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Editorial

Connie W. Adams

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EDITORIAL STEW

FULLTIME WHAT?

Paul wrote: that "they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14). It is beyond question, for those who respect the word of God, that gospel preachers have a right to be supplied with material needs so that they can devote their entire lives to the work of the gospel. Such support should be adequate to the demands of the times and circumstances where one has to live. This support is not charity, it is a "wage" (2 Cor. 11:8). Gospel preachers are not beggars and they should neither be treated as such, nor should they ever regard themselves in such a fashion when they must ask for help to go and preach in needy places.

But with all that said, when a man accepts support for "full-time" work in the kingdom, he ought to do "full-time" work in the kingdom! He is entitled to some free time for his family and for his own personal well being. He cannot work 16 or 18 hours a day, week in and week out, without paying a heavy price in terms of his health and sorrow brought on by a neglected wife and children. But "full-time" work does not mean that a man ought to have unlimited time to baby-sit while his wife works. If she thinks he has nothing to do, because she sees him sit with books open while he reads and ponders, or has to go here and there to talk to people about the Lord, then she needs to be educated as to what his work really is. Gadding about the community might make the "good old boys" down at the corner cafe think you are a "regular fellow", or spending a great deal of time involved in civic activities might cause you to be regarded as a pillar in the community and a good influence, but these are not evangelism. A man cannot be effective as a hermit, but social or civic-butterflyism is not evangelism.

There is never any excuse for a gospel preacher having very little to do with his time. There is so much to learn and so many good tools available these days to help with that process. A man can never preach or teach what he does not know. And he cannot know what he has not studied. Having spent adequate time in study and prayer, he needs to seek out opportunities to teach both "publicly and from house to house." My brother, if you are going to accept support for "full-time" work, then do "full-time" work. It is dishonest to do otherwise.

PUNCTUALITY IN SUPPORT

Having personally been on the receiving end of support from several places to labor in an isolated field, I know how to appreciate brethren who are always punctual in sending support. Often, men who labor overseas in remote areas of our own country, face serious financial problems because some who agreed to support them are so unpredictable as to when that support will arrive. That forces such brethren to have to juggle house payments, rent, car payments, or other regular monthly expenses, until such support comes. Sometimes letters have to be written or phone calls made to inquire into it. All right, brethren, how would you like to have to track down your pay check? Some church treasurers do an excellent job in keeping up with all of that (and it is a very responsible job, and one often not fully appreciated). But some are negligent and wait and send two or three months at one time, not realizing what a crisis this may create. Maybe a little better communication on both sides of the problem would help.

YOUNG MOTHERS

Everywhere we go there are young mothers who are present at every service along with babes in arms, or pre-school children who grow tired, weary and sometimes fretful by the last two or three days of a meeting. I know there are times when such young women wonder why they even bother to come at all. Usually, the children disturb the mothers (and sometime fathers) much more than they do others. But take heart, young mothers. You are establishing an important pattern with your children and you are setting a good example for the rest. It takes real dedication to hang in there and keep on trying when you and the children grow weary. You may think you will never smell like anything but sour, spit-up milk, ever again, but your worthy example is a sweet smelling savor ascending before the throne of the Almighty. God bless you!

W. C. SANDEFUR

With sadness we note the sudden death of W. C. Sandefur, faithful gospel preacher of Salem, Indiana. He succumbed to a sudden heart attack on October 11. We have no details about the funeral at this writing. He was 58 years old. We first came to know "Sandy" when he preached at Milbridge, Maine. He did much good work there with excellent results. For the past several years he has labored with the church at Salem, Indiana, helping it to develop into full scriptural organization. Perhaps we can have a more extensive report later. We will miss him and extend out kindest sympathies to his wife and children.

SPECIAL ISSUE PLANNED

Sometime in the spring of 1988, we plan a special issue of this paper entitled: **CONCERNING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH**. We will ask our regular column writers to produce the material. Be watching for later announcements.

BOUND VOLUME

We are rapidly rounding out the 28th year of this publication. Every two years we bind 200 copies in hard back, in attractive blue buckram to match all previous

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NEW PUBLICATION TO FOCUS ON EVANGELISM

A new bimonthly magazine called SPREADING THE WORD is published in Nashville, Tennessee with William C. Tuggle as editor and Royce Chandler as editor of foreign work. In an opening editorial, editor Tuggle said "Therefore, the single theme of SPREADING THE WORD will be the work of evangelism." Both home and foreign evangelism will be emphasized with teaching articles and news reports from around the world. There is a need to reawaken brethren and rekindle zeal for the work of the gospel over the whole world. Therefore, this paper should serve a much needed purpose. The first edition contains articles not only by the editors, but by Ray Ferris, Dennis Freeman, Cathy Hardage, Leslie Diestelkamp, Steve Rudd, Gardner Hall, Bill Reeves, Greg Brown and Keith Clayton, plus a reprint from James P. Miller. Charter subscriptions are offered for \$9 for two years (12 issues), or \$7.50 for a club of five or more. They also advertise a bulk rate for bundles to one address. Those interested may address them at: STW Publications, 950 Glendale Lane, Nashville, TN 3724. It looks good and should DO much good.

LET THEM KNOW

If you find special help or encouragement from some article, why not take a moment and send a note of thanks to the author of that article. It means a great deal to a writer to learn that his effort has touched a life and made a difference.

THANKS TO...

Jane Ashbrook for her faithful and efficient work in the office of STS. She keeps the business work on schedule when we have to be **who knows where** in meetings. This is not only a great benefit to our subscribers but a great relief to us in the necessary travels for our work.

David Key and his excellent office force at RELIGIOUS SUPPLY CENTER (**Marie Ricks, Mary Catherine (Wimpy) Threlkel, and Phyllis Key**) for their continued patronage in advertising through this paper. Except for the church ads, Religious Supply Center is the only client we have. Their store is well stocked with books, tracts, class materials, Communion supplies,

maps, and other needed things and their service is excellent and always friendly. David is expanding floor space, **again**. Why not "give them the business." They will make you glad you did.

CONGENIAL CO-WORKERS

It is a great blessing to work with the six good elders at the Manslick Rd. church in Louisville. Donnie Rader is the local preacher and does his work with much ability. It is a pleasure to get to hear him preach when we are home. A. C. Grider is here off and on between meetings and teaches a Wednesday night class when he is home. It is an enriching experience to be around him and his good wife, Hallie. Fortunate are those churches which get to hear this veteran of the cross. We are neighbors, living just one mile apart (though he insists that I live on the WRONG side of the railroad tracks which run between our places). We see little of each other during the meeting months but during the winter months we get to visit more. We are thankful that our lot has been cast in such a good place, surrounded by such faithful servants of God. There is much talent at Manslick Road. A recent series of bulletin articles on "The Family" was written entirely by men of the congregation and it was rich. Raymond Byers, an elder here for many years, is now retired from his work as a building contractor and will be able to devote much more time to the work of the congregation. The Lord has truly smiled upon us.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO ...

OUR READERS. Many of you have stayed with us ever since we began this publication. Because of you, we have been able to keep the paper in operation. You have sent the paper to friends, relatives and other brethren. You have shown admirable trust, patience and love, even when we used poor judgment, or just plain "goofed." We need you, still, but please be advised that we also love you.

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THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Col. 1:15-18).

The Colossian letter sets before us Jesus Christ our Lord in all of His supreme majesty, honor, power, and glory. This is done in such a measure and with such emphasis as to excel that found anywhere else in the New Testament. The reason for so exalting Christ involved heresies that threatened the future security of this church. These heresies reflected on the person and work of Christ in redeeming mankind. Therefore, the apostle Paul emphasized the pre-eminence of Christ. From this point of truth it follows that all men are "complete in him" (Col. 2:10). So far as our spiritual welfare is concerned, nothing more is needed. This lesson was urgently needed then, and I am persuaded that the need is equally urgent in our day.

Background Knowledge

A little background knowledge, geographical, historical, and circumstantial, will help us to understand better and to appreciate more the efforts of Paul in our text as well as throughout the epistle.

GEOGRAPHICALLY — Colossae was located on the main trade route from Ephesus and the Aegean coast to the Eastern world, about one hundred miles east of Ephesus at the head of the Lycus River Valley — the gateway to the East. Colossae was one of three once very prominent and prosperous cities, namely, Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colossae. Hierapolis was about six miles north of Laodicea on the slope of the mountain range that enclosed the valley on the north. Laodicea was on the south bank of the Lycus river, a tributary to the Maeander. Colossae was about ten miles up the river to the east at the foot of Mt. Cadmus (8250 ft. high) which stood like a sentinel overlooking the Lycus River Valley.

HISTORICALLY — Many years before, Antiochus the Great had transplanted two thousand Jewish families from Babylon and Mesopotamia into this area. They prospered so well that many more of their fellow countrymen — even from Palestine — came to share in their

prosperity. Hence, we might well expect that while the Colossian church was largely Gentile, it would have a good sized Jewish element in it.

CIRCUMSTANTIALLY — Epaphras, "a faithful minister of Christ" (Col. 1:7) and of the Colossian church (Col. 4:12) had visited Paul in prison in Rome (Col. 1:7, 8). From him Paul had learned much about the churches in the Lycus River Valley (Cf. Col. 4:13). Paul rejoiced over the Colossians' "faith in Christ," their "love toward all the saints," their fruitfulness, their "love in the Spirit" and their "steadfastness of faith" (Col. 1:4, 6, 8; 2:5). However, his heart was made heavy when he learned of that which threatened the future security of this fine church.

Heresies in the Church

While much has been written concerning "the Colossian Heresy," there is little agreement as to what it was. Some have grouped all of the heresies under one heading, namely, Gnosticism. One thing is certain. We can determine the dangers that threatened this church by taking careful notice of the epistle itself and the errors exposed, reproved, and condemned therein by Paul.

Judaism — sought to bind on believers ceremonies of the law of Moses, insisting that such were necessary to salvation. This issue was to be expected in view of the Jewish population in that area and the Jewish element in the church. Paul deals with it very pointedly, saying, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come: but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:14-17). Thus, Paul shows that such were only a shadow of things to come, and since the reality has come, no man is accountable for observing such today. We are complete in him (Col. 2:10). To contend otherwise is to reflect on Christ. No wonder Paul said elsewhere "Whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

Philosophy — The influence of the Grecian Philosophers was wide spread throughout this part of the world. This philosophy placed undue emphasis on knowledge and wisdom, insisting that one's spiritual welfare depended upon such in addition to that found in the gospel of Christ. Hence, Paul warned: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit. . ." (Col. 2:8). Furthermore, concerning Christ he said, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). Indeed, we are complete in Him!

Asceticism — was taught by the Pagans of that day. It affirmed that bodily torture and a denial of bodily appetites made for greater spiritual development. Thus, many lived an ascetic type of life even to the point of suffering injury to their health and physical well being. Even some of the restraints of Judaism became a part of this overall doctrine. That such had worked its way into the church is evident from what Paul wrote in the Colossian letter showing that such ordinances were of

the world and after the commandments and doctrines of men: "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?" (Col. 2:20-22). Paul foresaw such practices as departures from the faith and warned against it (1 Tim. 4:5). Later, with the development of Roman Catholicism, we find that some of it's tenets involved in part of the old doctrine of asceticism, namely, the doctrine of celibacy and the eating of certain meats.

Gnosticism — involved as a basic tenet that the spirit is good and matter is evil. Since God is Spirit and altogether good, He could not possibly touch matter.

Therefore God is not creator of the world. On this point Gnosticism taught that God sent out emanations, each farther away than the last so that finally one could touch matter; that the farther away from God, the more ignorant of and the more hostile toward God such an emanation would be, and that by such an emanation the world was created (Cf. comments by William Barclay, **The Letters To The Philippians, Colossians, and Thesalonians**, pp. 118-19).

Furthermore, it follows from such a premise that if Jesus Christ is the Son of God, He could not have dwelt in a flesh and blood body. This doctrine was widespread throughout the churches of Asia (Cf. 2 Jno. 7). Such doctrine reduces Christ to somewhat of a spiritual phantom, robs Him of His humanity, and makes impossible His being the Saviour of mankind (Cf. Heb. 2:9-18).

The Pre-Eminence of Christ

In our text Paul lays an ax at the root of all these evils by affirming a threefold pre-eminence, which combines to establish His pre-eminence in all things — supreme pre-eminence!

In relation to the Father—He is the image of the invisible God. He is the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9). He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person (Heb. 1:3). Thus, Paul not only refutes the ancient doctrine of Gnosticism, but also the current doctrine of Modernism which affirms that Jesus was only a man, perhaps a good man — even the best man that ever lived — but still a man. One simply cannot believe in the Christ of the Bible without believing in the fullness of His deity.

In relation to the physical creation — He is the firstborn of every creature. Unfortunately, our English translation admits an idea contrary to truth, namely, that Jesus was the first in order of time of all created things. This makes Him a created being which accommodates the view of Gnosticism and also Jehovah Witnesses of today. Thus, again we have a denial of the deity of Jesus.

The word "first born" is often used to denote order of rank and not always order of time, e. g., Ex. 4:22, Psm. 89:27; Heb. 12:23. The Hebrews often used the word to denote one with honor, privileges, and blessings above that enjoyed by others. Obviously, it is so used in our text. The Greek "oti" translated "for" with which the next

verse begins (v. 16) means "because." Thus, He is the "firstborn" of all creation not because He was the first in point of time of all created things, but rather because He is the creator of all that was created (Cf. John 1:1-3). Instead of being an agent or some inferior, secondary god or emanation, He is the creator of all! What pre-eminence! Verse seventeen further confirms this position and adds even more majesty to His pre-eminence.

In relation to the spiritual creation — He is the head of the church (V. 18). Paul affirms the same thing in Eph. 1:22,23. To be in Christ is to be in His spiritual body, the church, and since all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3), our spiritual well being depends upon our being in this relationship (the church) and in submission to His authority in everything (Cf. Col. 3:17).

Unfortunately, many today are doing things in the interest of their spiritual welfare by nearly every standard of authority in the world except that given by Christ. Such reflects upon His headship and robs Him of the pre-eminence ascribed by Paul.

Our salvation does not depend upon the philosophy of the intellectual aristocrats of the past or present. It does not depend upon the doctrines, commandments, and ordinances of men. The religious orders of men, secret, denominational, or otherwise cannot save. Furthermore, they cannot add anything to our spiritual well being that is not provided in the spiritual body of our Lord — His church. To contend otherwise is to deny the pre-eminence of our Lord and Saviour. Jesus Christ.

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(Rom. 4:3)

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DO CHURCHES NEED PREACHERS?

QUESTION: Why the glaring absence of mentioning any evangelist in Phil. 1:1 which states, "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons?" If they can go on without preachers, for they had elders, why can't we? I personally understand that bishops must be "able to teach" for they are to "shepherd the church of God" which is among them. Then, why the need for a preacher when a congregation is scripturally organized?

ANSWER: Philippians 1:1 begins, "Paul and Timotheus..." Conspicuously, evangelists are named in the very verse that is under question. Although Paul and Timothy were not at Philippi at the time, they were always with some congregation edifying the members or they were establishing churches wherever people would hear and obey. Other evangelists were doing the same and one could have been at Philippi when Paul wrote this epistle to those saints.

Because Phil. 1:1 does not mention "evangelists" as being among the saints at Philippi, it does not mean they had none. Elders are not mentioned in Paul's salutation to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1), but this does not necessarily indicate they had not elders. Acts 14:23 and Tit. 1:5 would imply they probably did. The church at Antioch of Syria had prophets and teachers in it (Acts 13:1). Elders are not cited, but this does not suggest that churches are not to have elders. When we collect and compare the verses that relate to this matter, they clearly show that evangelists have the scriptural right, yea, the obligation to teach both saints and sinners.

We know that evangelists were "located" with churches to edify the saints and to preach the gospel to the lost. Paul told the Ephesian elders, "Therefore watch, and remember, that by a space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31). He taught them "publicly and from house to house" (v. 20). Timothy was charged by Paul to "abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia (Philippi was one of the churches there, WEW), that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3). Although Ephesus had elders or bishops, both Paul and Timothy preached there for a prolonged time. We know Paul was there for three years.

When Paul and Barnabas returned on their first missionary journey, they came to Antioch of Syria. "And

when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them And there they abode long time with the disciples' (Acts 14: 27-28). Here are preachers "located" a long time with the church at Antioch. When the Judaizing brethren came down from Jerusalem and taught circumcision as a condition of salvation, Paul and Barnabas had no small discussion and disputation with them (Acts 15:1-2). These preachers defended the faith while they were at Antioch.

The Bible teaches that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were put in the church for, among other things, "the perfecting of the saints . . ." (Eph 4:12). Apostles and prophets revealed the truth, evangelists preach the truth, and elders (pastors) see that the church is fed the truth and walk in it. Elders are not given the job of personally doing ALL the teaching. If so, teachers, as well as preachers, are not needed in the church. But God placed teachers and preachers in the church (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:8,11). Elders are to "tend the flock," which includes feeding or teaching, but they do not have to do all the feeding themselves. Preachers and teachers assist them. (Parenthetically, teachers are not listed in Phil. 1:1. Does this mean they had no teachers at Philippi? Certainly not!)

Men who are elders may also be preachers, serving in both capacities at the same time. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:16). Peter was an evangelist and an elder. He wrote, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder..." (1 Pet. 5:2). In Peter's case, it seems to me, that he was about as "located" as one could get.

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"LABORERS TOGETHER"

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9). The Corinthians did not seem to understand this description of labor relations in the Lord's vineyard, and it is evident that some today do not, though that misunderstanding may be expressed in different ways. Then, the problem involved the relationship of preachers to one another; now, it concerns preachers and congregations.

We need to be careful when writing or speaking on this subject, lest we tend to polarize the attitudes already prevalent, and alienate fellow-labourers even further. We need reconciliation and understanding, not agitation and suspicion. With regard to his goal, let me say that I am not personally faced with such a problem at the present time, and intend to be objective in my observations.

I have known preachers who wanted to draw up a contract in case they were to be mistreated by the congregation. Some congregations regard the preacher as an antagonist, a competitor, and strive to keep him frustrated and on the defensive. Some brethren suggested in a business meeting that when a preacher moved, he lost his "seniority" and should have to "work his way up" as far as salary and benefits were concerned. Some congregations will support a preacher, but do not want his talents and energies to extend beyond the borders of the local congregation. One elder suggested that the local preacher's salary should stop when he left town for a meeting, and not begin again until he returned. Another congregation wanted the preacher to submit a detailed report of his hourly activities each week.

The examples of congregations and preachers as adversaries could be multiplied, and might provide some interesting and amusing reading were it not so deplorable. And, such an exercise may widen the gap between those who should regard themselves as "labourers together" in the Lord's vineyard. Surely the congregation supporting the preacher and the preacher being supported need to have some basic ground rules governing their relationship, but the implementation of the "golden rule" (Mt. 7:12), and a common desire to further the cause of Christ should end up in unity instead of in a court of civil law.

While we all should believe in and respect congregational autonomy and personal commitments, I see no way for congregations and preachers to operate on the

time clock method of employment. A preacher should be fully supported by the church, and the preacher should give himself wholly to the work of an evangelist (1 Cor. 9:14; 2 Tim. 4:5). General guidelines may be established and all concerned should endeavor to operate honestly within those boundaries. If a congregation hobbles a preacher until he cannot do the Lord's work, that preacher should make other arrangements. If a preacher has a history of defrauding congregations, that preacher should not be hired in the first place, or if already hired, fired, if he will not shape up.

Consider these facts, and meditate upon them. The knowledge and experience which I have gained in the past forty-odd years is now benefiting the local congregation which presently supports me. I prepared sermons in my last meeting which I am now preaching in the local pulpit. Conversely, the studying which I do at home will benefit the congregations and communities which I may visit in the future. And, if the local congregation did not assure me of support, I could not even schedule meetings with congregations which are not financially able to support me.

During my last meeting, I assimilated and preached the material which I have been studying and preparing for the past five or six years, and yet I only spent seven days with that congregation. Yet, those brethren supported me well, and gave me time to study material which will be used in my home congregation or in some future place as yet unknown. I have been able to preach in meetings, conduct funerals, write articles, and help congregations and individuals in a variety of situations because brethren gave me both moral and financial support. At the same time, I had to do some of these things without the aid and encouragement of some brethren, and even in spite of them.

The lifeline of the church, and the salvation of souls is tied to the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 1:15,16). The devil is the only adversary we need in this monumental task, so let us not spend our time "provoking one-another, envying one another," but rather as "labourers together with God."

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STUDIES IN 1ST & 2ND TIMOTHY (No. 4) DEACONS 1 Tim. 3:8-16

Deacons, as elders, belong to the organizational structure of a local congregation. The word (diakonos in Greek) means "servant -minister". Every Christian would be this. However, our text speaks of those who "use the office of a deacon" and certain qualifications are given for those who thus serve. The church at Philippi consisted of elders (bishops), deacons, and saints (Phil. 1:1).

Their Work

The selected seven in Jerusalem, appointed to look after the needs of certain widows are generally regarded as men serving as appointed deacons. (Acts 6:1-6). The word "deacon" is not applied to them, but in verse 2 the Greek word "diakoneo" is used, translated "serve" with reference to their work. In this text, their work was seeing that certain widows needs were met, spoken of as "serve tables". Their service would enable the apostles and elders to continue teaching the word of God without interruption (vs. 2). From this, it has been concluded that deacons execute the material matters of the congregation under the authority of the elders. Every congregation does have numerous physical needs, in addition to looking after the needy, such as preparation of the building for the assembly, continual maintenance, equipment and supplies, ushers, treasury, etc.

Does teaching churches to appoint deacons, and their function, have anything to do with saving self and others? Indeed it does! The fact that their work frees the elders and evangelists for more time in "the ministry of the word" contributes to the saving of others. Too, I believe the statement "will purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (vs. 13) has reference to their standing in the eyes of the Lord, rather than to their exaltation and promotion among men, as some conclude. Some say promotion to the eldership is meant. This, however, seems to be in conflict with the motive and spirit for any service rendered in the name of the Lord. All such service is rendered to please the Lord and save souls. Such faithful service will be pleasing to the Lord in the judgment. So, scripturally qualified and functioning deacons in a congregation, while attending primarily to material matters, actually has as a background purpose and result, the saving of self and others.

Their Qualifications

Verse 8 begins with the word "likewise" which means just as elders are to be men with certain qualities and abilities, it is the same with deacons. These are then listed. They differ only slightly from the qualifications for an elder.

1. Grave. (Gk. *semnous*) "august, venerable, reverent, To be venerated for character, honorable" -Thayer. English Translation: "grave, serious, honorable, serious demeanor, dignified". Webster: "sedate, dignified, solemn vs frivolous, trivial, light". This quality is, of course, relative.

2. Not doubled tongued. (Gk. *madilogous*) *ma* -"never at any time"; *dilogous* -"double in speech, saying one thing to one-another with another" Thayer. English translation: "not tale-bearer; straight forward man; not deceitful in speech; no gossip; sincere in their talk."

3. Not given to much wine (English translation). Greek, "*ma oino polio prosechontas*". *ma*, "not, never at any time"; *oino*, "wine"; *polo*, "abundant, plenteous, much"; *prosechontas*, "given ... addicted to". Literally, "not addicted to much wine" — "not under the influence of strong wine."

4. Not greedy of filthy lucre. (English translation). Greek, "*ma aischrokerdas*". *ma* -"never at any time"; *aischrokerdas*, "eager for base gain; sordid". Other English translations: "no lover of money; not addicted to dishonest gain".

5. Hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. Greek and English, "stability in that which was once for all delivered to the saints -(Jude 3). Hold this with a clear conscience". Three things are involved, (1) a pure conscience, (2) centered in the faith, (3) continually hold . . . through life.

6. Blameless. Two different Greek words are translated blameless. In 1 Tim. 3:2 the word *anepilamptōn* is used, which means "one against whom no evil charge can be sustained", while in Tit. 1:6 the word *anegklatos* is used, meaning "not open to accusation, unblameless". English translations, "blameless, without reproach; irreproachable" . . . "Live so no charge of guilt can be proved against."

Family Qualifications

7. Husband of one wife. The meaning here is the same as was said for elders in the previous lesson. A scripturally married man is to be selected. According to verse 11, wives also have a responsibility.

8. Rule children/house well. Rule, in the Greek, means "stand before-attend to". Children: "off spring-custody". House: "wife and children". Well: "according to God's will. The emphasis here is on the position the man occupies in his house. He is properly standing before and managing. The matter of how long is not suggested. A man, to qualify as an elder, must be in this position long enough for his children to be believers and not accused of riot or unruly. This suggests that a deacon may not be as old as an elder. If a man has the character, wisdom, and ability to do the work of a deacon, and is properly standing before and managing a family, he is in a position to serve well as a deacon and should be appointed.

9. Proved. Verse 10 says "Let those also (as with elders) first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon. The word first, in the Greek, is "proton" and means "at the first" or before they serve in the office of a deacon. The word "proved", in the Greek, is "dokimadzo" and means "to test, examine, prove, scrutinize".

There are various ways of doing this. Time is one way, but this is relative and no one has the right to set a certain time limit ... 1,2,3, years. Letters of recommendation from faithful brethren at other places where one has lived and served in the Lord's vineyard, and recommendations (testimony) from known faithful brethren often contribute to the "proving" of one to be appointed to the office of a deacon.

Why Such Teaching?

The last three verses of 1 Timothy 3 tells us why Paul gave to Timothy the instruction he did, including that about elders and deacons. Without Paul being there to personally instruct, he wrote "that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Congregations, properly organized, filled with informed and dedicated saints, properly functioning in the work of the Lord is the foundation and structure for spreading the truth that "makes men free". A brief synopsis of what is involved in this truth is then given; "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." It is simply the glorious gospel of Christ, said to be the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), all emphasized in the church of the living God.

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REMINDERS ABOUT SIN

For some reason we have a tendency to forget some of the basic truths. I do not mean that these points have completely left our minds, but that we are not conscious of them as we ought to be. For example, we do not use the word "sin". On the other hand there is the extreme concept that poor judgments and contrary opinions are to be treated as sin. We have a tendency to think that all are doing wrong and we rationalize that there is no danger in our own lives. All of this indicates that we have forgotten a few things about sin. Thus we need to be stirred up by being put in remembrance of the things we really already know (2 Pet. 1:12-13).

What It Is

Sin is a violation of the law of God. John said, "Who-soever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Thus, if it is contrary to law (a Bible passage) it is sin. It may seem minor and insignificant to you, but it is still sin! It doesn't have to be "major" (e. g. adultery or theft) to be sin. We can sin in attitude and thought as well as in what we do.

It is possible to violate God's law by doing something that God has forbidden (Jas. 2:9). It is also possible to sin by not doing what God has commanded (Jas. 4:17).

A thing is not sin simply because you don't like it, it is different, it is contrary to your opinion, it is contrary to tradition or your judgment. It is not sin unless it violates the law of God. And yet, we sometimes look at some brother or sister like two dollar bills when they haven't done anything wrong. If it is sin, let's call it sin. If it isn't, let's leave it alone.

What It Does

We have a tendency to minimize the consequences of sin. We begin to think that if it is a "little" sin that it is not all that bad.

Sin separates from God. Isaiah warned that "your iniquities have separated between you and your God .. ." (Isa. 59:2). The apostle Paul said that death (separation) comes upon all that sin (Rom. 5:12) for the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). James said that sin brings forth death (Jas. 1:15).

Sin renders our prayers ineffective. Peter said that the "eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12). The wise man said, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination" (Prov.

28:9). By sinning we not only separate ourselves from God, but from all the benefits of being the children of God.

There is no distinction in sins. The passages that say sin separates from God or brings spiritual death do not only apply to the "big" and willful sins. So, it doesn't matter whether it is "little", "big", ignorant or willful, one or an hundred — if it is sin it separates from God. I need reminding of that often.

In The Life Of The Christian

He will sin. There will be times that the Christian will sin. John said, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). This does not mean that he will be constantly sinning 24 hours a day. Neither does it mean that God will overlook the sin. All that texts says is that there will be times that the Christian will sin.

He is not to continue in sin. Paul raised the question in Rom. 6, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound" (Rom. 6:1)? The rest of that chapter is a response to that question. We have been raised in the likeness of Christ's resurrection and thus we live a new life. The old man is crucified (v. 6). Now that we have obeyed the gospel we are servants of righteousness rather than sin (vs. 17-18). John says that the one that is born of God "sinneth not" or "doth not commit sin" (1 Jno. 3:6, 9; 9; 5:18). These verses do not mean that the Christian does not sin at all. For that would contradict 1 Jno. 1:8. The point is that the Christian doesn't continue to make a practice of sin. Thus the concept that says the Christian is just sinning all the time is out of harmony with the Biblical picture.

He can be forgiven. When the Christian does sin, he can obtain forgiveness. John said that the blood of Jesus Christ "cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). He also wrote, "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

He must seek forgiveness. The Christian who sins is not automatically forgiven without any action. Rather, Simon was told to repent and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22). John said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Sin Will Surface

God instructed Israel to drive out all the people as they entered into the land of Canaan. Then he warned, "But if ye do not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23). We have deceived ourselves into thinking that we could hide our sins. And maybe we can for a while. However, sooner or later they will surface. It did with Achan (Josh. 7) and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). It always takes another sin to cover the previous one and then finally there are so many that our sin becomes known.

Tendency To Rationalize

For some reason we want to justify our own wrong and that of our family. We reason that our situation is different. We shift the blame to someone else so we have no guilt feeling. We think that the Lord will understand our case and overlook the sin.

The Jews must have reasoned the same way. Paul labors in Rom. 2 to show that the Jews were committing the same sins that the Gentiles were. Thus he asked if they thought they would escape the judgment of God (Rom. 2:3). Have we forgot that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34)? Do we need to be reminded that we can think we are doing right while we are continuing in sin (Acts 23:1; 1Tim.4:1)?

I realize that you already knew these things. But, honestly, didn't it help to be reminded again?

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Did you ever have to say "I'm sorry, I was wrong"? All of us have needed to make a statement something like that, but there are some people who just won't admit to any wrong, or any sorrow for wrong. They may say, "IF I have done anything that offended you, forgive me", but that's not the same thing at all. Perhaps some think it is a sign of weakness to admit error or guilt, but I propose to you that it is a sign of manhood to face your sins and other mistakes and correct them. And unless you are able to live a sinless life as Jesus did while here on the earth, the time will come when you must acknowledge those sins and either correct them or give account of them in the judgment.

Our relationship with God is totally dependent upon our acknowledging our sins. In the 51st Psalm, when David had finally seen his sin with Bathsheba he wrote, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Psa. 51:2-3). Or as Solomon wrote in the Proverbs, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). Further, John wrote, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Even our repentance is dependent upon recognizing that we are wrong, and that we must change.

Likewise our relationships with men require that sometimes we acknowledge wrongs done and say "I'm sorry". In the sermon on the mount Jesus said, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:23-24). I understand Jesus to have said that even our worship is affected by our relationships with men; that failure to repent and correct wrongs may indeed cause our worship to be in vain.

And perhaps the place where we most often fail to recognize our faults and ask for forgiveness is in our own families. Have you ever punished one of your children unjustly? I have, and had to go to that child later and ask to be forgiven. In our thoughtlessness and carelessness we say and do things to wives or husbands that hurt so badly, and are not deserved. But admit wrong? We just couldn't do that, could we? The "prodigal son" as we have come to call him made many serious mistakes, but he is

also a wonderful example of a man facing his sins and not running away but doing what had to be done to correct them. Even when his father came running out to meet him with open arms he did not try to rationalize and get out of confessing his sins. On the other side is the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5. Here were two people who lied and refused to correct their lies when given the chance. And they both died without ever making right the wrong they had done. Which of those two examples is more like you?

Have you ever said, "Well, that's just the way I am, and I can't change"? You may have said it, but it isn't true. That's the same excuse that is sometimes offered by the homosexual, blaming God for his own sins. Sometimes we sing the song, "OPEN MY EYES, THAT I MAY SEE". Are you willing to open your eyes? When Jesus told why He taught in parables He said, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed" (Matt. 13:15). Are you willing to see what you look like in the sight of God? There is only one way to do that, and that is to dig into the word of God and use that divine measuring stick to measure yourself. James wrote about looking "into the perfect law of liberty" and continuing in it. Only by first seeing what God wants you to be can you know how to change. And in addition to opening up your Bible and measuring your self by it. I suggest that you spend a lot of time in prayer for wisdom, help, courage and strength. We can have confidence that God knows and cares. Peter wrote, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:6-7). And the Hebrew writer told those Jewish Christians, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5-6).

Don't be afraid of ridicule or rebuke when you have to say "I'm sorry, I was wrong". Just do what you have to do to be right in the sight of God. It will make all of your relationships better too!

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WILLIAM C. SEXTON, 4400 N.W. Gleason, Kansas City, MO 64151 — We have finished two years with the Roan Ridge church, 6403 N.W. Roanridge Rd. in Kansas City. We have been fairly pleased with the results this year, although never completely, with so much more to be done. Eight have been baptized since January (3 recently), in addition to several restorations and identifications. Dick Blackford was with us in a meeting in November. I was in a week-end meeting in June with the Pleasant Valley church in Wichita, Kansas and in October with the Westside church in Morrilton, Arkansas where I presented a series on "Personal Responsibility in Man's Salvation." Coming to Kansas City? Visit and worship with us at Roan Ridge just off I-29 at 64th Street, N.W., 7 miles south of the KCI Airport. Request: I have an IBM compatible computer and am interested in finding software that is ideally suited for preparing a preacher's income tax. I'm sure some have had experience in this respect and would appreciate hearing from those who have found what works well in this regard — with as much simplicity as possible!

A. A. GRANKE, JR., 1 Cherokee St., Sumter, SC 29150 — David Powlas, a devout member of the Woodland church of Christ, Sumter, South Carolina, is recovering from open heart surgery to replace a defective valve. In August, at age 34, he was diagnosed as suffering from congestive heart failure, and was also discovered to have a congenitally defective aortic valve at the entrance to a major artery leading from his heart. It was surgically replaced, and he is recovering satisfactorily. But his medical expenses total approximately \$32,000 and he was not covered by insurance. Although he has not been preaching for several years, brother Powlas formerly labored as a full-time evangelist in Orangeburg, SC and West Palm Beach, FL. He has lived in Columbia, SC the past five years and works as a motel auditor there. His illness has brought further strain on his family's budget by keeping him out of work for two months. He has recently returned to worship services and expects to resume work soon. The church at Woodland is small and is not able to offer much help with his expenses. If you are in a position to assist brother Powlas, or know of a church or individual who may be interested in doing so, please write him at 3430 Kay Street, Apt. D-3, Columbia, SC 29210. His phone number is (803) 772-4371.

JIM MCDONALD, P.O. Box 247, Jasper, TX 75951 — Faithful brethren have rallied to the needs of Conrad Steyn and George Harris in South Africa since their stand against innovations in that country. Each has received enough help to pay bills which had accumulated for several months without support. But most of that has been one-time help. Each one needs to locate an additional \$1500 per month to be able to devote full-time to the work in that country. These men present a rare opportunity for the spreading of the gospel in South Africa. The task is not yet completed, brethren. Can you help? Write either of them at: Conrad Steyn, Box 133, Rondebosch, 7700 South Africa; or George Harris, Box 300, Steenberg 7945, South Africa.

PREACHERS NEEDED

PALATINE, ILLINOIS — The church at Palatine is interested in locating a preacher for full-time work. Sunday attendance averages about 60. We can provide a majority of support. Some full-time experience preferred. Send resume and references to: Church of Christ, 1050 N. Deer, Palatine, IL 60067, or contact Harlan Stoa, 130 E. Palatine Rd., Palatine, IL 60067. Phone (312) 705-0544.

JAMESTOWN, KENTUCKY — The church at Jamestown is looking for a full-time preacher at least 30 years old, who is willing to begin work with us sometime after the first of the year, 1988. Those interested should contact William O'Neal, phone (502) 866-3863.

PENSACOLA, FLORIDA — The Myrtle Grove church in Pensacola needs a preacher. Though there are no elders, the church is self supporting. Sunday attendance is about 60. We prefer a man 35-50 years old. Contact Scotty Mills (904) 456-2430; or Russell Green (904) 456-6721; or write to Church of Christ, P.O. Box 3415, Pensacola, FL 32516.

GLEN ALLEN, ALABAMA — This congregation in northwest Alabama is looking for a preacher for full-time work. This church of 25-30 can supply partial support and has contacts for additional support. Those interested may write Glen Allen Church of Christ, Box 161, Glen Allen, AL 35559, or call Kermit Vaughn at (205) 487-2538.

CROSSVILLE, ALABAMA — This congregation in northeast Alabama needs a preacher. We can supply \$200 weekly. Call R. C. Hammonds (205) 659-2687, or Marvin Ruf (205) 528-7333.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: We are glad to carry these notices for churches seeking preachers to work with them. We include them as news items and as a convenience to churches and make no charge for this service. We do not carry any news item for several months. Sometimes we are asked to run such notices several times. This we will not do. Further, we want readers to understand that we do not personally endorse all of the qualifications demanded nor are we in a position to judge the nature of the work at any given place. Churches and preachers alike should investigate each other thoroughly. CWA)

SHORT NEWS

The NEWSLETTER REPORTS are shorter than usual this month due to the index which we must print for the bound volumes. We are glad to have your news. It is edifying for brethren to read of the progress of the gospel throughout the world. The trials and triumphs of the Lord's people everywhere should be the concern of all who love souls and who labor for their salvation. Many readers say they always turn to the news column first. Do you have some good news? Let others know about it. It will thrill them to learn of it and perhaps embolden them to try harder to grow both in spirit and number.