

Paul's Victorious Farewell – A Powerful Example For The Followers Of Christ

As we run the Christian race, engaging in the "fight of faith," Paul's powerful example can lead us on to victory and the winner's crown

One of the greatest values of a good example is that it can build confidence and assurance in us that we can do worthwhile things which others have done, even in the face of trying circumstances. Even small children dare to do things which involve courage when they see others doing such. The various examples of followers of Christ doing those things which lead to victory were not recorded in God's word by accident. We would do well to give much more attention to those powerful examples, striving with all our might to emulate them, thereby assuring victory.

In addition to **Paul's Victorious Farewell** as a powerful example, he has encouraged the following of his examples in other places. To the Corinthians he wrote: *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"* (I Cor. 11:1). Paul exhorted the Philippians to *"be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample"* (Phil. 3:17).

When and if we become discouraged, as virtually everyone does at one time or another, we have a great source of strength in Paul's Victorious Farewell, as recorded in 2 Timothy 4:6-8:

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

With the current woeful disregard for God's truth on the part of so many there are those, who aren't caught up in this tragic departure, who become so overwhelmed and discouraged that they are on the verge of "throwing in the towel," and some do so. This ought not to be and doesn't have to be. I say this because we have the example of Paul, which if followed will lead us to victory with all certainty. Paul faced evil in many forms, the extent of which we are not likely to encounter, yet he was victorious. In 2 Corinthians 11, he enumerates a long list of physical and mental persecutions which he suffered. Paul often lived under the threat of death and was imprisoned more than once. And, yes, there were *"false brethren"* to contend with in his day (2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 2:4), just as there are false brethren to contend with today.

My point relative to the above is this, if Paul was able to endure all the problems he did and remain faithful to his Lord, then most assuredly one can do the same today. It is true that the devil has succeeded in capturing more of God's people within recent years than ever during our lifetime, but if we seriously consider Paul's example of maintaining his faith under such trying circumstances, victory can be ours!

In the following discussion we shall give attention to a number of things which stand out in Paul's farewell. We begin with Paul's statement:

I. "THE TIME OF MY DEPARTURE IS AT HAND"

Whereas Paul had reason for believing that his life would soon end, we are not faced with similar circumstances. We are, however, faced with the fact of life's brevity and uncertainty. James reminds us of this when he said, "*For what is your life? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*" (Jas. 4:14). From this we know that the time of "*our departure*" could be near at any time, as far as our knowledge is concerned. This is indeed a forceful reminder to the thinking person that one should take stock of his or her spiritual condition. Are we fighting a good fight? Are we living in such a way that if life ended today it would not be a tragedy? Are we keeping the faith? These things have to do with whether or not victory will be ours at the end of the way.

Whether life ends soon or years in the future, the example of Paul will be of no less importance. If we aren't following Paul's example we aren't in a condition for our life to end, with the expectation of that "*crown of righteousness.*"

II. "I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT"

In addition to the above statement, Paul tells Timothy to "*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life*" (I Tim. 6:12). The *eternal life* Paul mentions here would correspond to the "*Crown of righteousness*" in 2 Timothy 4:8.

The idea expressed by "*good fight*" is not so much a pitched battle as we might think of occurring in physical warfare. It is rather the figure of what occurred in a contest of athletes such as commonly occurred in the Grecian games. The emphasis is not just that of running a race or engaging in a contest, but rather upon expending the utmost effort possible in order to win. *Lenski* well expresses the meaning Paul attached to the expression in the following:

"he has in mind 'the noble AGON,' an athletic contest, the energetic striving for a prize which can be secured only by straining every muscle in a masterly effort to the very last" (Volume including Timothy, p. 860).

A very similar idea is found in Hebrews 12:1. There the writer says, "*...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*" Nothing must be allowed to hinder in the running of a victorious race.

One thing which stands out with reference to the "*good fight*" is that the utmost effort must be put forth to win. It is a fight which can never be won accidentally or by sheer luck. With such emphasis upon putting forth the greatest effort possible, it is downright unthinkable that Paul believed or taught the erroneous doctrine of "faith only." No. He believed in a faith "*which*

worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). Paul told the Philippians to "*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*" (Phil. 2:12). Paul's message was to keep on doing the things which had to do with their salvation, in the fear of God.

Every Christian is involved in this "*good fight*" to one degree or another. All could be winners, but we know that many will fall by the wayside. Many are the dangers lurking along the way, and while the danger can be faced and overcome through Christ (I Cor. 10:13; Phil 4:13), many will succumb. Some will simply give up and quit. Others will keep plodding along half-heartedly, but with no chance of reaching the finish line before time runs out. Some are now listening to those who think the rules of the contest were only made to be broken. There will be no crown awaiting them unless they see the error of their way and repent.

Those who are determined above all else to win that crown by pressing "*toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3:14), are assured of a glorious victory along with the apostle Paul, if they but follow his great example until the end of the way.

III. "I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE"

The word course as used above has reference to the running of a race. But as Paul uses the word it takes on much greater meaning than the running of any race or any contest in which the athletes of that day might have engaged. The race of which Paul speaks has reference to a course of life which will end in a victory far greater than any earthly victory. That is, if the race is run in accordance with God's instructions. This Paul was certainly willing to do.

Paul's course is finished only because death is imminent. Our course will not be finished until we come to the end of life's way, whenever that may be. An important fact to be remembered is that our course (race) must be run according to the rules, God's rules. When the rules are disregarded, as so many are doing, the result is disqualification. In this case there is no crown of victory to be received, not ever.

IV. "I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH"

Not only had Paul "*kept the faith*" in the sense of his personal belief and no departure from that body of God-given truth, as he had directed the Corinthians to do when he said, "*stand fast in the faith*" (I Cor. 16:13), he had guarded it. He had stood solidly in defending it. Paul had been "*stedfast, unmoveable*" (I Cor. 15:58). This all Christians will strive to do if their love for the Lord is the real thing. This love shows itself by doing God's will.

Paul warned of those who would "*depart from the faith*" (I Tim. 4:1), and of those who would not "*endure sound doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4:3). Paul pointed out to the Ephesian elders that from within the flock men would arise, "*speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them*" (Acts 20:30). But Paul would not be numbered among those who would not keep the faith. This was not because he was an apostle, but rather because he loved the truth and would not "sell it" at any price or give it up. Just like people today, Paul was responsible for his actions and for putting forth effort to remain loyal to the faith. This we know from what he wrote to the Corinthians: "*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway*" (I Cor. 9:27).

Paul "*kept the faith,*" leaving God-fearing people an example that they should follow in doing likewise. Not only is this an example that should be followed, it is an example that can be

followed. If the beloved apostle Paul was able to keep the faith, so can we!

New Testament examples, as in the case of Paul, do us little good unless we strive to emulate them. It should serve as an eye-opener to consider the degree to which Paul's example of keeping the faith is being cast to the wind, and try to visualize what Paul's reaction would be if he were with us now. In a sense he is with us, in that he still speaks to us through the inspired word, to which we are accountable.

As an example, let us consider the Billy Graham Crusade which is to occur in Nashville in early June. Could anyone, even by the wildest stretch of the imagination, visualize Paul participating in that campaign of error as are Rubel Shelly and the elders of the Woodmont Hills congregation, along with a number of other congregations in Nashville? Surely, no honest person could imagine Paul supporting a *perverted* gospel (Gal. 1:8-9), which denies the distinctiveness of the one blood-bought church which our Savior built (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28).

Who can imagine Paul participating in the Nashville Jubilee, the Tulsa Soul Winning Workshop, or a number of similar gatherings? Could anyone visualize Paul, a lover of God's word, visiting the Willow Creek Community Church, coming away all fired up and trying to encourage faithful brethren to drink deeply of all he had learned from this man-made religion, as did J. Wayne Kilpatrick? Let me answer this last question. No! No one would believe Paul would do such a thing if he believed Paul when he said, "*I have kept the faith.*" One could believe Paul would do such ONLY IF he believed Paul didn't mean what he said about keeping the faith.

Paul guarded the faith, as all true Christians should. He would not give "*place by subjection, no, not for an hour*" to false brethren. He was interested in "*the truth of the gospel*" continuing with the brethren (Gal. 2:5). If Paul were here today, and he is through his word, those brethren supporting a Billy Graham Crusade and/or a whole catalogue of other errors, he would call attention to his command to the Romans (which applies to us today) to "*mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them*" (Rom. 16:17). Would Paul fellowship those in error if he were here? NO WAY! If we have as much as an ounce of respect for the teaching of the inspired Paul and the example he left for us—we will "*keep the faith*" as did Paul. A serious fact that should not be overlooked is that religious authority is derived from only two sources, either **God** or **man**. That which God doesn't authorize is from man, there is no other explanation. In no sense of the term is it possible to keep the faith while following the teachings of men. If men understand this, and then follow the teachings of men, it is evident that there is a lack of respect for God's authority. When this is the case, then anything can happen and so often it does.

V. "THERE IS LAID UP FOR

ME A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS"

The figure of the Grecian games is used in Paul's Victorious Farewell, and this includes his reference to A Crown of Righteousness. There is, however, one important aspect in which the noble goal of striving for the victor's crown is unlike the Grecian games. In those games there could be only one winner of the crown. In this spiritual race of which Paul speaks, everyone who abides by the rules or conditions can be a winner of the "*crown of righteousness.*" After Paul's example, all who in their running fight the good fight of faith, who finish the course, who keep the faith, and love the Lord's appearing, have the crown laid up for them. What a great encouragement this should be.

It is clearly evident that Paul was motivated greatly by the eternal reward which awaits faithful children of God. Who would doubt but that the Crown of Righteousness was a major motivating factor to the early Christians, who were in many instances willing to face physical death rather than renounce their faith and loyalty to the Savior? Christ himself urged the church at Smyrna to *"be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life"* (Rev. 2:10). The context shows clearly that being faithful unto the point of giving up physical life was what our Lord meant. It is difficult for people to realize that there is something which is of greater value than physical life, but that crown which Christ offers to the faithful is of such value.

Whereas a prime motivating factor for Christians should be the eternal reward in the world to come, there is much evidence that the strength of the quest for that reward has diminished greatly when compared with several years ago. Forty or more years ago some of the denominational people began to emphasize the "here and now" rather than the hereafter. Since that time some denominational churches have gone all-out in providing things which people like, and at the same time diminished their emphasis upon spiritual things and the rewards which are in the world to come.

In more recent times, especially within the past thirty years or so, this same emphasis upon the "here and now" rather than the hereafter is being seen in many congregations of the Lord's people. The pursuit of things which appeal to people in life here on earth has really picked up speed. Once a trend is established it is often the case that it becomes more entrenched and powerful with the passing of time.

The desire of church members to be entertained, fed and frolicked is growing stronger day by day. Sadly, there are many elders and preachers who are willing to accommodate this desire by providing things in this area, though the providing of such by the church has never been nor will it ever be authorized by the Bible. This problem is deep-seated and not just a passing fad. The pursuit of the truly spiritual things is growing weaker all the time. The evidence of this is obvious to all who will see.

As evidence of the above we shall consider a number of things which are being seen more often within the church in an increasing number of congregations. Some of these things are in the area of the mental while others pertain to the physical realm. In the former area are such things as:

- 1) **Emotional highs.** The people of the Pentecostal persuasion used to be noted for their virtually unlimited emotionalism. Now, we are seeing more and more emotionalism within the church. Some people like it. Just recently I was reading an account of what happened at "Winterfest" in Gatlinburg, TN. Thousands of young people were gathered there, exposed to the influence of false teachers. In a number of instances emotionalism virtually ran wild. The influence of subjectivism and the lack of emphasis upon God's objective truth were clearly evident. This seems to be the trend in a great many gatherings of young people.
- 2) **Drama Groups.** This is now the rage in more and more congregations and various gatherings of members of the church. The study of God's word can be rather dull when there is a lack of interest in spiritual edification. Drama Groups are more entertaining to some.
- 3) **Singing Groups or Arrangements.** This variation of singing arrangements involves solos, duets, quartets, and groups. Congregational singing no longer satisfies an increasing number of people. It is evident that the entertaining aspects of such singing has a strong appeal in some instances.
- 4) **Puppets.** My wife and I can well remember when children could be taught from God's word. Interest in this area has waned as children more often are looking for "fun" and entertainment. Adults are in a large measure responsible for this change.
- 5) **Entertaining Preachers.** The demand for preachers who are good at entertaining are

much more in demand in some circles than those who *"Preach the word"*(2 Tim. 4:2).

In the area of the physical we see such things as: 1) **Transportation.** Some congregations provide transportation for sightseeing trips and to places of entertainment such as recreation parks. 2) **Free Food.** In the area of benevolence the church has a right to provide food for those who are truly in need. But where is the authority for the church providing me, and others who are well able to provide for themselves, with free food? If the church can provide hamburgers and barbecue, why not steak suppers or whatever the members may want? 3) **Games and Recreation.** Where did people get the idea that the church has a responsibility to provide these things, which are the responsibility of the home? This is being done simply because it is something which pleases the people, not because it enhances the spiritual well-being of people.

Several years ago the Family Life Center craze began to sweep across the brotherhood. The activities which often take place in these centers has an appeal, not to spiritual things, but to things people enjoy. Physical exercise, basketball, and other games are in the area of the "here and now." Every Family Life Center serves as a monument to the desire of brethren to gratify their yearning for pleasurable things in this life, not in the hereafter.

Those whose heart is in being entertained and enjoying the pleasure of the here and now, rather than in the heavenly treasures, have no reason to exhibit the confidence and assurance of Paul with respect to a laid up crown of righteousness.

**VI. "BUT UNTO ALL THEM
ALSO THAT LOVE HIS APPEARING"**

Paul makes it abundantly clear that the Crown of Righteousness which is laid up for him is also laid up for others who love the appearing of the Lord. The outstanding thing about this is that it gives assurance that God is not a respecter of persons. All those who follow the example of Paul can have the same assurance that Paul had. This should be a great encouragement to us, knowing that the crown of victory can be ours if that is what we want more than anything in this life.

Concerning the undone condition of the Jews it is said of Jesus: *"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it"* (Lk. 19:41). Our Lord must weep over those who for one cause or another will not follow the Powerful Example of Paul's Victorious Race for which a *"crown of righteousness"* was laid up.

- - Walter W. Pigg



Entertainment And Pleasure In The Church

Roger D. Campbell

At our house we enjoy various forms of relaxing activities. We play games, listen to CD's, watch videos, take in some sports on the tube, go to ball games, visit amusement parks, entertain guests, and participate in other activities that would fit into the category of entertainment, recreation, or pleasure. We realize, of course, that all of these affairs must be of such nature that they would not in any way involve us in ungodliness or the fulfilling of fleshly lusts (Titus 2:12).

Yes, as a husband and father I am always searching for wholesome activities that our family can do "just for fun." However, as a Christian I would never consider turning to the church and appealing to it to help supply me with what I and my family want in the realm of recreation, entertainment, or pleasure. Why not? Because the work of the church involves **evangelism, edification, and benevolence**, but nowhere in the Bible do we read that the church is authorized to provide recreation, entertainment, or pleasure for its members or other people.

In case you have not been informed, you need to know that today in more and more places the church is becoming involved in just those very things. Lots of folks want to be entertained, and they want the church to provide for them and their families a "fun" atmosphere. Sadly, more than a few preachers and elders are giving heed to such worldly cries. As a result, in an effort to attract big numbers or least keep the worldly-minded content, in many places entertainment, recreation, fun and pleasure are "in," while book, chapter, and verse preaching coupled with rebuking of those involved in sin and unauthorized activities are "out."

Just what is it that the church needs in our day? Answer: the same thing it needed in the first century – the word of the living God, which is able to build us up and give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified (Acts 20:32). Yes, just as the saints of nearly 2000 years ago, our great need is still to abide in the doctrine of Jesus Christ (2 Jno. 9). With that in mind, let us look at some questions that cause us personally to be extremely concerned about the present trends in so many congregations.

1. All members of the church who love the souls of men are always concerned about what we can do to "get more people." [Do we need to try and draw folks with entertainment and appeals to worldly pleasures, or with something else?](#) God's vote is for "something else." The Lord Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (Jno. 6:44-45). The only way to come to Jesus is by being drawn by His Father. But how does the Father draw men to His Son? Jesus said He does it when men are taught of God, hearing and learning His word.

We have heard of a great variety of schemes that have been used to attract people. Such things as bringing in singing groups or comedy teams, hiding money under a lucky seat, the preacher pushing a banana across the stage with his nose, and numerous other activities have been employed to either bring new folks in or keep "the converted" folks happy.

Friends, the power of God unto salvation is the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16). God calls men out of darkness and into His marvelous light, kingdom, and glory (I Pet. 2:9; I Thess. 2:12). The means by which He does this is through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14), not via entertainment or gimmicks.

2. [In the pulpit do we need an entertainment-preacher, or a preacher-preacher?](#) An entertainment preacher is one who tries to keep folks happy and entertained with his fun and jokes approach. A "preacher-preacher" is one who preaches God's word and lets the chips fall where they may. What saith the Lord? "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3). A preacher who does this is fulfilling "the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5). The charge to all preachers is, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and that that hear thee" (I Tim. 4:16). One can search high and low in the New Testament, but he will never find the concept of a preacher being an entertainer!

3. [In worship do we need singing for the purpose of entertaining, or for the purpose of praising God?](#) Solos, quartets, and choirs are becoming more and more popular in the church. Be that as it may, there is absolutely no

authority for them in the Bible. Call us "old-fashioned" or label us as having "traditional worship" if you must, but where there is no Bible authority for an action, we are just not interested in doing it (I Pet. 4:11).

Good people, our singing in our assemblies is not done for man's pleasure, but for the praise of the Lord God! We must never forget this. We are instructed to sing "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). These terms are defined by *Thayer* and *Vine* in this manner: "psalm" - a pious song, "a sacred song"; "hymn" - "a sacred song," "a song of praise to God," "song of praise addressed to God"; "spiritual song" - "a song in praise of God or Christ." And what about "making melody" in Ephesians 5:19? It means "to celebrate the praises of God in song," "to sing praises." Again, we are to sing in order to praise our Lord, not just to please or entertain men.

4. Does the church need drama, or the doctrine of God? We know that drama teams are big among a lot of brethren. For our part, we view drama as a sort of show that is provided for people's pleasure or entertainment. We know that a constant message of "sound doctrine" (Tit. 2:1) and "thus saith the Lord" is not nearly as appealing to many people as costumes, make-up and puppets. However, the unchanging truth is: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God....it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:18, 21). Our task is not to perform and make people smile or praise our neat skits. Rather, we are to preach the gospel (Mk. 16:15). That, and that alone, is what can save those who have an honest and good heart (Lk. 8:15).

5. Do we need church-financed support for the poor, or church-financed meals and parties for members who can afford their own meals? If a Christian is in a bad financial strait, then it would be appropriate for the church to help him/her with meals or financial help in general. We are to be ready to distribute "to the necessity of the saints" (Rom. 12:13). In the same epistle we read of a contribution from a number of congregations for "the poor" (Rom. 15:26). Cf. also Galatians 2:10; 6:10.

But, if Christians have the financial ability to feed themselves, then they should neither expect nor want the church to pay for their food, forks, plates, or other eating paraphernalia. If the members of our congregation want to enjoy a meal or party together, then let's do it. However, let us do it at our own personal expense and not consider asking the church to "foot the bill" for an activity that is clearly designed simply for our pleasure. We personally do not see that there is biblical authority for the church to use money from its treasury to pay for such things. The church is not in the party or pleasure-providing business.

6. Do we need church-sponsored entertainment and fun, or family-sponsored entertainment? Wholesome entertainment, recreation, fun, and activities that provide pleasure are not off limits for children of God. However, these ought to be provided and financed by moms and dads, family members, or other individuals. They are simply not the work of the church.

It seems that some "ministers" are hired to entertain the church's young people. They are expected to organize wiener roasts, trips, and all kinds of fun stuff to keep the young folks happy and off the streets. It is certainly a wonderful thing to conscientiously work with young people to teach and train them in spiritual affairs so they can mature in Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). We need more of this. We fear, however, that in some cases the spiritual development takes a back seat to fun stuff.

Some families move their membership to a congregation that has "more activities for young people." Again, activities might be spiritual in nature, or they might be just those that are for pleasure or having a good time. It is great when young Christians enjoy one another's association. However, trips to amusement parks, camping trips, or going rafting are activities that ought to be organized and financed by the home, and not by the church. If parents want more fun activities for the young people, then THEY need to get busy and work with other parents to arrange them. They can do that right in the congregation where they are, and don't need to run off to one where they are hoping that the church will arrange the fun things in their stead.

Entertainment and pleasure in the church? God forbid. Brethren, let's leave recreation, fun and games, entertainment, and pleasure just where they belong. These are to be provided by or in the home/family. They sure enough are not part of the work of the church.

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Editor's Note:

It has been our pleasure to know the Roger Campbell family for a great many years. They were working as missionaries in Taiwan during the little more than three years we spent in Taiwan. Leaving Taiwan they moved to Kiev, Ukraine, where they spent about five years before coming to the U.S. Roger is one of the most studious people that I know, having learned two difficult languages well; Chinese and Russian. Roger is also one of the hardest workers that I have known in the church. Another commendable thing that I can say about him is that he has not gone off on some far-out doctrine as have some of the brethren that I have known over the years. We wish Roger, Donna and family the very best in their work with the Union Grove congregation near Cleveland, TN.



GOD'S DRAWING POWER

Bill Graddy

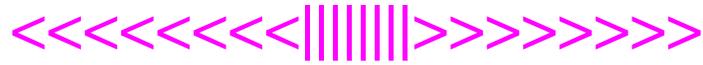
Scriptures ARE PLENTIFUL WARNING US AGAINST SERVING THE PHYSICAL, MAN, AND THE FLESH (Deut. 31:20; Jno. 6:36; I Jno. 2:15-17). Satan's appeal to the flesh did not only arouse Eve but is turning many from God to physical robots. As we use the physical things to impress others to become spiritual, so we are ensnared by them ourselves (2 Pet. 1:19). We will never grow spiritually and strengthen the inward man by appealing to material things (Eph. 3:16). If the gimmicks of non-biblical things will draw men to Christ, then why don't we just give \$100.00 bills to all that would attend the services? We have just as much authority to do that as we do to "dangle the carrot" of fun and games before them. If billboards and posters motivate others to see Christ in us, why not wear a black robe, put a cross on a chain around our necks, and carry a candle—light it if you prefer. Or, we could erect a neon sign of Christ and place it high enough above the building for all to see. We must realize it is the circumcision of the heart not physical circumcision. It must be the inward "cutting of the heart" not made with man's hands (Col. 2:11). Brethren, let me remind you:

"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with man's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:22-25).

We may make "broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments..." and place the icons all over the building, but Jesus called these people hypocrites (Matt. 23:5-13).

Those who are using the physical things to lure people to obey the gospel and live the Christian life should examine their motives. God looks upon the heart (I Sam. 16:7). Note the answer Jesus gave in John 6:26, "...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (Jno. 12:32). Christ is our drawing power, and He draws us through His word. It has been well said that he who loves man for money loves the money more than the man. Guy N. Woods concluded, "It would follow that one who loves the Lord for any other reason than because he is the Lord (and all this involves), loves that more than he does the Lord" (*The Gospel According to John*, by Guy N. Woods, p. 124). The incentives that Jesus uses to draw us unto him are spiritual and appeal to the spirit of man, not his flesh and vanity (Prov. 22:8).

#22 Sugar Creek



What Is The Work Of Church?

Remember the time in years gone by when nearly all members of the church were in agreement that the God-approved **Work Of The Church** was limited to the areas of **Evangelism, Edification, and Benevolence**? This was the case because Bible authority for work in other areas was not to be found. Today, it is far different with many, in that the work of the church includes a variety of things which are not found in the above categories.

Why have so many changed their view with regard to the work of the church? Has the teaching of the New Testament changed in some way? Surely, no one would answer this question in the affirmative. Could it be that the brethren of a few decades ago were not capable of understanding New Testament teaching on the subject? This doesn't seem likely, since there were as many brethren with a good knowledge of God's word then as today.

Since the above questions don't seem to explain the difference in the thinking of brethren today with regard to the work of the church, as compared with several years ago, it is needful to look for some other explanation. This brings up another very serious question. That question is: "Could the present trend of doing things without clear New Testament authority account for the change?" It seems to me that this is the only reasonable explanation. Strong evidence, which is a factor in this conclusion, is that so many things are being done today as a work of the church for which there is not even any attempt made to show that there is scriptural authority for the practice.

The results of following the principle of doing things for which there is no authority is no less than frightening to those who believe we should walk in "the old paths" of scriptural authority. The denominational religious world is virtually built upon this very principle of doing things for which there is no biblical authority. Already, we are seeing denominational teachings and practices cropping up within the Lord's church in widely scattered areas. I don't like to try to visualize what it will be like in another decade or two, if the present trend continues.

The following question comes to my mind quite often. Just why do our brethren want to leave the inspired pattern for the church and its work, as revealed in God's word? Some things are done due to ignorance, but when men with a knowledge of God's word go beyond what is written, ignorance is then ruled out. It would then seem that a major motive in such actions is that of pleasing men rather than God. This is not a new problem, but that makes it no less dangerous and destructive. Saul's disobedience in I Samuel 15, was a case of bowing to the will of men rather than doing God's will. Paul says we can't please men and be a servant of Christ (Gal. 1:10). Those engaging in works of the church which aren't authorized, or try to force such upon others, as elders some times do, take heed!

We encourage the careful reading of the two articles just prior to this one, since they also have to do with the work of the church.

- - - Walter W. Pigg



WHAT "A MESS"

Michael Light

The above is a copy of the "Out Front" column of the front page of the Religious section of the *Abilene Reporter News* (Saturday, October 2, 1999). One of our members brought their paper to me on Sunday asking if I had seen the announcement (I had overlooked it). I went to Abilene and attended this meeting at the Highland Church of Christ.

I arrived at the building at 6:15 p.m. and really had no idea what to expect. I had some experience with the "Walk to Emmaus" and knew it was an attempt to "connect" with the Spirit (over a weekend retreat). This program originated in the Methodist Church.

I feared that the Highland congregation might play taped instrumental music during the service. I was wrong on this. They did not play taped music; they had the real thing! THAT'S RIGHT, A FULL BLOWN BAND. Four WOMEN SINGERS sang and played a variety of instruments for the duration of the service. I walked into the auditorium and right into a concert. These women also led the singing (with the instruments) during the "service part" of the gathering.

They showed the Emmaus instructional video as advertised. The thrust of the video was consistent with what I have been told by those who have gone on "walks," namely, that on these retreats the SPIRIT REVEALS HIMSELF IN A VARIETY OF WAYS and guides (directly) those who seek His presence. The video is basically a collection of "testimonials," geared to convince the audience that something (the Holy Spirit) is missing and this "walk" can get them connected.

After the video the all girl band played and led the audience in more songs. All the songs were sung as the audience stood and swayed with hands in the air (in true Pentecostal fashion). Brethren, only the fact that I had not eaten since breakfast kept me from getting physically ill during all this vain worship (Matthew 15:7-9). During this segment of song the plate was also passed, to help sponsor more and more Emmaus events.

I was sure by this time that I could not be surprised by anything else that was to happen, but I was sadly mistaken. EDDIE SHARP (ACU instructor and the pulpit minister for the University congregation in Abilene) approached the stage. He read (after stating that the Spirit had been stirred) the "LITURGY." I don't know what other word to use for it. He asked the audience to get out their "purple book" (an Emmaus creed book, or some such thing). He would read certain sections or passages from the "PURPLE BOOK" (not the Bible, nor were the passages Scriptures) and the audience would repeat the lines. In others he would read a certain part, and they would finish by reading the rest and say amen, etc.... It was just like watching the Catholics doing their "liturgy."

He then led them in a CONFSSIONAL TYPE PRAYER where the whole crowd confessed to several sins (collectively) and asked to be forgiven. This segment was reminiscent of the group crying and mass repentance of the Promise Keepers. It was a written prayer that was read, very little feeling, just vain repetitions (Matthew 6).

After a few more songs, Brother Sharp took the stage again and presented the message of the hour. HE BEGAN BY BELITTLING THE CHURCH. In fact, his introductory comment was that as a church of Christ preacher he wasn't used to preaching to a crowd where everyone was invited. This is a blatant attempt to paint the church in a negative line. (I'm sure Jesus was impressed with this smart-alec man running down and making fun of His bride, the body He heads and for which he died (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23-25). Since when has the Lord's church not "invited"

everyone to come and study God's Word with us? This is a lie. Indeed, it is a disgraceful attempt to taint the reputation of members who have labored for years in evangelistic efforts, (p. 12)

sacrificing and working tirelessly to fund and build both the building at Highland, as well as the University building where Sharp preaches.

Other snide comments were made at the expense of the church as well. He then went on to laud the "Emmaus Movement" (He clearly holds it in much higher regard than the Lord's church). He plainly and specifically taught that it does not matter where you worship of what "tradition of faith" you are in, just serve Jesus. He said we are to follow the light of Jesus wherever it leads us. If it leads us to stay in our current church, fine. If it leads us to change churches, then we should do just that.

The Bible doesn't give us a smorgasbord of churches from which to choose. Ephesians 4:4ff makes it clear there is only one body. In Matthew 16:13-18, Jesus promised to build one church. Brother Eddie Sharp needs to put away his "purple book" and pick up his Bible and study, believe, and obey his Bible.

You cannot go to heaven and not be a member of the Lord's church. Acts 2:47 says that God adds the saved to the church. Eddie Sharp and his ACU buddies can scream and holler ecumenicalism and denominationalism as often and as loudly as they like, but it is still a damnable doctrine that will cost them their souls (Jno. 14:6; Matt. 7:21-23). There are no denominational churches in the Bible.

Perhaps the saddest phrase of the entire speech came during Brother Sharp's introduction when he informed the audience that he HAD DELIVERED THE MATERIAL WE WERE ABOUT TO HEAR TO HIS CLASS AT ACU earlier in the day. What a crying shame. Teaching our youth that they are part of a denomination that is nothing more than a man-made self-seeking body with no regard for Bible authority at all. Children are sent to a "Christian" school to be prepared to fight against the doctrines of Satan, yet Satan has infiltrated the very classrooms built by Christians. Unsuspecting youth are often turned over to these men and women who are bent on turning the church into a denomination.

It is high time many of us woke up to what is happening around us. Sticking our heads in the sand is not going to help. Refusing to see and listen to warnings will only allow those who have no love for the church to do more to defile as many of her children as possible..

After the "Sermon from Hell" (my title, not his, ML), Sharp announced that we were about to have COMMUNION (the Lord's Supper). Yes, that's right, it was Tuesday night (I stress again, these people don't care what the Bible says about the Lord's Supper or anything else. They will do anything they desire). He did mention that he realized many people were not used to this, and if they did not feel comfortable doing it then we could abstain (Mighty nice of him).

He then discussed the manner in which it would be taken (I don't know why it mattered at this juncture). He said that it would be "INCTION." that's how he spelled it. He then stated that he really thought the "Emmausians" just made it (inction) up. He said that "inction" was taking the piece of bread and dipping it into the juice then (after the bread soaked up the juice) it was to be taken all at once. I know, Jesus and his apostles partook of them separately (Matthew 26) as did the early church (I Cor. 11), but our brethren at Highland and Eddie Sharp are not impressed with that. They would rather please their denominational harlots and do what feels good to them than stay true to God's Way (James 4:4).

The communion itself was also VERY CATHOLIC in its order. Brother Sharp took a large piece of bread (a loaf). (I could not tell if it was leavened or unleavened. Again, I know it does not matter to them one way or the other). He stood down front (with his Emmaus cross around his neck) and broke off small pieces and gave it to the laity (people) as they passed by. He said something to them. It looked just like a Catholic priest blessing the "Sacrament." They would pass from him to another man who held a large goblet of juice. They would then dip the bread into the juice and take it. This fiasco concluded the service, and the crowd went out to the foyer where the "host" congregation (Highland) had prepared quite a spread of snacks.

It was altogether a sickening and sad night. I could not help but think of the changes in that congregation since its formation in 1948—how it used to be a "Herald of Truth," but that has long since passed. Over 25 years ago Lynn Anderson declared from Highland's pulpit that the church of Christ was a big sick denomination. He emphasized "big," "sick," and "denomination." While the Lord's church is not a denomination, the Highland church

and churches such as Highland are. Highland should stand as a warning to us all. We should contend for the faith (Jude 3), and mark them which cause divisions among us (Rom. 16:17-18).



Jesus: The Head of the Church

Alan Adams, Assistant Editor

If one were to set out listing the various descriptions and appellations of Jesus which are found in the Bible, it would take a while. There are the figurative or metaphorical: Rock (I Cor. 10:4), Shepherd (I Pet. 5:4), Word (Jno. 1:1), Door, Way, Truth, Life (Jno. 10:9; 14:6), etc. There are the titular: The Lord and The Christ (Acts 2:36), The Potentate and The King (I Tim. 6:15). There are the literal [**Note:** *Literal* does not mean more *real* or *true*]: God (Jno. 1:1), Son of God (Rev. 2:18), Son of Man (Rev. 1:13).

The burden of the present article is to consider the Bible's designation and description of Jesus as the "head of the church." It would be a simple matter to note passages of Scripture which affirm Jesus to be "head of the church" (e.g. Eph. 5:23), but we need to go beyond mere observation. Just as important as the meaning of these names, titles and figures is the application of the same to our thinking and the way we live.

DEFINITION: FIGURATIVE OR LITERAL

"Head," like most nouns, has a literal meaning out of which has grown figurative applications. Remember one thing: The figurative application of a given word still retains some aspect or function of its literal meaning. For example: Jesus is the "door" because that's the way you "get in" to the Father. "Head" refers to that appendage attached to the very top of the human body. It is self-evident that the "head" is that part of the human body which ultimately decides, wills, and controls the rest of the body. The comfort or success of any person depends on whether or not he "uses his head." It's easy to see how this word has been appropriated to describe many other areas of life. It is used as a noun to describe a person who is in a position of authority. "He is the head of a large company." It is used as a verb: "He was chosen to head the campaign."

OBVIOUS APPLICATION FOR THE CHURCH

The most readily obvious implication of Jesus as "head of the church" is that of **authority**. It's so frustrating when people emphasize one aspect of Jesus and His relationship to us, and ignore others. Some only want to think of Jesus as Savior, but not as Master. Some want the Lamb, but not the Lion (Rev. 5:5-6). It's kind of like some children who only want to see parents as Dispensaries and not Disciplinaryans.

As "head of the church," Jesus is ruler, controller, and guide of the church. What is the practical application of this? Paul says that this authority of Jesus extends to our every action and every word spoken: "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). Acts 4:7 explains "in the name of the Lord Jesus" as meaning "by his power or authority." A church of Christ, and a "member" thereof (I Cor. 12:13), is obligated to act and speak only at the behest, direction or permission of Him who is the Head. It is the height of hypocrisy to give lip service to Jesus as Savior and, by our deeds reject Him as Head.

APPLICATION IN OTHER MATTERS OF LIFE

We must recognize the headship of Jesus in the order of things. He is the Head of the church, He is the "Shepherd and Bishop of [our] souls (I Pet. 2:25), yet He has delegated authority and control over the daily affairs of local churches to elders or bishops (I Tim. 3:1). To refuse to submit to the eldership of the local church is to reject

Jesus as the "head of the church." Jesus is equally the "head" of women as of men, yet, in our affairs within marriage and the church, we must observe the principles of authority and subordination. "The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman *is* the man, and the head of Christ *is* God" (I Cor. 11:3). "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23). Within "assemblies of the saints" (I Cor. 14:33b), women are not "permitted to speak" (vv. 34-35; Cf. I Tim. 2:11-12). Here the word "speak" comes from the Greek word *laleo* which has a variety of connotations. Under **Heading No. 5**, in *Thayer's*, he gives the meaning: "To use words in order to declare one's mind and disclose one's thoughts, to speak" (P. 368). He goes on to point out that *laleo* is "often used in the New Testament of teachers,—of Jesus, the apostles, and others" (P. 369). He lists I Cor. 14:34-35 as an example of "speaking" as a public teacher or preacher. People who respect Jesus as Head of the church will respect His order of and delegation of authority.

AN APPLICATION TO THE WORLD

Neither is this Headship of Jesus limited only to the church, quite to the contrary. Reread Eph. 1:20-23. Paul says that (1) God raised Jesus from the dead, (2) Sat Him at His right hand, (3) Put Him in a position above all rule, authority, power, dominion and every name, and (4) Put all things in subjection under Him. Note carefully: Verse 22 mentions "all things." This does **not** refer to all of the things or affairs of the church (although, it would certainly include them). The italicized words *to be* are unnecessary. A literal translation of the passage says, God "gave him as head over everything to the church." He is *ipso facto* "the head of the church." It must be noted that every human being on the face of planet earth is amenable to the Headship and authority of Christ. It is for this very reason ("all authority hath been given unto him both in heaven and on earth") that we must go forth and "preach the gospel to every creature" (Matt. 28:18; Mk. 16:15-16). This recent notion that the Law of Christ, the New Testament, doesn't apply to the non-Christian is a flat-out rejection of Jesus as "head over all things." Actually, this notion is not too recent. A brother E. C. Fuqua proposed it several years ago in a debate with Thomas Warren. This false doctrine of *limited authority* of Christ arose out of an effort to make the teaching of Jesus relative to Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage **not** apply to non-Christians. The late James Bales also promoted this false doctrine. The Bible doctrine of Christ as "head over all things" makes it clear that what He says applies to all men. It makes me very sad that many people have rejected Bible teaching on Marriage and Divorce, and it makes me sadder yet, that in order for them to obey the Gospel, they must repent of their unscriptural marriages. Still sadder are those preachers who try to weasel and squirm around the plain teaching of Jesus on this topic. This is so unseemly and even unmanly. There is not one single accountable human being on the face of this planet who is not amenable to the law of Christ who is head over all things.

HOW DO WE ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN THIS "HEADSHIP" TO OURSELVES?

How do we claim and keep Jesus as our "head"? John says "whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God: he that abideth in the teachings, the same hath both the Father and the Son" (2 Jno. 9). the Headship of Jesus cannot be separated from the "teaching" of Jesus.

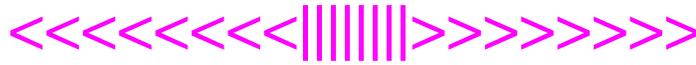
ANOTHER IMPORTANT APPLICATION

Jesus as "head of the church" also relates to the idea of the **uniqueness** and **exclusiveness** of the church. It is there that the idea of Jesus as "head" is both literal and metaphorical. The church is "his body" (Eph. 1:23). There is "one body" (4:4). The picture of a body with more than one head is a biological aberration. No less grotesque is the picture of a single head attached to many bodies. To be sure: Each individual Christian is a "member" of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13); each is a "branch" of the "vine" which is Christ (Jno. 15:6), but, there is no such thing in the Bible as many bodies or branches (i.e. denominations) attached to the one head, Jesus. Jesus is the "head of the church and the savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23), thus, it should be abundantly clear that those and only those who are "members" of the body or church of which Christ is the "head" may in fact call Christ "savior."

Jesus cannot be the "head" of the Catholic Church because it began several centuries after he established His church. Even more so, he cannot be "head" of any Protestant denomination. They all came into being within the last five hundred years.

Let us be determined that the doctrine of Jesus: The Head of the Church, will not merely be a trite cliché or the title of an article.

103 S. Willow St., Cowan, TN 37318



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Total Jan. & Feb. contribution	2,928.00

"That we might be fellowhelpers

to the truth" (3 John 9)

Banner of Truth Financial Report

Jan. & Feb. 2000

Balance on hand Jan. 1, 2000	10,934.15
January & February contributions	<u>2,928.00</u>
Total funds available	13,862.15
Jan. & Feb. expenses:	
Mailing <i>Banner of Truth</i>	1,104.68
Mailing labels	47.42
E-mail	24.00
Misc.	<u>1.45</u>
Total Jan. & Feb. expenses	1,177.55
Total funds available	13,862.15
Less Jan. & Feb. expenses	<u>1,177.55</u>
Balance on hand Feb. 29	12,684.60

*We express our sincere thanks for the most generous way in which our brethren are supporting our efforts through **Banner of Truth**. It is a great encouragement to us when we have no need to wonder about the financial support which is necessary to carry on our work. We appreciate greatly everyone who chooses to have a part in our work in*

whatever amount. - Editor

READERS' RESPONSE

"I really appreciate your stand for the truth as you put forth in Banner of Truth. Of course being a Christian you are taking the only stand that you can take! God's word is truth! I, too, am greatly concerned about the direction the church is going....Thanks again for all your good work - **Homer Lloyd.**" - **AR.** (*I couldn't agree with you more that the only stand a Christian can take is for the truth. It is unfortunate, however, that so many don't know this or either simply don't care. The results are the same.* - Ed.)

"Have seen and heard so much about how the Lord's church is going denominational. I saw some of your papers at a congregation I visited and was surprised at all the preachers who are preaching false doctrine....- **Wanda Thompson.**" - **MO.** (*The condition is much worse than many realize, and the indifference on the part of many only makes it even worse.* - Editor).

"We enjoy your paper very much and would like to get on your mailing list. We are sending 40.00 to help in this work - **James D. Jackson.**" - **TN.** (*We have added your name to our mailing list. Thanks so much for the check to help. If you know of others who would profit by reading BOT, send us their names. We would like to increase our mailing list to 6,000 this year* - Editor).

"One of our friends picked up the April and Sept. issues of Banner of Truth. We enjoyed them. Since you said you liked new readers, thought I would send for more of them. Please put us on your mailing list. My husband (74) still speaks on Sunday A.M. at a little country church out of Licking, MO - **Otis and Lola Brown.**" - **MO.** (*Good to know that at 74 a brother is still preaching. After all, 74 is not so old (since that's my age). I believe I am busier now than I have ever been and I don't think of "retiring" in the sense of quitting preaching, as long as I am physically and mentally able. Thanks for the check to help in our work* - Editor).

"I enjoy Banner of Truth very much. Enclosed is a small check. Keep up the good work - **Mozelle Brown.**" - **AL.** (*Thanks very much for being a "fellowhelper to the truth." It is the truth which makes men free* - Editor).

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Banner of Truth can be viewed on bro. David Lemmons' website at the address below:

<http://www.hcis.net/users/dlemmons/BOTlist.htm>

Help us reach a circulation of 6,000 in this year of 2000. We can send a bundle of up to 16 copies for only \$1.13 in postage. Why not request a bundle and be responsible for seeing they are put into the hands of brethren who would profit by them? - Editor.