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Sunday Services:

Bible Classes 9:00 a.m.  
Worship 10:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

#### READERS' RESPONSE CONTINUED

"A donation enclosed to help in the publishing of Banner of Truth. I appreciate receiving it" – **Jimmy Clark, TX.** (*Many thanks for your help. Editor.*)

"Please remove our name off your mailing list. Thank you." – **TX.** (*Thank you; we will comply – Editor.*)

"Thanks for sending us Banner of Truth. It is nice reading material that you know is sound" – **Jim and Jackie Patchell, AR.** (*Thank you for your interest in our efforts in the Lord's cause. Give our regards to family. –Editor.*)

"Your firm stand for the Truth is an inspiration for all. Please continue your tireless effort to produce B.O.T. May the Lord continue to bless you and sister Naomi" – **Ed Armstrong, TX.** (*Thanks for your encouragement. It makes us feel that our efforts are worthwhile. Early next year we will begin our 15th year since we started publishing Banner of Truth. I had my 80th birthday last month but trust that I will have some more years to work. The paper goes into nearly every state, and several foreign countries. Response from readers is nearly all positive, but we receive some criticism, which we expect – Editor.*)

"We are a young congregation in Kenya and kindly request you to add us to your mailing list if we can get a good number. Thanks in advance" – **Kalamindi church of Christ, Kenya, Africa.**

"Will you please add the following to your mailing list to receive Banner of Truth. I gave them my last copy I received and they requested that I send to have them put on your mailing list. I've been receiving BOT for a good while and feel it's one of the best publications in the brotherhood. Thank you for your efforts and work to further the cause of Christ" – **Tommy D. Boothe, TX.** (*Thanks for you comments and for passing BOT on to someone else who desires to receive it – Editor.*)

#### FOR YOUR ADDRESS BOOK

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## A PORTRAIT OF A LIBERAL

Webster defines the word "portrait" as: "1. a likeness of a person, esp. of the face, as a painting, drawing, sculpture, or photograph. 2. a verbal picture or description, usu. of a person."

In years gone by, when I had more time, I did some pencil drawing and oil painting as a hobby. Most of my drawing and painting was of landscapes or seascapes, but I did try my hand at doing some portraits in oil and pencil. I never advanced beyond novice in my art work, but I did learn some things about portraits.

One objective in doing a portrait is to accentuate certain features of the individual. A person can be made to look peaceful, friendly, serious, humorous, evil or mean, etc. As certain things can be accentuated in a painting or drawing, it is also true with regard to a "verbal picture." In the following discussion our main emphasis will be upon the verbal portrait of a liberal. There are, however, some things about a literal painting or drawing which remind us of verbal portraits. There are certain likenesses and also things which are very unlike.

One thing I learned about portraits is to avoid painting an open mouth. This is very difficult. It would also be difficult to paint a portrait of an open mouth to represent a liberal. The liberal

mouth may speak from both sides, saying different things from each side.

Another difficulty would be to get the right tone or skin color, since like a chameleon, the liberal often changes color to suit his surroundings. He can look like those with whom he is associating in different situations.

Another problem is the painting of the eyes. In a literal painting of a person's face, the eyes can say a great deal. With the liberal, his eyes may be closed, and often are. Like the Pharisees, there are certain thing he does not want to see.

It would be difficult to paint eyes which are looking for something new and different. But not so in a verbal portrait of the liberal. He is looking for something new, something different. It could be a "Holy hug line," or worship composed primarily of entertainment.

Another difficulty would be the painting of an honest face on a liberal. The liberal is not honest with God or with himself. In the first place, he does not take God at his word. That is not being honest with God. In the second place, one is not being honest with himself when he deceives himself, or puts his own will before the will of God. →

## BANNER OF TRUTH

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*Continued from Page 1*

From religious history we read of a group of religious people called "Gnostics." That word has to do with knowledge, and those people claimed to have a superior knowledge. I don't know of any way one could accurately portray a Gnostic's face in a painting, but it can be done by a verbal painting of a liberal. Some, like Rubel Shelly (one of many such like) profess to understand "God talk," whereas most of us can't. They feel their knowledge is superior. They, however, "know" things which aren't true.

We now leave the discussion of differences or likenesses between the actual painting or drawing of ones face and the verbal picture of a liberal, and give our attention to liberals from the verbal standpoint, both in picture and characteristics. We begin by defining the word "liberal."

**Liberal Defined.** The term "liberal" has a variety of meanings. In this instance we are using it in the area of religion. But even so, it is still necessary to qualify what is meant by the term. Even within the church there are some who would call me a liberal, yet, others

might call me a radical. But the term is being used in this discussion in its most commonly accepted sense among those who consider the Bible to be God's inspired word, to mean those who do not believe that God's word must be fully submitted to in order to have His approval. They don't take God at his word.

The "liberal" may include that person who professes to believe in God's word, yet in teaching and practice ignores or treats it very lightly. The actions may show much more clearly what a person actually believes than does what may be said.

Liberals often refuse to focus God's word in areas where it disagrees with their practice. This is some times evidenced by refusal to read anything which would call in question that which they desire to practice. It is somewhat like the small child with whom an adult is playing the game of "peek-a-boo." The child will put its hand over its eyes, thinking that makes it unseen. Some adults seem to think that if they refuse to listen to God's word when it condemns them, that it will somehow go away or disappear. Perhaps they think that if they do not face God's word, they will not be guilty and their conscience will not make them uneasy.

The liberal is very likely to use the word "love" in an erroneous way. Love (agape), as it is used more than two hundred times in the New Testament, has the idea of doing that which is for one's betterment. It is used in the love we are to have for God, for Christ, and for our fellowman. That love is shown by doing the will of God, obeying His commands. Yet, the liberal often uses the word to mean compromise with God's word. It doesn't believe in "hurting one's feelings," or speaking "negative" things, though they be from God's word.

It is typical of the liberal to assume the right to "criticize the critics," but to oppose "judging." In the "Response from Readers" of Banner of Truth, it is not unusual to receive a real "going over" for being critical of some false teacher. It is as though these people believe they have a special right to lash out with unjust criticism with immunity. I cannot recall a single critic pointing out the difference between the "judgment" which our Lord commands (John 7:24), and unjust judging which is condemned in Matt. 7:1-5. Is this an indication that the liberal doesn't know, or is it an indication that he wants to accept only that with which he agrees? †

## Is Division Good or Bad?

Depending on the circumstances, this question is one that could be answered either way and be true. That there is a failure to recognize this may help account for the fact that a great many see "division" as bad, period.

It is true that there is abundant evidence in the New Testament that unity among God's people is indeed God-pleasing, and should be a high priority among those who strive to serve faithfully. Paul commanded the brethren at Corinth to "speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10). The real "Lord's prayer," (Jno. 17:20-21), was that those who believed on him through words of the apostles would be "one" as He and the Father are one. A greater example of unity cannot be imagined.

Though God desires unity among His people just as He desires many other things, men, even members of the church, behave in ways which are completely contrary to His will. Acting contrary to God's will began in the garden of Eden.

God desires unity, but this unity must be based upon the believing and doing of His all-sufficient word (2 Tim. 3:16-17). People are some times together when unity is absent. And the time may come when division is necessary, that is, a ceasing of fellowship. When brethren "transgress" and fail to "abide" in the doctrine of Christ, they do not have the approval of the Father and the Son (2 Jno. 9) and the faithful should no longer be in fellowship with those in error. In this case, division is a good thing on the part of those who continue in the doctrine of Christ.

Let's answer the question we've raised. Division is *bad* when it is within a congregation, and is due to some adopting error and will not repent. This is true even if the congregation remains together. Division is *good* when brethren stand uncompromisingly for the truth, and withdraw themselves from those who refuse to walk in the light of truth. When division is good, it is bad for those who have espoused error and brought about the division. When division occurs, wrong has been done, but those on the side of truth are not guilty.

—Editor

## New Preacher at Hickory Grove

Virgil Hale and his wife, Dana, began work with the Hickory Grove congregation in October. They are well known in this area, having worked here for several years. The Hale's phone number is: (270) 767-0625.

Whereas I preach for the Dexter church, the Hickory Grove church is the publisher of Banner of Truth. I print Banner of Truth at Hickory Grove, and the paper is put together and made ready for mailing there. A number of people from the Dexter congregation and some from Hickory Grove contribute much of the labor.—Editor

## Readers' Response

"Please take me off your mailing list" — CA. (*Thanks for letting us know. — Editor.*)

"Please put my mother on your mailing list. She is 87 and still enjoys attending every service" **Jean Willard, AR.** (*My heart goes out to those who are up in years who still serve God in a faithful way. It has been a great encouragement to me to hear from quite a number of sisters who are in their golden years, and who are still very concerned about doing God's will. They also express concern when they know things are not what they should be in the realm of spiritual things.— Editor.*)

"We appreciate so much your sending Banner of truth to the congregation here. It's good to receive a paper that teaches sound doctrine" — **Downtown church of Christ, AR.** (*Thanks for your encouraging words and your help with Banner of Truth — Editor.*)

"I picked up your paper in a hospital waiting room and enjoyed reading it. Would like you to put me on your mailing list. Thanks for 'Banner of Truth'" — **Garland Barnwell, AR.** (*We've added your name. — Editor.*)

"Brother Walter, I hope everything is going well with you. You're in our prayers here in Alabama. May God bless you in the work you're doing and in your everyday life. I know you'll be much better soon. Take care" — **Jake and Rose Taft, AL.** (*Thanks for your kind words and prayers. I am doing better now than for a while, but still not back to normal. My doctor wants me to have lung biopsies, but I will wait for a few months before deciding. — Editor.*) →

## Do We Actually Love The Church?

The first line of a familiar hymn is: “I love thy kingdom, Lord, the house of thine abode; The church our blest Redeemer saved with His own precious blood. I love thy church, O God! Her wall before Thee stand, Dear as the apple of thine eye, And graven on Thy hand.” From a scriptural standpoint we have every right to sing those words. The Lord’s kingdom is the church (Matt. 16:18-19), it is His house, in the sense of a family (I Tim. 3:15). The “church of God” was purchased “with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). But the question I’m raising is, DO WE ACTUALLY LOVE THE CHURCH? Can we truthfully sing that we love the church when our actions say otherwise? If we actually love the church how can we do some of the things we do, and fail to do some of the things we should do? Let us consider a few examples.

IF WE LOVE THE CHURCH, why don’t we “seek” it and “his righteousness” first (Matt. 6:33)? The fact of the matter is that the church seldom takes first place in our lives. How many of us see the church as the most important thing in this life, even more important than any person, place or thing? Is it worth living and dying for? How do we show it?

IF WE LOVE THE CHURCH, why aren’t we “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”? (I Cor. 15:58). A great many are unwilling to give three or four hours each week to participate in “the assembly” where we should “consider one another to provoke unto love and good works” (Heb. 10:24-25). The “work of the Lord” involves much more than attending church services, but how much does the average member do?

IF WE LOVE THE CHURCH, why don’t we demand that “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) be preached and taught? The church is to be the “pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15), but some will not “receive the love of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:10), and some will become the enemy of the one who speaks the truth (Gal. 4:16).

IF WE LOVE THE CHURCH, why will we allow the church to suffer at the hands of those carnally minded people who cause “strife and division”? (I Cor. 3:3),

and those who are “tattlers and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not”? (I Tim. 5:13). Why will we tolerate “liars” and “any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine”? (I Tim. 1:10). Why are we willing to “Give place to the devil”? (Eph. 4:27).

IF WE LOVE THE CHURCH, why do we fail to do the Lord’s will with regard to church discipline, which may require the breaking of fellowship? The Bible says to “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly” (2 Thess. 3:6). Paul says to “Mark them which cause division and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). If a brother is a “railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one not to eat.” says Paul (I Cor. 5:11).

Brethren, if we love the church, will we not uphold it in the face of all opposition? Will we not “put on the whole armour of God” and then “stand against the wiles of the devil”? (Eph. 6:11). We cannot expect the church to win the battle against the devil unless we are willing to allow the Lord to use us to “contend for the faith” (Jude 3). If we are not willing to stand against evil, have we not become the enemy of ourselves and of the church? The idea that problems will simply go away is not based on the truth of God. Our Lord was willing to die for His church, and how can we say we love it when we will not even stand up for it, much less die for it? If the Lord’s body being torn to pieces by wicked and ungodly men will not call people to action, what would do so?

DO WE ACTUALLY LOVE THE CHURCH? If our answer is “Yes,” as it should be, how do our deeds testify to it?

The unmistakable, and only, way of showing our love for Christ and His church is: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (Jno. 14:15). Again, Jesus said, “If a man love me, he will keep my words...” (Jno. 14:23). There is no way to love Christ and not also love His church. We may profess love for both Christ and His church, but it is by our actions that we speak more convincingly. It is often true that “actions speak louder than words.”

—Editor

Another thing a liberal may do is to categorize God’s word into “big things” and “little things.” There is no question but that some of God’s word is of greater importance to us than other of His word. But the liberal may consider only that which he classifies as “big things” as being important, while that which he classifies as “little things” of little importance. The great tragedy of this is that some things classified as “big things” may be relegated to the category of “little things.” Seldom will one hear the liberal putting emphasis on such things as: The distinctiveness of the one true church; condemnation of sin; use of instrumental music in worship; fellowshiping error; immodest dress; dancing, modern unreliable versions of the Bible, in the category of “important things.”

Liberals are some times quick to engage in the “blame game.” Their blame is against those who still want to walk in the “the old paths” (Jeremiah 6:16). Our brethren who rightly oppose the use of instrumental music in worship, are some times accused of causing division or disruption of unity. They fail to recognize or admit that some division must come, but that division is not to be blamed upon those who continue to stand up for the truth. Such unjust blaming is about as ridiculous as Hillary Clinton blaming hers husband’s adultery, lying and other sins on the “religious right.”

Great numbers often appeal to the liberal. An example of that occurred several years ago in Missouri. There was a discussion of the Crossroads Movement. Brother Gene Jones said there must be something right about it, because of the size of their contributions and the number of converts. This shows a clear lack of reasoning. If numbers were a sign of “right,” just think how “right” Billy Graham would be, yet he has never to my knowledge, told anyone what God requires for salvation. When it comes to giving, many of the members of the Jim Jones cult gave up everything they had, in support of death dealing error.

There are other characteristics which could be emphasized in a verbal portrait of a liberal, but we trust these will suffice to enable us to see some warning signs. God gives a verbal portrait of His own, in his flawless painting, as contained in His inerrant, inspired word. Wise are they who look to it for the painting of their portrait.

—Editor

## What is “Good Preaching” and “Good Writing”?

It is interesting to note the standard by which some people determine what is “Good Preaching” or “Good Writing.” One person may determine good preaching and good writing to be the case while another may think entirely different. But there should be some things which would help us to determine what is good and what isn’t good in these areas. We want to examine a few things relative to this.

One person named a certain preacher and said he was a “real good preacher, he never speaks against anyone.” Another person said a certain person was a real good writer, “He doesn’t criticize things.” Indications are that quite a few others think this same way, though they may come out and say so.

Important questions are: 1. What makes a person a good preacher and a good writer. 2. What standard should be used to identify one as such? Are we talking about “good” on the basis of what God’s word describes as good, or, are we talking about what we like? Are we talking about objective truth and its application, or, are we talking about our feelings?

If we were allowed to make our own definitions of words, all manner of things could be set forth as good, whether right or wrong. The prophet, Isaiah, speaks of those who “call evil good; and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Isa. 5:20). Man-made definitions, when contrary to God’s word, are deadly dangerous. Much religious error has come about due to this very thing. Not only do people some times disagree with what God sets forth as good and what is evil, it can be a case of a person not actually knowing what is good and what is not. This principle would apply to a “good preacher” and a “good writer.”

As noted in the beginning, some consider a preacher and a writer as “good” when they do not engage in negatives in their preaching and writing. But is that a safe and God-approved method of making such a determination? Don’t we agree that the only correct answer to a question involving spiritual things is found in what God says and wants, not that which we may say or want? At least, we all ought to agree on this, but sadly, some do not. →

For those who posit the “no negatives makes a good preacher or writer,” we have a few questions. These questions involve things clearly set forth in the New Testament and should be considered in all seriousness. We begin by asking:

**Was Paul a good preacher and writer?** We’ve never heard Paul preach in person. But it seems reasonable that the same manner in which he wrote would have characterized his preaching. Was he being “good” when he criticized Demas for forsaking him, “having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10)? What of Paul’s warning relative to Hymenaeus and Alexander, who had made some have shipwreck with their faith (1 Tim. 1:19-20)? Was Paul being “good” when he warned that the words of “Hymenaeus and Philetus” “will eat as doth a canker” (2 Tim. 2:17)? Let us not overlook that catalogue of the eighteen “works of the flesh” which Paul said would keep from inheriting “the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21). Was Paul “good” in setting forth all those negatives? Didn’t Paul speak with authority? Then, there is the very negative statement of Paul when he said: “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18). Note that Paul had told the brethren “often” about these enemies of the cross of Christ. Was Paul wrong?

**Was John a good writer?** Was John demonstrating good writing when issued the following statement: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). The “spirits” here mentioned are obviously teachers. In John’s second letter he writes: “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. . . .” In his third epistle, John calls attention to Diotrephes, of whom he said, “Wherefore, if I come I will remember his deeds, which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words. . . .” (vv. 9-10). Now, a question. Was John a “good writer” or not? If not, by whose standards?

**Was Christ a good preacher?** We don’t have the writings of Christ, but we do have much of what he preached or taught. In Matthew 7:15 we have a record of what Christ said relative to false prophets. “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” In Matthew 23, our Lord uses some very powerful and to the

point words in condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees. Were the words of Christ “good” when He criticized those in error?

So much for the above examples. There are many others that could be given. That many negatives are found in the writings and speaking of the individuals named is a matter of record, God’s record. Therefore, those who categorize speakers and writers “good” because they are not negative face serious problems. If writers and speakers in our time are good because they are not negative, then by implication those negative writers and speakers in New Testament times were NOT GOOD. Who wants to take that position? But consistency demands it.

**Good speakers and writers by God’s standard.** We have noted what makes one a good speaker or writer in the minds of some. We should be seriously concerned as to what makes one a good speaker and writer by God’s standards.

Since we are going to be judged by the words of Christ (Jno. 12:48), would not a good speaker and writer abide by the “doctrine of Christ”? John says, “He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 Jno. 9). That is, one has the approval of the Father and the Son, and that is indeed good.

Paul declares, “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Does this not suggest that a good preacher and writer by God’s standard is one who doesn’t leave out part of God’s word, as some do? When “all the counsel of God” is declared it will contain both positives and negatives. When either positives or negatives are left out of God’s word, it is a perverted gospel.

The standard by which some judge preachers and writers, is the extent to which they please listeners and readers. Paul didn’t use that standard. In fact, he said, “For do I persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). Paul asked another related question, “Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16).

By God’s standard, one is a good preacher or writer when Truth is upheld at all costs. This is verified in many instances in the New Testament. Truth makes men free. The good preacher and writer will only preach and write the same. —Editor

(his “law”) “died through the body of Christ.” With Jesus, he/it was “nailed to the cross” (Col 2:14). Thus, the Jews, once joined to Moses, are now “joined to another.” They have been “discharged from the law.”

It is in this connection, and it alone, that Paul speaks of “new. . . spirit” and “old. . . letter.” Whatever else is meant by “spirit” and “letter,” it should be clear here, as in II Corinthians 3, that Spirit = New Testament, and Letter = Old Testament.

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## Milestone Not Claiming Milestone Status, But Working On It

The Lord selected the “seven churches that are in Asia” (Rev 1:4) as a kind of archetype of local churches of Christ throughout the Christian dispensation. Using each or all of them as an overlay, we can see what our local congregation looks like, and how it looks to the Lord. That can be an educational albeit scary proposition. There are not likely many Smyrnas and Philadelphias out there; but, neither were there then. Most churches, like those seven churches, have some good points and some not so good points. The important thing is that we be honest about both: praise God and commend the brethren for the good; confess to God and show the brethren the flaws and failures and how to correct them. The Milestone church of Christ in Cantonment [Pensacola] Florida is a church that works hard, is happy with her successes, and yet is humbled by her deficiencies, but determined to do better.

Milestone has an eldership of five. These men do not view the church as their personal fiefdom, rather as a place to serve. They plan, promote and participate in positive works for the Milestone church; yet, they know they still have a long way to go. This eldership is committed to evangelizing and converting folks right here in our own back door.

Milestone is committed to fraternal relations with sound churches in and out of the Pensacola area. Ours is a platform of bonhomie: We rejoice with our brethren and their good works; we love the brotherhood. All of these horrible hurricanes have really brought this goodwill to the fore. Scores of churches and individuals have entrusted Milestone with tens of thousands of dollars to use in disaster relief. Those dollars plus a considerable contribution by Milestone herself

Under the Old Testament there was no *spirit of the law* or *letter of the law*, nor under the New. Whence then, such ideas as, “The Pharisees emphasized the letter of the law, and neglected the spirit of the Law,” or “The letter of the law may condemn something, but the spirit of the law says we must be merciful”? Not from the Bible. These and such like come straight from the Chimney Corner. —AA

are being used. We have personally purchased and driven great loads of goods into Mississippi and Alabama, and have sent funds to aid a sister church in Louisiana in her own disaster relief efforts. Milestone believes in and practices church cooperation.

Those outside Pensacola perhaps know Milestone best because of her preacher training work: The Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies. This school has already produced some topnotch preachers who are capably and faithfully serving the brotherhood. The school is growing and now has a fully formed and functioning alumni association. NWFSBS is not the tail that wags the dog. It is a work of the Milestone church of Christ, and a work that is supported by dozens and dozens of churches and brethren. NWFSBS is sound, focused, and apolitical. We are dedicated to the depletion of, rather than contribution to, the ranks of dysfunctional preachers. This past year has been a good one and the prospects ahead are bright for the NWFSBS. If you know of aspiring preachers among you, you would be doing them a favor by putting them in contact with the Milestone church and the NWFSBS [(850) 479-8878, 474-9257]. We would be honored and pleased as well for you or your congregation to cooperate with us financially in supporting a student(s) during their two year tenure here.

We would be tinkled pink for brethren to come and check us out. We are right off of I-10 on the north side of Pensacola (4051 Stefani Road, Cantonment, FL 32533). Milestone hovers right at 100 in her assemblies, and we are gradually adding to that number. We are a friendly bunch, and there is no way you can get in and out of here without being greeted profusely and several times. —AA

## Spirit of the Law *Versus* Letter of the Law? (III)

Some “Chimney Corner Scriptures” are relatively harmless — such as, “Spare the rod, and spoil the child” — others are not, as they give rise to both false and dangerous implications. Our title and topic is an example of such.

This man-made distinction between a *spirit* level and a *letter* level of law is very dangerous in that it leads people to think that strict adherence to God’s Word is not mandatory so long as we are maintaining the “spirit” of His Law or Word. As you might guess, in such a case, the “spirit” of God’s Law varies with each individual. Alexander Campbell, in his great sermon on The Law, pointed out common, yet man-made, divisions of the Law of Moses into the so-called moral, ceremonial, and judicial law. He cited the dangers of such artificial divisions; his comments are relevant to our present study,

But, like many distinctions handed down to us from mystical Babylon, they bear the mark on their forehead that certifies to us, their origin is not Divine. If this distinction were harmless, if it did not perplex, bias and confound, rather than assist the judgment in determining the sense of the apostolic writing, we should let it pass unnoticed; but justice to the truth requires us to make a remark or two on this division of the law.

Some, even brethren, believe that *too* strict an insistence on, and adherence to, this thing they call the “letter” of the Law, will somehow result in one’s missing, and thereby violating, what they call the “spirit” of the Law. At present, in this series of articles, it is our intent to show that the passages (Rom 2:27,29; 7:6; 2Cor 3:6) which bring the terms “spirit” and “letter” (and sometimes “law”) together, have nothing to do with any such bifurcation of the meaning and application of Divine Law.

The *meaning* of Divine Law (in our present case, the New Testament) can only be ascertained by understanding the words in which it is written; that meaning is one. *Having derived said meaning, we either live in harmony with it, or we do not. There’s no such thing as one being too strict or meticulous in the observance thereof.* Nor, in a similar vein, are there any grounds for concluding that the christian is under

less obligation to obey every “jot and tittle” of the Law of Christ, than was the Jew to obey the Law of Moses.

We have concluded that “spirit” and “letter” in II Corinthians 3:6 refer to the New and Old Testaments respectively. Now we ask,

DOES ROMANS 7:6 TEACH THE IDEA OF A “LETTER OF THE LAW” AND A “SPIRIT OF THE LAW”? Again, as in II Corinthians 3, we have the words “spirit” and “letter” brought together and contrasted; the “spirit” being described as “new...” and the “letter” as “old...” This passage, in my opinion, is much easier to understand than the Corinthians’ passage.

Romans 1-9 comprises a *conceptual* discussion of the “gospel... the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). Within that framework we can place chapters 7-8 under the heading: *The Governing Factor* of the Gospel. Chapter 7 shows that it is not the Law of Moses; and chapter 8 shows that it **is** the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.

Verses 1-6 show that those once under the Law of Moses had been delivered from it. Verses 7-12 show that the Law itself was good. Verses 13-21 show that it was not the Law, but sin, which brought about spiritual death. Verses 24-25, in a very poignant way, show that there has to be some other way for sinners to be “delivered out of the body of this death.” (Rom 7:24).

In verses 1-6, Paul uses beautifully the analogy of husband and wife to show that 1) the Law of Moses is “dead,” so consequently, 2) Those once “joined” to it, and under its “dominion” have now been “discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.”

There are legitimate grounds for rendering verse one, “the law hath dominion over a man for so long time as **it** liveth (or, “as there is life”).” I think this makes the analogy very smooth. “Husband” = Law of Moses, and “woman (wife)” = a Jew. Paul’s point: For a Jew to be simultaneously “joined” to Moses and Christ (each being law-givers, and each man standing for his respective “law”) would be the same as a woman being simultaneously “joined” to two husbands — that is, both would be “adulteresses.” Moses †

## DRESSING FOR WORSHIP

Roger D. Campbell

Jehovah God, our great Creator, is worthy of praise. “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4:11).

The Psalmist stated, “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker” (Ps. 95:6). Yes, as Christians we do live under a new and better covenant. It is also true that we are not governed by the specific worship instructions of the Old Testament. However, there are principles that do not change with the passing of time. The verse that we just noted from Psalm 95 makes it clear that when people worship properly, they worship our Maker. Also, when we worship we bow down and kneel before Him. This indicates that He is greater than we are, and because of such, He is to be revered and treated with respect, always.

Worship is not a trivial affair. It is a sacred, serious, from-the-heart activity. The attitude we show toward worship and during worship, is a matter of tremendous importance. God has not given Christians a “go-to-meeting” or “Sunday-best” dress code. He does not need to. The very idea of coming together to worship the One that is “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty” (Rev. 4:8) ought to cause us to think within ourselves that this is a special, yea, mighty special event. Dress for worship is certainly worthy of more thought and attention than dressing to attend a baseball game or throwing on clothes to go buy some paint.

I may not end up with a large cheering section after writing this article, however my motive is not to receive men’s praises (Gal. 1:10). Rather, I hope to provoke serious thought and to be helpful. I am, my dear brethren, concerned about what I perceive to be a trend in the church in general for saints of God to wear clothing to services of the church that is ultra-casual, sometime indecent, and on some occasions makes the wearer look like a slob.

Friends, it is undeniable: it says something about our thinking when we “dress up” for “special occasions,” but for the ultimate special occasion known to man – worship of the Creator, we “dress down.” I know that I have numerous gray hairs and I take an old school

approach to many things in life, but I just cannot buy into the philosophy that says the most important matters in dressing for worship are comfort and convenience.

Our respect for others is indicated, in part, by the way we are attired in their presence. Brother Bubba, a mature Christian man, attended a funeral. His attire? Dress pants with a nice shirt and tie. Some people readily admit that they dress up for a funeral or visit to the funeral home simply out of respect for the deceased person. Question: When a brother serves by leading in public worship, especially in the memorial of our Lord’s death, should not respect “for the deceased” (the Savior) be as important as respect to the passing of one that was merely human?

Another day brother Bubba went to worship services. He wore a collared, pullover shirt with a white undershirt beneath it. Neither shirt was tucked in, and the undershirt hung down lower than the collared shirt, stretching down past the pockets of his blue jeans. It may be the “fashion” of the day, but why would a servant of the King choose to come before Him with the sloppy look? Would we dress like this for a job interview (if we really wanted the job)? Would we dress like this when attending a funeral? A wedding? If not, why, then, do we want to “dress down” to worship the Rock of our salvation?

On a different occasion brother Bubba went to another non-worship activity. Those that attended were asked to wear “Sunday dress.” That time he wore a suit and tie. So, for a non-worship activity, he wore Sunday dress of coat and tie, but when he joined his brethren in Christ to worship the Almighty, he chose to let his undershirt hang out over his blue jeans. My personal thought is, “What is going on?”

What are other priests of God thinking when they come before Him to worship in clothing that leaves their midsections or thighs uncovered (pronounced “naked”)? It is distracting. Or, do we really think other people can keep their heart focused on the Lord during a prayer or during the Lord’s Supper that is lead by one that wears a T-shirt with a huge, bright orange “T” on it, or a picture of a well-known athlete or singer? →

Remember, some clothing is immodest because it draws excess[ive attention] to its wearers.

Pants with holes in them, shirts unbuttoned down to the navel, and a legion of other dress styles that are common place in some worship assemblies today again make me wonder, “What is going on?” Some brothers in the Lord expect their wives and daughters to wear dresses or skirts again to Sunday night services like they do on Sunday mornings, but the brothers themselves dress down from their nice clothes to jeans and a Titans T-shirt at nighttime. I wonder, “Why is there a double standard?”

In the spring of 2001 Donna and I attended an honors banquet at a local high school. A few days prior to the banquet the students were instructed that those who attended were to wear “Sunday dress.” I cannot say that I saw the attired of every single person that attended this event, but out of all the approximate 500 people that were present, I personally saw only one person wearing jeans. All others whom I saw dressed much nicer. I do not mean more expensive clothes, but nicer looking. You might say they did what they were asked to do: wear “Sunday dress.” Now here is a point to ponder. I know that the great majority of those that attended this school function were not members of the Lord’s church. Yet, they manifested self-respect and respect for the occasion in the way that they dressed. If non-Christians understand what “Sunday dress” means, then it makes me scratch my head when I observe the sloppiness and dress-down look that some of my brothers and sisters manifest.

No, I am *not* appealing to folks to wear tuxedos to services, nor do I propose that everyone empty their savings accounts to go out and buy nice looking clothes. The Almighty, though, dies deserve His respect, don’t you agree? Our kids are watching how we dress for services. It sends a message to them. Our brethren in the Lord notice our attire. Our non-Christian friends do the same. Let us always keep in mind the sacredness of worship and the majesty of the Master whom we serve.

—4865 Bates Pike SE, Cleveland, TN 37323

EDITOR’S NOTE: I say a hearty A-men to the above article. The way some dress is no less than a shame.

## Ezekiel On Individual Accountability and Responsibility

Early on many people have rejected their individual accountability to God, thereby relieving themselves (in their minds) of any responsibility to live by God’s standards. Believing the devil’s lie that she would NOT surely die if she disobeyed God’s instructions not to eat of the forbidden tree, Eve rejected her accountability to God. If, therefore, she was not accountable to God, neither had she any responsibility toward Him.

In recent decades, the problem of accepting individual accountability and the responsibility which would necessarily follow has gotten progressively worse. This fact is evidenced by the frightening pace of our society’s breakdown in moral standards. When more than a third of the children are born out of wedlock [74 percent in blacks in Louisiana]; when millions live together without marriage; when truth is seldom bought but often sold (Prov. 23:23); when multitudes are unwilling to earn a living—and we could go on and on—it is clear that a great many people reject their accountability to God and therefore feel that they have no responsibility toward Him.

In more recent times there has been a very pronounced effort to blame the sinful deeds in society upon something or someone other than the individuals who are responsible. The drunkard has a “disease,” the ungodly acts of sexual perverts are attributed to their “genes.” Much of the thievery, robbing, raping, drug abuse, etc., is blamed upon poverty, racial prejudice, or something else.

God’s prophet, Ezekiel, has set forth some valuable lessons on the subject of individual accountability and responsibility, which can contribute to “our learning” in a most beneficial way. Much of chapter 18 of Ezekiel deals with the subject.

A proverb was being used with reference to Israel, which said, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge” (18:2). The false idea of the proverb was that the present generation would place the blame for their own waywardness ↴

## The Desperate Need For Sound Gospel Preachers

There will never be too many sound gospel preachers. Our Lord has ordained that the gospel be taken to the whole world. Until that is done, there will be a need for preachers. If that were done, there would still be a continuing need for preachers. Paul asks a sobering question when he said, “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without preacher?” (Rom. 10:14). This is where the preacher fits in God’s plan for saving man.

After preaching for more than fifty years, I have no regrets for having done so. In fact, if time could be re-run, I would have preached my first sermon before I was twenty-eight years old. I firmly believe there is no greater work in the Lord’s kingdom than preaching the true gospel.

As to why there are not more brethren willing to give their lives to preaching, someone else may have the answer, but some factors seem evident. It is true, there are some sacrifices to be made in order to give one’s time and effort to a full-time proclamation of God’s word. But aren’t we supposed to be willing to make sacrifices in serving our Lord? It is some times necessary to move and go where the preaching of the gospel is most needed. My family and I have lived in a great many places, but there have been rewards in this. It has been rewarding to me personally, to have come to know various brethren and sisters in other countries.

Any sacrifice which one has to make to preach the gospel pales in comparison to the sacrifice Paul and others made to do so. Paul pleads with the Roman brethren (and to us) to “present their bodies as a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1). This involves our “spiritual service” which would certainly in-

clude the preaching of the gospel by those who have the ability to do so. We should be “alive” unto our opportunities and responsibilities of serving.

As servants of the Lord we are to make use of our talents (Matt. 25). One doesn’t have to be a “five-talent” man to preach God’s word. Had that been necessary, I would have been left out. The gain made by the use of talents in preaching God’s word, is measured in terms of spiritual rewards, even the eternal salvation of souls. The greatest good that one can ever do for another, is to lead them to salvation in Christ. This is not limited to preachers, but preachers have more opportunities than most brethren.

There are a great many brethren who have retired at relatively early ages. Just think what resource they are, if they would give many years to preaching. Think of the small congregations which would be blessed greatly if they had the services of some retired person to preach and teach them.

Some effective preachers have been self-taught. That is good. But a period of intense training can work wonders in preparing men to do a more effective work. Brethren have the finances to support men who are willing to give themselves to the great work of preaching.

If a brother asked my advice in preparing to preach, I would unhesitatingly recommend the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies in Cantonment, FL. Why would I recommend this school? Because I know the teachers and those in control. I know the type of training the students receive. I know some of the preachers who have been trained there. I know that in this small school, students receive excellent attention to their needs.

The above school is the work of the Milestone congregation, 4051 Stefani Rd., Cantonment, FL 32533. Information can be had by contacting: Ken Burlison, 1644 Pine Ln., Cantonment, FL 32533. Phone: 850-968-2207 (H); Ofc. 850-474-9257.

—Editor

of the Book of Romans is “justification by faith,” but by a living and active faith, not a dead or weak one. James says that “faith without works is dead” (Jas. 2:26). Faith comes from the hearing of God’s word (Rom. 10:17), and when God’s word is not heard on a regular basis and in a serious manner, faith is not going to grow. A sure way to grow in faith is to follow the apostle Peter’s command when he said, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). The evidence is abundant that more and more people are coming to have A Wavering Faith. We know this because people are not showing their faith by their works. So many no longer believe what God says, and they demonstrate this by their actions. The writer of Hebrews warns against an enemy of faith, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. Evidence of their wavering faith is seen in that they were told, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat” (Heb. 5:12). A wavering faith can result from staying on milk and not taking any meat.

The final outcome of a wavering faith is often spiritual death. This is more often the case than a new beginning wherein faith begins to grow again. There seems to be a principle which works so often. That principle is that when one’s faith begins to falter, a line is crossed which makes it more difficult to return to the Lord with real love and determination.

**Time Often Works For The Devil.** Whereas time should work on the Lord’s side, and will if allowed, time often turns into a device of the Devil. By this I mean that quite often people will stand against some device of the devil, but with the passing of time, their resistance weakens. This can be exemplified in many instances, where erroneous practices have come into a congregation and there was resistance for a time. But in time the resistance weakens, and in some instances the error is adopted. It works this way on an individual basis. I’m thinking of one individual who for years spoke out strongly against error in the congregation where he attended. In time to come he accepted error which he one time opposed. Others have done the same.

### THE TRAGIC EFFECT OF THROWING IN THE TOWEL

From all accounts that I’ve heard, the church is not growing numerically, but actually declining. As tragic as this is, a matter which makes it even worse is that the faith of members is weakening generally, and error is being accepted as never before. Some who now profess to be members of the Lord’s church have hearts that are elsewhere. The affinity for the man-made religions is growing rapidly. Schools operated by our brethren are, for the most part, eating away the faith of brethren.

**Preachers Are Being Affected.** More than a few sound gospel preachers are needed. Not enough brethren are willing to give of their time and effort to educate themselves in God’s word to make of themselves sound proclaimers of the truth. To make bad matters worse, quite a number of preachers Throw in the Towel, with respect to full-time work, when they are still able to work. With some, when difficulties occur, or things are not as convenient as desired, they are ready to outright quit. I’ve never quite understood a preacher “retiring” as long as he is able to carry on. Think of all the difficulties Paul faced, and yet he never threw in the towel. It makes one wonder some times as to just how heavy one’s “towel” is in the first place.

**Congregations Are Being Affected.** This is the case when a congregation is no longer willing to stand for the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The leadership may not be willing to battle the opposition to the Lord’s cause which may occur. I’ve never seen a greater need for bold and aggressive leadership within the church than we are seeing right now. Congregations have never been so susceptible to the invasion of error than right now. Where there is good leadership, some members may not be willing to stand up and be counted. Country congregations are often affected by the liberally inclined city congregations, which appeal to those whose faith is not as strong as it could and should be.

If we truly believe that “Heaven will surely be worth it all,” there is nothing can keep us from inheriting it, as God’s faithful children. Brethren, we can never afford to “Throw in the Towel” with respect to serving our Lord and Master.

—Editor

upon their former generation. The proverb erased their individual responsibility. God said that proverb was wrong. He says the souls of the fathers and the souls of the sons are His, and “the soul that sinneth shall die” (18:4). If a man “Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments...he shall surely live”(v. 9).

Now it is pointed out by the Lord that if “a son” does “all these abominations” (several are mentioned) “he shall surely die.” (v. 13). On the other hand, if a sinful father has a son who does not follow his father’s wicked ways, he “shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live” (v. 18). But Israel wanted to know why the son does not bear the iniquity of his father. In response to their question, God, through Ezekiel sounds the death knell to the false doctrine of inherited sin. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (v. 20).

Another valuable lesson set forth by Ezekiel is that the individual is accountable to God and responsible for his condition at the **present time**. “. . .if the wicked will turn from his sins that he hath committed. . .and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die” (v. 21). “But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity. . .all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned. . .in his sin that he hath sinned. . .shall he die” (v. 24).

The Lord’s way of dealing with people on the basis of their individual accountability and responsibility was said by Israel to be unequal. But the Lord’s response was, “O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?” (v. 29). To further confirm that fact that God’s standard of accountability is right, rather than that of man, God says through Ezekiel, “Therefore I will judge you, o house of Israel, every-one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves. . .”(v. 30).

While one generation may have an influence upon another, the fact remains that we are accountable to God on the basis of our present condition. Therefore, we have a responsibility to be right with God at all times. Our past deeds will not condemn us if we turn away in repentance, neither will our righteous deeds render us acceptable if we turn away from them. We are indeed accountable to God and responsible for our actions.

—Editor

## The One True God

Alton W. Fonville

From the dawn of creation, we see recorded in the Bible so many times how our Heavenly Father tried to impress on the human race, that He was the only True God, the Creator of all things, including mankind. We also see that He is a jealous God and instructed his creation to glorify Him, worship Him and have no other gods before Him. This was among the very first of the Ten Commandments given to the children of Israel (Ex. 20).

We also see that mankind violated those laws which were laid down by our merciful and longsuffering God; and, we get an insight into just how long the patience and longsuffering is with our Maker. At the time of the giving of the Law of Moses, God said bowing to and serving other gods was equivalent to “hating Him”; and, to keep His laws was equivalent to “loving Him.” Our minds are quickly drawn to the words of Jesus, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (Jno. 14:15). Also, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24).

Various ways are possible which we can use to arouse the jealousy of God and incur His divine wrath. We can see them demonstrated in Bible history. So many examples are available, it is difficult to decide which to use for the best results. In the time of the patriarchs, men were putting their trust and allegiance in themselves rather than to trust the Living God. They were going to build a tower to reach up into heaven, using their own strength, skill and wisdom, until God confused their language to discourage them in their efforts, and the project was abandoned. (cf. Genesis 11). A similar project in our time is being worked “to see how the universe was started.” God’s word is being completely ignored, making one wonder how long God will let it happen.

During the time of the prophets, the kings which had been selected to rule over God’s people, were soon so influenced by their godless neighbors, that they began bowing down and serving man-made Gods. The story of king Ahab, with his wicked wife Jezebel is such a story. (cf. I Kings 16 and onward). →

The contest on Mount Carmel is one of the most familiar stories about the worship of Baal. Elijah prepared the contest with all the stipulations for Baal to answer first. When it was far past time and no answer came, he ridiculed Baal, saying, “cry louder, maybe he is on a journeyed or sleeping” and such like. No answer came from Baal. When it was time for God’s answer, even with all the water poured on the wood and sacrifice, He answered loud and clear – burning up the rock altar, sacrifice and the water. Elijah then had all Baal prophets killed (see I Kings 18). This should have been a lesson for God’s people for all time, but, it did not last. We are often so slow to learn.

A lesser known story is about Eli and his “honoring his sons” more than he did the Lord. Samuel had told him the bad news about his death and how Israel was to be defeated. Many thousands died in Israel and the ark of the Lord was captured by the Philistines. After many bad experiences, the ark was brought and put in the house of the Philistine god, Dagon. The next morning Dagon had fallen on his face before the ark of the Lord. They put Dagon back up and the next morning he had fallen down again, this time with his head and hands cut off. Again, the Lord spoke loud and clear as to who is the one and only true and living God (I Sam. 4-5).

The results are always the same; it does not matter who or what the false god is —whether it is: Allah, Buddah, the Pope, or some other mere man, wealth, gold or silver, possessions or our “pride”—all who look to some other god except the Lord God of heaven, putting their trust in them, will fail miserably on day.

—337 Madison 4605, St. Paul, AR 72760

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—Editor

## *Shall We “Throw in the Towel”?*

As to where the expression of “Throwing in the towel” originated, someone else will have to answer. But expression is commonly understood to mean: quit, give up, don’t try any longer, etc. There are some instances when such would be commended. For example, if one is going to profit as a Christian, there are many things one must “quit” doing. One must give up the ways of the world. One must not try any longer to walk in the world and the Lord’s kingdom at the same time. Our discussion will emphasize the causes and dangers of “throwing the towel” with regard to serving our Lord in an acceptable manner, by which we can reap that eternal reward of life evermore in the world to come, and a living hope in this life.

Even before God created man, provisions for his spiritual well-being were in His mind. This is evidenced by the fact that soon after man’s transgression reference is made to God’s plan by allusion to the bruising of the serpents head by the seed of woman (Gen. 3:15). From this point onward the thrust of God’s revelation points to His plan for man’s salvation as it would be carried toward fruition through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It was through the above lineage that Christ, the “seed of woman” (Gal. 3:16) was ushered into the stream of the human family to make God’s plan of salvation a reality. This involved “the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord,” as it related to the church (Eph. 3:10-11). When Christ built His church (Matt. 16:18), the sacrificial blood by which He purchased it (Acts 20:28), made redemption a reality for those under the first covenant as well as those who would come afterward (Heb. 9:15).

Since the time when God made salvation available through Christ and His church, some have availed themselves of this priceless blessing, the greatest that can ever come to man. Sadly, however, the great majority of man have rejected the precious gift in the first place. But in a way, even sadder still, is the fact that many who have come to know salvation, have for some ↴

cause or other turned from it. They have “Thrown in the towel.”

Most Christians experience discouragement to one degree or another, at some point along the way. This is not to be unexpected. The New Testament points out many trials and afflictions with which God’s people will be confronted. Timothy is told to “fight the good fight of faith” (I Tim. 6:12). Paul even says that “all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). By the very nature of the race which Christian must run, there must be times of discouragement. Be that as it may, it is not necessary to “Throw in the towel,” that is, to give up and quit. This is amply demonstrated by the early Christians, including Paul himself, who were willing to remain faithful, even to the giving up of life (Rev. 2:10).

On the sad side are those once faithful followers of Christ who “throw in the towel.” Even when our Savior walked upon the earth, some just gave up and quit. In John 6, is the record of those disciples of Christ who did that very thing. “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (v. 66). Demas, a once faithful co-worker with Paul, succumbed to the love of the “present world” (2 Tim. 4:10). He threw in the towel. Judas, once one of the twelve apostles, threw in the towel to become a traitor for a measly thirty pieces of silver. In our time similar things are happening, a matter to which we shall give more attention later. Next, we shall consider:

### **SOME CAUSES FOR THROWING IN THE TOWEL**

The things we are about to mention are in no sense of the term justifications for giving up and quitting. It is my understanding that we are to serve our Lord to the best of our ability as long as we are mentally and physically able. I know of no place in God’s word where we are to call it quits, but to the contrary. Nevertheless, many are quitting and there are some causes, though unjustified. We trust it will be profitable to consider some of these.

**Love Of The World.** “If any man love the world, the Love of the Father is not in him” (I Jno. 2:15). Just as Demas forsook Paul the Lord’s work due to the love of the world, so are many doing the same in our day. We’ve never seen a time when there was so much worldliness in the church as there is today. For some, their quest is

for more and more of the world and its evil ways. Christ said, “No man can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24), but some are trying to do so anyway.

**The Power Of Criticism.** Criticism was endured by Christians in the first century, and it is no different now if we are going to be faithful. If we stand up for the Truth we are going to be criticized, not only by the world and man-made religions, but even unfaithful brethren within the body of Christ. If we receive no criticism, this is cause for concern. Yes, I receive criticism and some of it rather pronounced, but such is expected. Our liberal-minded brethren know how to dish out their “loving” criticism. But we must “stand fast in the faith.” What would have happened Paul, the other apostles, and even Christ himself, if they had said, “I’m quitting, I’m not going to put up with that criticism”? What will happen to us if we give up? We’ll be lost.

**The Lure Of Laziness.** The Lord’s religion is a “doing” religion. The true servant of the Lord can truthfully sing, “Till Jesus comes, we’ll work.” Paul told the brethren at Corinth to be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (I Cor. 15:58). There seems to be a “time saving” trend within the church today. The bottom line seems to be, “How can we carry on with less work and less time?” There is something that just about every member of the church can do, but the willingness to do what one can do is often absent. One preacher I know didn’t beat around the bush about being lazy. Quite a few brethren are lazy but they don’t usually admit it or boast about it.

**Lack Of Love For The Truth.** One’s love for the truth can wane, and with many it does. Most of us have known brethren who at one time demonstrated a love for the truth, yet with the passing of time the love diminished. Isaiah speaks of those “Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits” (Isa. 30:10). Some whom I have known no longer demonstrate their love for the truth, and they evidence this by the fact that they no longer stand up in defense of the truth. Paul speaks of those who would perish, “because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved” (2 Thess. 2:10).

**A Wavering Faith.** A good definition of “faith” is simply to “take God at His word.” The theme →