

Banner of Truth

"The truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

Vol. 17

June 2008

No. 6

Eighth Annual

***Banner of Truth* Lectureship**

June 23-26, 2008

Murray, KY

Murray State University

Curriss Center, 3rd Floor Theatre

Daily Schedule: 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

**Twenty Eight Lessons Presented by Sixteen
Experienced Speakers Representing Hundreds of
Years of Preaching and Teaching God's Word.**

Lovers of the Plain Truth

Cannot Afford to Miss This Lectureship.

BANNER OF TRUTH

Published by the
Hickory Grove
church of Christ

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Published monthly and sent free to interested persons. Made possible by the contributions of congregations and individuals. Our purpose is to: 1) Teach and uphold God's truth; 2) Encourage mission efforts to seek the lost; 3) Oppose that which is "contrary to sound doctrine" and not in harmony with the "doctrine of Christ."

Continued from Page 1

We are giving attention to a number of things concerning our lectureship, and those of other congregations. I realize that thousands of people who receive Banner of Truth will not be able to attend our lectures, but be that as it may, there are a number of ways people can profit by lectures. Video's of our lectures will be available, and these can go to many places where most of us are unable to go. The lessons presented will be beneficial in many years to come, since they can be studied over and over.

Lectureship Defined. Most of us understand the nature of lectures presented by various congregations. A lecture is simply a lesson presented to an audience. The lecturers are generally preachers. The audience is most often made up

of members of the church, though non-members may attend, and in some cases learn many things which are very helpful to them. Not only do the hearers hear lessons on becoming a Christian, but also that which is involved in living the Christian life. Some may think that lectures are just for preachers, but that is not at all the case. They are for the benefit of any person who wants to learn God's will and be encouraged to put it into action.

The Origin of Lectureships. Several decades ago the schools operated by our brethren had lectureships on a yearly basis. But if my memory serves me correctly, lectureships sponsored by congregations had their beginning in the 1970s, and in the years since, a growing number of congregations are having them. While working with the Hickory Grove congregation, we had two lectureships in Murray in the 1970s. The first one had an attendance of more than 300 for the evening lectures.

It is the custom of many congregations to have lectureships which last three or four days, with dozens of lessons presented. The seven lectureships thus far presented by the Hickory Grove congregation have each been four day events comprised of twenty-eight lessons. This year, the Eighth Annual Lectureship will be the same, with sixteen speakers presenting twenty eight lessons.

A lectureship could rightly be called an extended gospel meeting. In most cases, gospel meetings today involve four or five lessons. In fact, it is somewhat unusual for a meeting to last more than four days. Those of us who are older can remember when most of the meetings lasted about a week, and in some instances more than that.

The Purpose of Lectureships. Of course, the main purpose for lectureships is to teach 1

God's word and encourage people to do what God teaches. However, that is not the only purpose, as we shall note in the following discussion.

Many of our brethren realize that in general we are not studying and learning God's will as we should. This is reflected in various problems which arise due to a lack of a good knowledge of God's word. We are no longer the people of the Book that we used to be. Efforts are being made in an increasing number of instances to cut short the time involved in the learning of God's word. As we mentioned earlier, gospel meetings are much shorter now than they used to be. Some vacation Bible schools are only one day, or less. Brethren are heard to say, "People just will not attend Gospel Meetings anymore." The point they are making is that there is no need for them. But they are so wrong. Brethren, there is a need for more preaching and teaching, not less. If we give in to problems, they will only increase. Success is often found in the overcoming of problems.

God's word is spiritual food. Peter says, "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Pet. 2:2). There is no "quick fix" for learning God's word, but it sometimes seem that brethren are looking for that. This spiritual food is not being served in far too many instances. The result is that many are suffering from spiritual malnutrition. In too many instances people are being fed that which will not bring about spiritual growth, but spiritual sickness. We urgently need to get a lesson from the noble Thessalonians, "...in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

The Wholesome Fruit of Fellowship. One of the great strengths of the early church was their close fellowship. The brethren obviously enjoyed this fellowship as they were drawn together in their race for that crown of life. It is said of the early Christians that their strong fellowship caused people to say of the Christians, "How they love one another." The early Christians were united and devoted, "continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:46).

The fellowship enjoyed at our lectureship is truly uplifting. To have people of like faith, eating and socializing with one another is wholesome indeed. Quite often we hear our brethren say they hate to see the close of lectureship and the fellowship it affords for those few days.

The Strengthening of Elders. No one in a congregation has a greater need to be strong in the faith than do the elders. No one, even the preacher, has a greater responsibility than elders. The elders are to "have the rule" over the flock (Heb. 13:7). Paul charged the elders at Ephesus to "take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made your overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The apostle Peter also speaks on the same subject saying, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly. . . . Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock" (I Pet. 5:2-3).

A good question here is: How are elders going to do their duty unless they have a good knowledge of God's word? How do they know what to feed them? There is much poison food →

available, and it some times it has a wholesome appeal, but the elders are to be able to know what good food is and be able to tell the difference from bad food.

What better opportunity is there to learn much from God's word than to hear twenty eight lessons from faithful and capable brethren who speak on the lectures. That is about as many sermons as the average congregation hears in three months.

Elders who are feeding a flock, can increase their knowledge greatly, and they can also greatly encourage their flocks to feast on the spiritual food which is served at a lectureship by faithful and knowledgeable brethren. The demanding qualification of elders should compe them to seek ways to strengthen their flock as well as themselves. Many of the problems facing the church today can be traced to elders who are elders only in name, but not in the qualities which God has set forth. True elders will take advantage of the opportunity to learn how to fulfill their God-given duties, and be able to better care for their flock.

Lectureships Offer a Variety. By that I do not mean things which are not in keeping with God's word, but different speakers often make different points in their presentation. No two speakers are exactly alike. Their styles of delivery are different. It is good to hear different speakers from time to time. The knowledge of speakers differ, and some have a better speaking voice than others. The twenty-eight subjects covered in the lectures will deal with a great many different subjects.

The Renewing of Acquaintances. A lectureship is a good place to come in contact with friends of like faith. My wife and I have made

many friends in the more than fifty years that we have been Christians. It is a real delight to meet those friends from time to time. We need to cherish our friendships, and strive to make more.

Learning The State of the Church. We have tried to select subjects dealing with problems faced by the church, and the way to overcome those problems, as provided by God's word. We face many more problems today than we did fifty years ago. We need to be aware of those problems and know that we can victorious over them by standing fast in the faith. We need to know about positive things with regard to the church. In fact, the state of the church involves both positives and negatives. In our lectures some lessons will deal with the dangers faced by the church. We need to know these things, lest we be overcome by them.

Some Negative Points in Lectures. If a lectureship has liberal-minded speakers, no good will be accomplished; rather, evil. False teachers are not new, and many warnings are set forth as to the danger of them. Brethren who love the truth should not in any way support or encourage such. To uphold evil is to become a partaker of that evil (2 John 11).

In our lectureship, we do not knowingly use those who are false teachers. We oppose false teachers, just as they were opposed in New Testament times, and we give credit to those who uphold the truth. In the New Testament there are many warnings concerning false teachers. The apostle Paul said, concerning the false brethren who came in to spy out their liberty which they had in Christ, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5). In some cases individuals might learn of false brethren that they would not know about otherwise. Let us now consider, †

What Others Have to Say about the *BANNER of TRUTH LECTURESHIP*

Virgil Hale, preacher for the Hickory Grove church of Christ (sponsor of the lectureship) —

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE EIGHTH BANNER OF TRUTH LECTURESHIP

It has been my privilege to attend and speak on the Banner of Truth Lectures in the past, and I look forward with great anticipation to the one this year. Each year the theme has dealt with things that affect the world as a whole, and the Lord's church in particular. The speakers have been men who are sound, who love the truth, and are ready and willing to stand up and defend the Lord and His cause. This year is no exception.

Take a good look at the subjects to be discussed this year, and I believe you will agree that they are timely, and need to be heard and heeded. Let me urge you to put forth every effort to be present for as many of these lessons as you possibly can. You will be blessed, and you can be a blessing to others by getting the tapes of the lessons presented to share with them. In fact, if you cannot be present, make it a point to order the lectures to view and share.

We are living in troubled times and a troubled world. The only hope for the future (if such we have) is to get back to God and to His will and way. We can truly serve the true God in an evil world, but it will take faith and courage to do so. Our soul is at stake and the souls of others that we can influence. We hope to see you in June. *Virgil Hale*.

Alan Adams, Assistant Editor of BOT —

WHEREIN LIES THE ADVANTAGE?

Papa used to say, "There's more than one way to skin a cat than by feeding him buttermilk." It does not, however, follow that all "ways" are equally advantageous or profitable. A fly killed with a swatter or a sledgehammer would be equally dead, but who can imagine buying a sledgehammer to use for killing flies?

Christians are driven by the directive "to teach" (2 Tim. 2:2, et al), as well as all its cognates: expound,

instruct, preach, admonish, reprove, exhort, et al. Since there are many ways to accomplish this directive, we must also be concerned with advantage or profit. Lectureships, like the upcoming Annual BOT Lectureship, are one way of teaching; but, prudent people will ask, Wherein lies the advantage?

In the New Testament, the idea of something being of use, profitable or advantageous comes from the word *sumphero*. This is a compound word that joins the ideas of "together with" and "bring"; in other words, the bringing together of things so as to result in advantage. "...not all things are expedient," Scripture says (I Cor.6:12); that is, not all things come together to the advantage of a particular goal. A lectureship involves many aspects: time, money, travel, just to mention a few. Do these things come together so as to be a profitable way to accomplish our directive to teach? We cannot speak to all of them, but we do believe the Banner of Truth Lectureship is indeed "expedient": It is a profitable, advantageous way to meet our objective.

The lectureship is an adjunct to the paper, *Banner of Truth*. This paper, now in its seventeenth year of publication, means a lot to thousands of people. This annual event allows for focus on and creates publicity for the paper leading to greater support and circulation.

Think of a lectureship as an extended gospel meeting. The lectureship will be comprised of twenty eighth sermons. That is about twenty-five percent of the preaching a faithful Christian will hear in a year's time. In addition, these lessons will be recorded and reproduced at a minimal cost allowing people to hear the lessons again, and to pass them on to others.

Giving the Devil his due, in the past many years, change agents have done a number of the Lord's church. Brothers and sisters, who long for the pure teaching and worship they remember back then, often find themselves a shrinking minority. It can be downright lonesome for such folks. There are many churches in the Murray area and surrounding areas, and in some of those churches are yearning brethren who for years have not heard the Word preached. The BOT lectureship gives these longing brethren an opportunity to be with those who "believe just like they do."

The BOT lectureship is not a case of buying a sledgehammer to kill flies. It surely costs a lot of →

time, money and effort; but, these things all come together nicely to produce an effective profitable way to accomplish our directive: by teaching; by encouraging teaching; and, by encouraging those longing for the “sound teaching.”

Gary Price, faithful brother said—

What A Blessing. Although my work schedule is so hectic, I was able to attend 12 of the 28 lectures. I was blessed a hundred fold. All the men spoke what they are commanded to speak, and what we as Christians are commanded to hear. Looking forward to next year. In Christian love, Gary Price.

Jim Bailey, late faithful brother —

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BOT LECTURES.

Having been privileged and blessed to attend all of the first four lectureships, the following are some of the things the annual events have meant to me:

I. A high point to look forward to throughout the year.

II. An opportunity to see and visit with Christian friends, both new and old.

III. To keep better informed about the good and bad things that are facing Christians today.”

Edith Kincaid, faithful sister wrote—

I have been coming to the Banner of Truth lectures since their inception. It is always a great spiritual feast, but seems to bet better every year. I am placing it on my calendar for next year. Thank you for your work in the kingdom.

Carol Chapman, faithful sister wrote—

What a spiritual feast we have just enjoyed in the Banner of Truth Lectures. I could help bet be saddened that so few Christians chose to partake of the feast. It came to my mind that when we are really hungry, we want food. But Christians must not be hungry enough for the word of God. I remember how Joseph’s family traveled a great distance to receive food from the hand of their brother, but many Christians would not travel a few miles to receive spiritual food.

The above are only a few of the many positive statements we receive about the lectures. While we appreciate greatly those who attend, some of them from great distances, we wish more would avail themselves of the great opportunity to learn more of God’s will and be encouraged by those who stand fast in the faith.

More than likely, most do not realize the work that goes into a lectureship the size of the Banner of Truth Lectureship, not to mention the great expense which is also involved. But we believe it is well worth the time, effort and cost involved. Our purpose in the lectures is to teach God’s word and encourage people to do His will.

In a final note, let me suggest that those who live within driving distance of Murray, KY, make plans to attend as much as possible. Why not get together a carload and enjoy this spiritual feast, including the great fellowship which many enjoy?

Please note the schedule of speakers and their subjects, which are listed in this issue of BOT. If more information is desired, call me at: (270) 753-3675, or brother Virgil Hale at: (270) 767-0625.

We have arranged a special rate for rooms at the Best Western Motel in Murray. The cost of a room is \$47.75, and that includes taxes, and breakfast. The number for the motel is: (270) 753-5353. In making reservations, make it clear that you are with the Hickory Grove church of Christ group. We can make reservations for you if you wish.

Tapes of the entire lectures will be available. The price is \$35.00 for the complete set.

Do come and be with us.

—Editor

Eighth Annual *Banner of Truth* Lectures

Murray, KY, June 23-26, 2008

Theme: *Serving the True God in an Evil World*

Venue: Curris Center, Murray State University Campus, 3rd Floor Theater

Monday, June 23

10:00 A.M.	<i>Serving the True God</i>	Alan Adams
11:00 A.M.	<i>The Christian and the Powers That Be</i>	Michael Willy
1:30 P.M.	<i>The Music God Approves in Worship</i>	Paul Curless
2:30 P.M.	<i>Beware of the Spirit of Compromise</i>	Ken Friel
3:30 P.M.	<i>The Influence of Evil Politicians</i>	Michael Willy
7:00 P.M.	<i>The Evil Influence of Our Schools</i>	Ken Friel
8:00 P.M.	<i>More Than Conqueors through Christ</i>	Rusty Stark

Tuesday, June 24

10:00 A.M.	<i>Need for Recruiting Soldiers for Christ</i>	Lloyd Gale
11:00 A.M.	<i>Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear</i>	Rick Knoll
1:30 P.M.	<i>Only the Gospel of Christ Saves</i>	Damond Lundy
2:30 P.M.	<i>Seeking First the Kingdom of God</i>	Steve Baisden
3:30 P.M.	<i>God-Approved Unity in Christ</i>	Paul Curless
7:00 P.M.	<i>Overcoming Evil with Good</i>	Tom Snyder
8:00 P.M.	<i>Serving God in All the World</i>	Glen Tattersall

Wednesday, June 25

10:00 A.M.	<i>God-Given Power to Choose</i>	Damond Lundy
11:00 A.M.	<i>Evil Faced by First Century Christians</i>	Rusty Stark
1:30 P.M.	<i>Overcoming the Present World</i>	Glenn Tattersall
2:30 P.M.	<i>Facing Evil within the Church</i>	Lloyd Gale
3:30 P.M.	<i>Victory for the Overcomers</i>	Rick Knoll
7:00 P.M.	<i>Acts of Acceptable Worship</i>	Virgil Hale
8:00 P.M.	<i>The Evils of Islam</i>	Walter Pigg

Thursday, June 26

10:00 A.M.	<i>Evils Faced by Old Testament Characters</i>	Tom Snyder
11:00 A.M.	<i>Power of the Printed Page</i>	Jimmy Bates
1:30 P.M.	<i>Devices and Wiles of the Devil</i>	Garland Robinson
2:30 P.M.	<i>The Home and the Church Working Together</i>	Virgil Hale
3:30 P.M.	<i>The Evil Influence of the ACLU</i>	Jeff Bates
7:00 P.M.	<i>Calling Evil Good and Good Evil</i>	Alan Adams
8:00 P.M.	<i>Reward for Serving the True God</i>	Garland Robinson

Accommodations will be at the Best Western Motel. The price for a room with a double bed is \$47.75. This includes tax. To receive that price, those making their own reservations must specify that it is with the Hickory Grove Church of Christ account. The hotel number is (270) 753-5353. For more information call me at (270) 753-3675, or Virgil Hale: (270) 767-0625. —Editor

On the Road to Sodom and Gomorrah

In the past we have had articles on the subject of homosexuality. Due to the rapid progress of this God-condemned scourge upon our society, there is an urgency to call attention to this sin again. With time pressing, this cannot be as exhaustive as it ought; we will perhaps later reserve more time for the sad subject.

Over the past few decades the increase in the sin of homosexuality has gained great speed. The opposition to this repulsive sin has weakened considerably. There is a tendency by people to weaken their opposition to sinful things with the passing of time. This is clearly seen as we look back at things which used to be avoided because they were sinful. Many things are acceptable today that were not in the past. When God's word condemns something, it is still just as wrong as it was to start with.

Religions — some claiming to be Christian — are now accepting the sin of homosexuality. That God's word condemns it makes no difference with many. Officials in various religions are all out in their support. Religion which is not authorized by God's word is evil, not good, in God's sight. It shows that people want to have it their way rather than God's way.

Politicians use support of homosexuality as a plank in their political platform. It tells us something which is not good, but rather evil, when strong political forces appeal to such an ungodly thing in order to make a political gain. We have come a long way from God on our way to Sodom and Gomorrah, when those in high political places stand for that which is sinful and condemned by God. Our nation was to a great degree built upon Godly principles. But that is eroding at a rapid rate. Yet, most people are not disturbed. Indifference encourages evil to prevail. That has been demonstrated in a great way during the past few decades.

Various businesses are seeking to satisfy this ungodliness, by giving the homosexuals the same benefits as those who still have some respect for God and His will. In some instances they are given special consideration. A small portion of our population is swaying the many. Children are being indoctrinated to think the sin is normal. The stage is being set for a genera-

tion of homosexuals and lesbians. This reflects the departure from God and His influence.

A Giant Step toward Sodom. Just a few days ago (May 15, 2008), the Supreme Court in California took a bold stand in making the marriage of same sexes legal. The reaction of the homosexuals was one of great glee. The California Courts ruling is very significant for a number of reasons. California is the largest state in the U.S. The court's ruling has few if any restrictions. People from other states can go to California to be married. Therefore, the homosexuals will pour into the state in masses. California Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger's, response to the court's decision was: "You know, I'm wishing everyone good luck with their marriages and I hope California's economy is booming because everyone is going to come here and get married."

The only other state to make same-sex marriages legal is Massachusetts, though, the state of New York will accept homosexual marriages from other states. But the California ruling is more radical than others in that there is no waiting period, is not necessary to be a resident of California.

Sodom and Gomorrah. A few years ago I did an article in Banner of Truth, "On The Road to Sodom and Gomorrah." We were on our way to those cities then, but we are much nearer them now.

Sin is a transgression of God's law (I Jno. 3:4). All sin is sin, but it appears that God looks with greater disfavor upon some sins than others. I say that due to the fact that so many biblical references are made to Sodom and Gomorrah showing or suggesting God's disapproval. In fact, doing a check I came up with twenty-six references in the Old and New Testaments.

There are other references made to homosexuality where Sodom and Gomorrah are not mentioned, but it is clear that homosexuality is meant. An example of that is found in Leviticus 20:13. "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them." Another example is found in Romans 1:26-27. Neither Sodom or Gomorrah is mentioned, but it is clear that homosexuality

is meant. In First Corinthians 1:6:9, the word “effeminate” is used instead of homosexual.

Supporting Homosexuality. Supporting — even not opposing — homosexuality is likewise sinful. Of evil-doers transgressors of the doctrine of Christ, John said, “He that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 11). As members of the body of Christ, this should give us something to think about seriously. If we support those who uphold and support this evil, we are guilty in God’s sight.

God’s Law on Homosexuality. As noted, under the Law of Moses, this sin was punishable by death. Many references show God’s intolerance of this sin. Bear in mind that this sin is condemned in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. We need to realize that such a number of references to homosexuality are given to emphasize how that God condemned the practice. Of course, God only has to condemn an evil one time for it to be wrong, but in the case of homosexuality so many references are made. It appears, as suggested earlier, that some sins are worse than others in God’s sight.

We shall list a few short passages, of the many, found in God’s word —.

Gen. 13:13. “But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.”

Gen. 18:20-21. “And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, because their sin is very grievous, I will go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry.”

Gen. 19:24-25. “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants....”

Deut. 29:23. “And the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass growth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger in his wrath.”

Deut. 32:32. “For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter.”

Amos 4:11. “I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.”

Luke 17:29. “But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and

destroyed them all.”

Rom. 1:26-27. And for this cause God gave them up to vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature; And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another....”

2 Peter 2:6. “And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly.”

Jude 7. “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Convincing Examples. The above passages are only a few of those that could be given. If people do not get it that homosexual is a sin which will lead people to eternal destruction, no amount of scriptures would do so. We are getting nearer to Sodom every day. The devil must rejoice.
—*Editor*

A Response From A Muslim

A few weeks ago I received a call from a Muslim in Tennessee; he is an acquaintance of a christian in that neighboring state. Right off, he began to tell what I had written about Muslims was false. I asked him if the Koran were sufficient as a guide for Muslims. His answer was “Yes.” But then he said words to the effect that one had to have another book to tell what the Koran meant. Almost in a breath he contradicted himself.

I have done quite a bit of study on Islam, and the more I learn, the more I see that Islam is both false and dangerous. Many of us are completely unaware of the threat it constitutes. Their “Holy Book,” the Koran makes this very clear.

The Muslim also called our daughter, Susan, and was aggressively rude to her, as he had been to me. I would call his attitude despicable. This reminds me of the fact that Islam’s advance began with the sword, and from all the terrorists activities which are occurring today they are still using force to advance their evil cause.
—*Editor*

Antics in Preaching and Teaching God's Word

Some time ago I ran a note in Banner of Truth about a "Horse Ministry." No, I did not mean preaching to horses. It involved sitting on a horse and talking about or teaching God's word. I do not remember what kind of religion this person professed, but that antic of sitting on a horse was quite unusual.

When I read this in the newspaper, I thought to myself: "It won't be long until some of our brethren come up with something similar. In reality, the first of this sort of thing that comes to mind is Ben Zickefoose of Abilene Christian University. At least two decades ago, he touted his "Gymnastics to the Glory of God" program. Zickefoose performed various gymnastic feats while quoting passages scriptures presumably amplified by his contortions. But, it goes one. A friend sent me two clippings out of a newspaper which involved the antics of two of our brethren in teaching or preaching God's word.

The First Example. The headline of the article discussing this person was, *Preacher uses his pool skills to spread God's word.* The article, by Bob Smietana, says, "Yow, 25, a pulpit minister at Chapel Hill Church of Christ in White Bluff [TN], is ranked No. ten in the world of artistic pool players." It continues: "He can't turn water into wine or walk on water, but put a pool stick in his hand and Eric 'The Preacher' Yow can work wonders." In describing Yow's method of teaching, the article says, "While performing trick shots behind his back and standing on one foot, he mixed in Bible verses and stories about how God was working in his life."

The headline on the continued page of the article is: *Yow: Preacher uses his Bible, pool cue to spread Word.*

Can you imagine the apostle Paul, Peter, John, or the Lord himself using such tomfoolery to teach God's word? As far as we know, in New Testament times no gimmicks were used. The gospel of Christ was the drawing power. Paul told Timothy to "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).

The Second Example. The headline of this article is: *Sites spreads hunting's gospel.* Jimmy Sites is the

"Former Madison Church of Christ senior pastor..." The article says, "The Hendersonville resident and former senior pastor at Madison Church of Christ said he received a vision 18 years ago to expand his ministry. So he set out to lead his fellow outdoorsmen to Christianity..."

Another quotation in the article says of Sites: "God has his ideas and he gave me a very clear vision to me in 1990 while I was sitting on a deer stand to do all this." Then Sites is quoted as saying, "I didn't start doing it until 1998. His timing had to be right. I didn't have the means, or even the ability, to do it all at that point."

Sites' type of approach is somewhat unusual, the article says: "He calls it the "stealth evangelism approach." This brings to mind the thinking of some of our brethren, even though their thinking has no basis in God's word. The idea that we can sort of slip up on a persons and convert them without their knowing it. If a person is "converted" without hearing and responding to the truth of the gospel, which is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16), their conversion is not real.

It appears that some brethren think we can add something to God's way that will sort of "help Him out." I have known people who thought we should get people to be baptized, without them knowing that there are responsibilities involved in being a Christian. Being a true Christian is the most rewarding thing one can do, but that involves the greatest of responsibilities. Christ said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

It is dire time that we turn back to God's way which is revealed in the gospel. To rely upon man-made gimmicks is to fail to accomplish God's purpose, and has no reward for those who do so.

Christ 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" (John 6:44). People are drawn by the gospel, and not by some plan of man. The gospel is God's drawing power, and if a person is drawn by something else, that one is not a Christian.

— Editor

Why No More Divine Miracles Today?

Jozel S. Aguliam

Today, we hear various claims of miracles, such as healings and speaking in tongues, by our Pentecostal friends and other denominations. The word **miracle** (Greek *dunamis*) is defined by *Vine's* the following way: "power, inherent ability, is used of works of a supernatural origin and character, such as could not be produced by natural agents or means" (p. 757). This was evident in all the divine miracles found in the Bible. According to John 20:30-31, "many other signs [miracles]" were done by Christ in the presence of his disciples which were not "written" down or recorded. The purpose of those miracles which were "written" was that people "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye [they] might have life through his name." The apostles were also endowed with the power through the Holy Spirit to perform miracles to confirm their preaching of the Word (Mark 16:20).

We will not compare the miracles in the Bible with the declared miracles of today in this discussion. However, we contend that there are big differences between them. According to the Scripture, we are to "try the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (I John 4:1). Hence it is mandatory that we consult the Word of God and judge righteously (John 7:34) whether God is legitimately behind the miracles (?) of today.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit in I Corinthians 12:4-10, are all miraculous. After Christ ascended to heaven, the Apostles received this power through the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2.. These were transferred to others by the laying on of the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:14-19). Simon the sorcerer witnessed the miracles and desired to buy the power to perform miracles, for which he was sternly rebuked (vv. 18-20). From Acts 8 we learn that the church in Jerusalem had to send Peter and John to Samaria to lay hands on the people that they might receive the Holy Spirit, even though they had already been baptized (vv. 13-15). Cornelius received the Holy Spirit prior to water baptism (Acts 10:44-47). Hence, receiving the Holy Spirit in these passages differ in meaning. The previous refers to the power to perform miracles, while the latter was to show that salvation was for the Gentiles.

Healing, performing wonders, speaking in tongues, faith, knowledge, prophecy and interpretation are miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, as noted in I Corinthians 13:8-10. In I Corinthians 13:8-10, Paul tells us that prophecy, speaking in tongues and knowledge will vanish "when that which is perfect is come." Healings, tongues and other gifts of the Holy Spirit could be imparted by the apostles. Since all the apostles have died, that power ceased.

What is meant by the word "perfect" as used in I Corinthians 13:8-10 ? Does it mean the Last Day or being in heaven? The passage says that "knowledge" will be gone when "that which is perfect" comes. If this knowledge is an ordinary knowledge, will that mean that in the judgment day, we can't have information on who Christ is and what the Bible teaches? Matthew 7:21 and Romans 14:10-12, teach us that knowledge remains on the day of judgment. These and other passages affirm that it is a miraculous knowledge that is being discussed, and does not refer to the Judgment day.

The word "perfect" in the New Testament has two meanings: qualitative (Lk. 1:13; Col. 4:12), and quantitative (I Cor. 13:8-10). *Kittle, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 8, p. 75, agrees, based on its explanation of the Greek word *teleion*. (Wayne Jackson, *Notes from the Margin of My Bible*, p. 76). By considering pages 9 and 10 of I Corinthians 13, we conclude that "perfect" means the complete unfolding of God's will about salvation. When that happened, speaking in tongues, knowledge and prophecy, as spiritual gifts, vanished away. Therefore, these do not exist today.

These gifts deal with revealing and communicating the will of God to man. So, in verse 9, Paul was teaching that when he wrote I Corinthians all that man should know about salvation had not been revealed. This he means by saying, "for we know in part, and we prophecy in part." "But when that which is perfect is come (when all truth has been given or completed)," then that which is "in part" (prophecies, tongues knowledge) will vanish.

The Lord says the Holy Spirit guided the apostles in to "all truth" (Jno. 16:13). "All" means perfect →

or complete, no more no less. Therefore, “all truth) was given unto us by the apostles. They have communicated to us “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). That which is “perfect” has come. Hence, no more prophecies, tongues and knowledge (miraculous kind) since the time of the apostles. We now have the complete truth, as verified by 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

—*General Santos City, Philippines*

EDITOR’S NOTE: I have known brother Jozel since the late 1980s. I was privileged then and later in the 90s to work with him in the Philippines. He and his wife, Bing, are so active in the Lord’s work. They have three children, I believe. I have great appreciation for the Filipino brethren; health permitting I would love to visit them again.

Evidence Of God In A Butterfly

The life and flight of the Monarch butterfly can make you wonder, Why? My wife and I were driving from Arkansas to a city in Missouri in late September. Fall was in the air. As we drove along the countryside we saw thousands of the beautiful Monarch butterflies. None were flying north, east or west, except in rare instances where something interfered with the flight. With the few exceptions, all were flying in a south-westerly direction. It was very evident that by some means they knew where they were going.

The common Monarch butterfly, black and orange in color, is a native of North America, and may be found from Florida and Mexico even unto Canada. The Monarch is migratory, traveling as far as Canada in the summer and as far south as the mountains of central Mexico, where literally millions of them spend the winter, resting and conserving energy for their journey northward in the spring. In migration some travel even 2,000 miles one way.

With the coming of spring these Monarchs which winter in Mexico, begin to move northward. On their journey the mating of the male and female takes place, after which the male soon dies. The female begins the four stage development of her offspring by the laying of her eggs. The eggs soon hatch and the larva feed on milkweed, from which a toxin is derived and stored in the larva. This will serve a very useful purpose in that it

makes the adult undesirable as food for birds; the toxin makes birds vomit. After some time in the pupa stage a new adult Monarch butterfly comes forth and begins a northeastward journey to the land from whence its parents came. But this new Monarch has never been to the land where it is going for the summer, nor has it ever been to Mexico where it will be going when fall arrives in the north, that is, unless something befalls it somewhere along the way in its journey.

The life and flight of the Monarch butterfly, as briefly described above, provokes a number of interesting questions for those who trust in man and his wisdom of the world rather than in God. One might do well to consider the following: 1. How does the Monarch know that it should head for the mountains of Mexico with the approach of autumn? It has never done such a thing before. 2. How does this ordinary butterfly know which direction to take to get to Mexico: It has certainly never been Mexico and its parents are now dead. 3. What keeps the Monarch from flying north into Canada? East into the Atlantic Ocean? Or west into the Pacific? 4. Does this butterfly know that flying into the north, east or west would put an end to its kind? 5. How does the adult female know to lay her eggs on a particular kind of milkweed, which is suitable for the larva, but which produces a toxin which prevents her offspring from becoming “bird food” during a one way journey of up to 2,000 miles?

How long have Monarch butterflies been going to Mexico? I don’t know the answer to that question, but I would imagine they have been doing this for a long time and will continue to do so, if time stands. But, then, I don’t claim to be an authority on butterflies. Some who do so claim, admit that they **do not know** why those butterflies do all the things they do. But one does not have to be an authority on many of the complex subjects which have baffled the wise of this world in order to explain a great many “WHY’S,” including that of the butterfly. In the case under consideration, unless one is like the “fool” who said in his heart, “there is no God” (Ps. 14:1), the answer to those complex questions is simple — **THERE IS EVIDENCE OF GOD IN A BUTTERFLY!**

EDITOR’S NOTE: The above was written about seven years ago, but we believe it is still food for thought.

The Pharisaic Pigeonhole

Has any class of people come close to the centuries-old contempt for and opprobrium attached to those unusual people known in the New Testament as “the Pharisees”? — perhaps the Nazis would. In the final analysis, the Pharisees, generally speaking, were in some sense bad. Yet, it is annoying at best, and contemptible at worst, when, whether ignorantly or willfully, people use the Pharisees to symbolize things that are bad, but for all the wrong reasons.

There is so much today pigeonholed as “Phariseeism” that in reality has little or nothing to do with the Pharisees of old; and just the mere charge of being a Pharisee can send the accused into a stammering, backpedaling, state of denial. With some, just throw up the word, Pharisee, and that pretty well ends any further discussion of the issue at hand. It is the same with social/political liberals of our day. Rather than engage in genuine debate in moral philosophical terms on issues such as abortion, homosexuality, and fiscal responsibility, these people find it much easier to refer to their opponents as the “religious right,” or sometimes “the radical religious right.” Anyway, let us get this Pharisee thing straight.

WHO WERE THEY? **Webster’s New World Dictionary** comes about as close as some, even preaching brethren, in answering this question; which is to say, not terribly close: “An ancient Jewish party...that carefully observed the written law but also accepted the oral, or traditional law...” Then, under the adjective “Pharisaic,” they have,

...of the Pharisees [who] emphasiz[ed] or observ[ed] the letter but not the spirit of religious law; self-righteous, sanctimonious; [who] pretend[ed] to be highly moral or virtuous without actually being so; hypocritical.

There are several problems with these comments:

“Ancient” might be a bit too elastic to describe the Pharisees. Moving from Malachi to Matthew, one’s attention is called to the “sudden” appearance of people and things seemingly Jewish, yet

not found in the Old Testament. We meet Sadducees, Pharisees, Herodians, and Lawyers. It was somewhere during the 400 hundred years between Malachi and the events unfolded in the Gospels, that these groups, as well as their peculiar doctrines and practices arose.

To say that the Pharisees “carefully observed the written law” is also quite a stretch. I believe it was Jesus, whom the Pharisees generally loathed, who said of the “written law”:

Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Now, does it stand to reason that the Master who uttered these words about the Law, would have been in conflict with people who “carefully observed the written law”? No. The Pharisees, like every present day sect, were more devoted to their peculiar creeds and catechisms than to the Divinely inspired “written law.” In truth: Whether Old Testament then, or New Testament now; there’s no such thing as being at fault because you are too careful about observing the written law.

Webster also uses that old, tired, non-biblical cliché to describe the Pharisees: They “observ[ed] the letter but not the spirit of religious law.” We have had a series of articles showing that in the Bible there is no such thing as two levels of Divine Law: that is, a “spirit” level which is superior to the mere “letter” level. This whole idea comes from a misinterpretation of three passages (Romans 2:25-29; 7:1-6; II Corinthians 3:1-11) which variously use the terms: spirit, letter, and law, to draw a contrast, not between two levels of divine law, rather between two divinely given laws: the Law of Moses, and the superior Law of Christ. →

What is meant by this letter-but-not-the-spirit characterization of the Pharisees is the idea that they were so overly concerned about the “jots” and “tittles” of the Law like sacrifices and tithes that they failed to pay any attention to the really important stuff like compassion, mercy, and love. In reality, a good reading of the Old Testament will bear out the fact that there are “jots” and “tittles” which deal with both the outward and the inward parts of the truly religious man. This is why Jesus said to the Pharisees,

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. (Matthew 23:23)

Nobody has the right to decide which “jots” or “tittles” of divine Law which he will heed to the exclusion of other “jots” and “tittles.” The Pharisees were condemned in this instance precisely because they arrogated to themselves the right to pick and choose.

The rest of what Webster says pretty well comports with the facts. The Pharisees did “accept...the oral, or traditional law,” and they were “self-righteous, sanctimonious; [who] pretend[ed] to be highly moral or virtuous without actually being so; hypocritical.”

These people, just like sectarians of our day, put their own twist on Scripture. Jesus warned against the so-called “righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” (Matthew 5:20). Then in the rest of the chapter he gave examples of their righteousness. Notice how often he used the lead phrase: “Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time.” Emphasis here lies on the word “heard.” In other words, these were things that the scribes and Pharisees said were taught by the Law of Moses, which in fact were not.

Many times, these people elevated their own doctrines to the point that they made “void the word of God by their tradition,” of which traditions Jesus said, “which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do” (Mark 7:13). They made void their “worship” by “teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men” (Matthew 15:9). Not only did they

make up their own rules, even to the point of circumventing God’s rules, they didn’t even follow their own rules; for which Jesus condemned them by saying they, “bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger” (23:4).

PRESENT-DAY PHARISAIC PIGEONHOLING. In the church, so often when one is critical of, or calls into question the biblical correctness of, some brethren’s teaching or practice, he will be pegged as a Pharisee. If that is Phariseism, why was the Lord not a Pharisee? Rather than debate the issue that prompts criticism, it is just so much easier to wave the magic wand of: “Pharisee.”

The charge, “Pharisee,” is sometimes applied to brethren who are opposed to outward shows of zeal and emotion, particularly in worship. This Pharisaic trait supposedly is seen in the Pharisees’ criticism of the rejoicing going on during the Triumphal Entry:

[The] Pharisees...said unto him...rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said, I tell you that, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out. (Luke 19:39-40)

The Pharisees were not concerned with the emotion and zeal of the disciples here, rather with what they were saying: “Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Besides, this charge does not fit the Pharisees at all. They were the very people who were fond of “trumpets,” “street corners,” and “disfigur[ed]” faces (Matthew 6).

Most egregious of all Pharisaic pigeonholing is that of applying the term Pharisee to “conservative” brethren, when the moniker far better fits our liberal, loving, innovative brethren. These are the folks who have created their own non-biblical terminology (“our fellowship,” “belief fellowship,” etc.). They are the ones who are so adept at phony, outward, and pretentious crying, shouting, and swaying. They are the ones who make up their own rules as to what is loving, kind, and compassionate; and they, hypocritically, will not even abide by them.

Call a spade a spade, and a Pharisee and Pharisee when it is needed. Just be sure you know what you are calling someone.

—AA

Ervin Brantley

Asked how he felt upon the news of FDR's death, Mr. Truman likened it a wagon load of hay falling on you. Having had this experience, I nonetheless testify that the simile fails to capture the numbness we felt, and feel, at the death (6/3/08) of brother Ervin Brantley. It is a blow to his beloved and family; a blow to the Milestone church of Christ; and, a blow to the North-west Florida School of Biblical Studies.

My wife pegged Ervin to a tee: This barrel-chested man with his booming voice and bear paws, she said, "was a big 'ol teddy bear"; yes, that and more.

Ervin was *educated*. Self-taught, well-read, he was conversant with a diversity of topics, and he liked to talk about all of them. Dearest to him were the Scriptures which he knew well. Ervin, the elder, was "apt to teach" — privately, in Bible classes, and in NWFSBS.

Ervin was *generous*: with his time, treasures, and talents. More than a bunch of people have been on the receiving end of his giving nature. He spent hours visiting and reached deeply into his pocket to help people and causes he believed in.

Ervin was *tough*. So full wires and metal stuff, he was a veritable bucket of bolts; yet, without whining, he mounted podia, drug limbs out of people's yards, campaigned, and door-knocked. Ervin makes me think of one of David's men of valor, Benaiah who "slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day" (1Ch 11.22).

Ervin was *magnanimous*. You could go to the mat with him today and it was bygone tomorrow; he just did not bear grudges (Col 3.13).

Ervin was *passionate*. He was a man of deep conviction from which he would not retreat. He loved the Lord's church and His Cause believing them worthy to promote and fight for.

Ervin was *compassionate*. He could be "touched with the feeling of [others'] infirmities" (He 4.15). He did not like to see people go without; and, would be the first to embrace an erring christian who came back.

Ervin was *humble*. He did not take himself too seriously. He loved laughing and joking whether as the object or the instigator.

My regrets? 1) Ervin is gone; 2) This list is not long enough; and, 3) I did not adequately say these things to this precious, precious man while he was here. —AA

READERS' RESPONSE

"I have enjoyed Banner of Truth for a long time and appreciate your taking the time to present the whole truth as revealed in His word. It's hard to hear a good sermon now and I get a lift from your paper... Thanks for all: I'm sending a few names to put on your mailing list, **Norma C. Williams.**" — **TN.** (*We appreciate the names to be added and will do so, Editor.*)

"I am including a check for a small amount help pay for printing and mailing the publication "Banner of Truth." I have personally subscribed for several years and also receive a 25 issue bundle addressed... The work you and the Hickory Grove congregation are doing warrants our continued support. We have moved. Please continue to send the bundle to the new address and we will make them available to Abilene, 5th and Grape congregation where we now worship... May God continue to bless us both with the strength and vigor to do His work in combating the error that is so prevalent in the Lord's church, **Joe F. Travis.**" — **TX.**

"Thank you so much for sending Banner of Truth. Please put me on the mailing list for future papers. I am sending you a paper my brother, Jim Farley, puts out. My other brother, Albert, puts out the WV Christian. They are doing a good work, along with you and others. Thank you for teaching the truth, **June Williamson.**" — **WV.** (*I have been getting the paper your brother Jim puts out. I appreciate receiving it. It contains good lessons, Editor.*)

"Thanks so much for you Banner of Truth. We look forward to each copy. Your articles are very informative. We have someone who would like to receive it. Would you please put them on your mailing list? Thanks so much, **Bobby and Nell Harris.**" (*We appreciate those who send us names for our mailing list. Those names are usually names of people who find BOT worthwhile, Editor.*)

"I was given one of your papers, "Banner of Truth" and was very impressed with it. I am 86 years of age and have been a member of the church since I was 12. My father was the preacher of a small country church for a number of years. I have a son who is a preacher for a small congregation in Medford, OK. I attend at the Garriott Rd. church in Enid, OK. I have been distressed at the apostasy that is creeping into the Lord's church. And am so happy when I read papers like yours that are upholding the truth. I would like to add my name to your list to receive the paper if that is possible. Am enclosing a small donation to help in my small way, **Anna M. Siders.**" — **OK.** (*It is refreshing to hear from ones like you, who are in their golden years, and have a love for God's truth. The apostasy which is* →

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taking place in the Lord's church is distressing indeed. Some of the people who are younger don't seem to be as concerned as those who have been members of the church for many, many years. We are happy to put your name on our mailing list, and thank you for your help for the paper, Editor).

"Thank you for your continued good work and great articles which are easily turned into a series of sermons. Keep it up!, **Freddie Clayton.**" — TN.

"We enjoy your Banner of Truth very much and would like to continue receiving it. We will be moving May 8 to our new address. Thanks, may God bless in your good work, **Vernon Key.**"—AL. (Thanks for sending your change of address. This helps greatly, Editor).

Our Readers' Response will be continued in our next issue of BOT. Thanks for responses. – Editor.

SAVING STEPS OF FAITH

"walk in the steps of that faith" (Rom. 4:12)

Hear the Gospel

Jn. 20:30, 31; Rom. 10:17

Believe

Rom. 1:16; Acts 18:8; Heb. 11:6

Repent

Lk. 13:3; 24:47; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess Faith in Christ

Rom. 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37

Be Baptized

Mat. 28:19; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 10:47, 48; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-6; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12; 1Pet. 3:21

Be Faithful Unto and Until Death

Mat. 25:21, 34; 2Pet. 1:1-11; Rev. 2:10; 1Jno. 1:6-9

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