

2ND ANNUAL BANNER OF TRUTH LECTURES

We were greatly encouraged by the success of the lectures. We saw a good increase in attendance and interest in general. We are looking forward to an even better lectureship in the year 2003.

We invite our readers to consider an unsolicited appraisal of the lectures by two of the participants. We believe their appraisal would be typical of that of the greater number of those in attendance.

We begin with an article by David Lemmons, in which he points out in the beginning that he had heard, taught, or preached 34 lessons, including 28 of the 28 lectures of the *Banner of Truth* lectures, in one week. David says, "Most people would say that is way too much preaching, but I say to you, without hesitation, it was a WONDERFUL week for me." His article continues as follows:

"I could wish that more than the very few members from North Marshall who came, would have taken advantage of the opportunity at the BOT Lectures. Without doubt, you are the loser for not doing so. I am very thankful that some of you did come. Those of you who came encouraged me greatly by your presence.

The theme of the lectures was so timely and vital: Church Growth—As God Would Have It. I'd like to mention some of the highlights of these lessons I was blessed to hear. All of them were very good and I took one yellow pad full of notes and then got started on another steno pad before the week was over.

I was so thankful that Tommy & Dianna were able to hear brother Roger Campbell, on Monday night, discuss: "Church Growth Through Foreign Mission Work." Brother Campbell is an expert on this subject, having served about 10 years in Taiwan and another six years in Ukraine. This good brother has sacrificed and worked hard in the mission field, and learned two of the most difficult languages on earth (Mandarin Chinese and Russian). His presentation was masterful and so very interesting and well done.

Someone added up the combined years that the men who attended the lectures had lived in the foreign mission field and that number was more than SIXTY. I would suggest that number would be WAY ABOVE AVERAGE for any assembly of similar size among our brethren!!!

While I was sitting beside Tommy and Dianna [Tommy, elder at North

Marshall], brother Don Waggoner came over and asked me if would be present to hear him speak on Wednesday night I replied to him that the Wednesday night lectures would be the only lectures I would miss, but Tommy spoke up and volunteered to carry out my responsibilities here at North Marshall, thus freeing me to hear brother Don. That was a kind and considerate thing for Tommy to do and I appreciate it very much.

Earlier in the day on Monday, brother Freddie Clayton had preached an excellent lesson (in his own unique style) on the subject: "Church Growth Through Progressive Worship." Freddie dealt with many of the innovations to our worship that change agents are striving to convince our brotherhood are necessary in order to maintain the interest of the coming generation.

Also, Virgil Hale had presented a tremendous lesson at 7:00 p.m., on the subject: "Preaching The Whole Counsel Of God." This is such an important concept for us to get hold of among our brethren. Many of our preachers are not even coming close to following the apostolic example set by the great Apostle Paul (cf., Acts 20:27).

The first thing on Tuesday morning was another challenging and practical lesson from Roger Campbell: "Church Growth Through Personal Work." If I had to choose one sermon I would want each member at North Marshall to hear from this series, it would be this sermon, yet I believe I was the only person present from this congregation to hear it.

One of Roger's fellowlaborers in Taiwan, Alan Adams, presented some very valuable suggestions about: "Church Growth Through Writing," on Tuesday afternoon. Writing is something we are not doing as well and as much in the church as we could be and that is a tremendous shame.

The lesson that captivated my attention and would have been OK with me if it had gone on for two or three hours was the presentation of brother Don Waggoner: "Church Growth And Islam." The lesson covered some aspects of the doctrine of Islam, but primarily centered on what Don identified as THE ONLY WAY TO BE AT PEACE WITH MUSLIMS: convert them to Christianity. Don told about his experience in preaching and teaching the saving message in Indonesia. What a blessing it was to me to hear that lesson! I think everyone present in the assembly was awed by Don's message about what the powerful gospel of Jesus Christ is able to accomplish.

I can see that this article is not long enough for me to comment on all the lessons of this series, but the lesson on "Prayer And Church Growth," by Don Greene was certainly one of my favorites. It was preached by a man who is a student in the preaching school at Ensley, The Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies. Also, Richard Guill did a great job on the subject: "Church Growth Through Special Singing Groups."

Because of the tragic death of a grandchild of one of the speakers (Jimmy Bates), brother Walter Pigg expanded his assigned lesson into two parts. He spoke on: "Christ's Attitude Toward Indifference," and "Church Growth And The Plague Of Indifference." There is no denying that this is a tremendous problem among us which is preventing church growth. Brother

Walter did a really good job in focusing our attention on this plague. I sincerely hope that more of you will be able to hear such good lessons next year.

Brethren, I am sad to point out that many among churches of Christ would refer to many or perhaps all of the speakers on this 2ND ANNUAL BOT LECTURESHIP in Murray as RADICALS, as KNUCKLEHEADS, or some other such like moniker. I've been to many lectureships in my short 50 years here on earth and I can tell you honestly that this was one of the most helpful and encouraging lectureships I've ever attended. It is so convenient for some brethren to dismiss what good brethren (I mean brethren who love the truth, love the church, and love lost souls) say by giving them some label and then closing their ears, but it is not very good policy when those things taught are what will be faced at the LAST DAY (Jno. 12:48). I am grateful to have spoken on this lectureship and recommend it to you. - - *David Lemmons.*

BANNER OF TRUTH LECTURES — A REVIEW

Richard Guill

The Banner of Truth Lectures for 2002 are now history. Twenty-eight great lessons on the subject of “Church Growth As God Would Have It” were presented. Each speaker was well prepared on the subject assigned to him. Our physical facilities (the theater at the Curris Center on the Murray State campus) was commodious and comfortable.

Attendance this year was above that of last year. However, it was still not what it should have been. With thousands of Christians living within a short driving distance of this event, we struggled to have 100 in attendance at any session. Only a few sessions reached that mark. Many of those in attendance were from other states such as Michigan, Florida, North Carolina, Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, Illinois, Alabama, Michigan, and others. That means that local folks were very sparse. I thank those of you from Coldwater that attended. Were you able to attend, but chose not to? Is it because you are not interested in church growth? Was it the speakers chosen? Was it the location? OR, was it simply that you had other things you thought were more important? But were they, really? Cf. Matthew 6:33.

These lessons reminded us that Church Growth involves more than numbers, but involves growth in knowledge and faith and in favor with God (2 Peter 3:18). They also reminded us that although God wants us to grow in all these areas, the methods employed to foster such growth must be authorized in the scriptures and that God has given unto us a plan to follow that will produce such growth. If we follow God's plan, He will give the increase.

The planning for the 2003 lectures will begin soon. If you missed this year, please make plans

to make it next year and help us promote it by telling your friends and inviting them to go with you.

My Personal Assessment of the Lectures

Looking back over the lectures and listening to comments by quite a few brethren, I can truthfully say that I was greatly encouraged, yet at the same time somewhat disappointed.

I was encouraged by the quality of the lessons presented. As someone commented just today, “It was clear that the speakers had spent some time in preparing their lessons.” Although I had not pointed out specifically the way I wanted each speaker to deal with the lesson or lessons assigned, there was very little repetition. So many positive aspects of Church Growth were discussed, as well as the increasing number of hindrances with which we are now faced.

It was good to hear the emphasis upon Church Growth from the standpoint of mission efforts. In comparison with three or four decades ago, the interest in mission work has waned considerably. It is a tragedy when the part of the Lord’s work which should be of the highest priority drops to such a low priority.

The increase in attendance was encouraging this year. Visitors, other than speakers, came from several states, some of them quite a distance away. There were some from nearby congregations in attendance who were not last year. A good number of people have told me how much they enjoyed the lessons presented. It seems to be goal of a number of brethren to work for better attendance next year. This will produce results if we work toward that goal.

The love and respect for God’s truth exhibited by the speakers could hardly have been greater. Of the 28 lessons delivered, not a one to my knowledge contained false teaching. Anyone criticizing the content of the lessons delivered would undoubtedly do it on the basis of a lack of love and appreciation for Truth. But don’t think for a moment that there aren’t those who would do that very thing! I testify to this from my own experience over a great many years.

I was encouraged greatly by the willingness of brethren to put forth the effort necessary to participate in the lectures as speakers. Some travelled long distances, and spent much time.

It was also commendable that some brethren had a part in the lectures by helping with the expenses involved. Some came at their own expense and others had financial support from their respective congregations. This meant that brethren and congregations were willing to be *fellow-helpers* from a financial standpoint. We did give financial assistance to those who needed it, and were glad that the church at Dexter and Hickory Grove were willing to support the lectures in this way.

Now, as noted in the beginning, in some ways I was somewhat disappointed. A great many individuals expressed this same disappointment. My greatest disappointment was the fact that so many within easy travel distance chose not to attend any of the lectures. There must be well over two thousand members of the church within this county, and many, many thousands within easy driving distance. Invitations to the lectures were sent to about 330 congregations within a radius of a hundred miles.

It was not expected that brethren from a number of local congregations would be in attendance. They have chosen to go the way of liberalism. They have false teachers for meetings and

bid “God speed” to them in other ways. Those who will not be honest with God in upholding and respecting His word, are repelled when the whole counsel of God is preached.

How sad it is that people who one time claimed to love the truth have now demonstrated by their actions that Truth is not all that important to them anymore. It is no less than heartbreaking that so many have turned from the truth but we are forewarned by the New Testament in several instances that this very thing is going to happen, and happen it has!

Sad as it is that so many no longer have a love for the truth which make men free, and would not even partake of the spiritual feast which the BOT lectures offered, even in a small way, and even oppose that truth, it is in some ways sadder still that those who claim to be sound brethren are so indifferent to the truth.

When people simply don’t care about spiritual things, it isn’t any wonder that the church is in such trouble. So-called “sound brethren” who don’t care are responsible in a great measure for allowing the devil, through his “devices” and “wiles” to wreak havoc upon the cause of Christ. These brethren often violate God’s law on fellowship, claiming to stand for what is right and going right along fellowshiping those in error. The Lord’s church is truly hurting!

The following question has been on my mind for some time: Just how could anyone find a just cause for opposing or criticizing the recent lectures? Or, for that matter, how could anyone who claims to have any love for the truth be completely indifferent, as many have demonstrated? It is indeed a sad thing to me that things have changed so drastically here in our own area. Whereas thirty years ago most of the congregations were fairly sound, those who demonstrate their soundness today are in the minority!

We appeal to faithful brethren far and wide to start now the making of plans to encourage the stand for truth everywhere, and to work toward a greater *Banner of Truth* Lectureship next year. If ever there was a time when brethren of like faith needed to stand together in support of the gospel and the encouragement of each other, it is NOW! The Lord’s church stood against great opposition in the first century, and it can do the same today, if we are willing.

- - - *The Editor*

Video & Audio Tapes of the 2nd Annual BOT Lectures

Tapes may be ordered from James E. Green, 2711 Spring Meade Blvd., Columbia, TN 38401. E-mail address: <jamesegreen@charter.net> Phone number: (931) 486-1364.

Video tapes of the 28 lectures - \$35.00

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All order and inquiries should be directed to our brother James E. Green

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by the above title, which he is offering **FREE** to those who will make use of them. Contact him by mail or phone at: (225) 344-6519. These tracts are worthwhile for members of the church as well as non members.

Welcome New Readers! With every issue of *Banner of Truth* we have **new readers**. We welcome you and invite you to let us hear from you. If you profit from BOT, we ask you to recommend it to others who would find it worthwhile also.

We have many readers who tell others about BOT, and in that way help to uphold the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. - - *Editor*

Dear Unfaithful Ones In Christ

As I grow older, the statement of James that we “know not what shall be on the morrow” and life “is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas. 4:14), takes on more meaning than ever. Perhaps it is because I know that by reason of nature there isn’t all that much time remaining for me, and it could be all but gone even now. The bottom line is that there is no time to waste in making preparation for the “great beyond” into which we all shall journey soon.

While I must do all that I can by way of faithfully serving the Lord for myself [no one can do it for me], there is such a great need to encourage those brothers and sisters in God’s church (His family) who are not even making a serious effort to be ready when the “great day” comes. It is with these thoughts in mind that I write these words, trusting that some unfaithful one who read this will stop and think, and awake to reality and become serious about this matter of life, death, and eternity.

By “unfaithful” I mean those within the church who are not really putting their **all** into serving Christ; not seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, as our Savior said we must (Matt. 6:33). There are many reasons why some are unfaithful, but there is no need for any of us to make excuse, even though men have been in the habit of doing this since Adam and Eve. God knows us within and without and we will be as though **transparent** before the eyes of the Lord in the day of judgment. But if you are inclined to make excuses for your failure to get down to business about spiritual preparation anyway, or if for whatever reason you are **unfaithful**, please take a few minutes to consider with me a few things which will show the folly of excuses and the tragedy of unfaithfulness. Let us note some of the excuses for unfaithfulness which are so commonly given.

Are you, by any chance, one of those who contend, “We are entitled to some pleasure”? Not all pleasure is wrong to be sure. There are things which bring delight, joy and satisfaction which are right, and the Christian should experience some measure of this type of pleasure, and this may be done while serving the Lord acceptably. But if you speak of **pleasure** in the sense of gratification of the senses or sensual satisfaction, wherein God’s law is broken or your service to Him is hindered, you are **not** entitled to **pleasure**. Do you remember that Paul told Timothy that the time would come when men would have a “form of godliness” and that they would be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4-5)? Well, that time has come. That great servant Moses, sure had his head on straight when it came

to sinful pleasure. He was willing to suffer affliction with God's people rather than "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25-26). You see, Moses had respect for the recompense of reward in serving God. While there is no need for me to tell you that there is no pleasure in sin, I will say that such pleasure is short lived, and is not worth your soul.

A lot of people are saying nowadays, "We just don't have time to devote to spiritual things." If you have been carried away with that excuse, let me ask you: Just how much time do you have to devote to anything? Do you have time to get sick? If it happens to us, we'll have the time! In fact, we even have time to die, and one day we shall. That is one appointment we'll all keep, ready or not. Are you one of those who have "so much to do" that you just don't have time for Christ and his church? If you have that kind of job – you have the wrong job! If you have other things to do that are more important than serving Christ, you are deceived and misled, and you will live, or die, to regret it. There will come a time when all men (every knee) will have the time to bow to God (Rom. 14:11-12). If that doesn't happen in this life, it will happen in the world to come, when it will be too late. But isn't it true that we find some time to do the things we want to do most? That is the way it is with most people I know.

Some have even tried to make excuse for their unfaithfulness by saying: "There are so many problems within the church." There are many problems within the church, and no one could in honesty deny that. But problems are not new to the church, and were not even in the days of the apostles. But the faithful ones did not run out on the problems; they faced them and sought to overcome them as God's people should. Have you ever thought about the cause of church problems? They arise because some are unfaithful in some way, thereby encouraging problems rather than helping to solve them. Just think what a difference it would make today if all the unfaithful members of the church would repent and begin to set forth a positive influence by standing up for truth through word and deed. The church would stand taller than it ever has in our lives.

I have known people, unfaithful members, who took the position that, "It is nobody's business how I live." While we know that people cannot be forced to live a Christian life, it is somebody's business as to how church members live. Christ loved them enough to die for them, and most have those who care for them. But **influence** must be considered. It may be one's friends, loved ones, or even their children who are being led into a path of unfaithfulness. It is also the Christian's business as to how fellow Christians live. The influence upon the church must also be considered.

Could it be that you are one of those who make no excuse for your unfaithfulness, but that you are simply indifferent? If so, you are to be given credit for being honest about the matter, however that doesn't change the gravity of your condition. If you are unfaithful because of indifference, have you thought about what Christ said to the church at Laodicea? He said that he preferred that people be **hot** or **cold**, not **lukewarm** (Rev. 3:14-22). What does it mean to be **lukewarm**? Well, if one is just in between, the Lord said he would "spue" that person out. In other words, the Lord would be made sick and "vomit" them out. The **lukewarm** people make the Lord sick. The apostle Peter talks about those Christians who have become entangled and overcome by the world. He says they are worse off than before obeying the truth, and then uses the picture of a dog eating its vomit to describe that one's condition (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

There is one other thing which I wish you would think about. Have you read the account of Lazarus and the "rich man" recently (Lk. 16:19-31)? If you haven't, you do remember that account don't you? Have you ever thought about what kind of message you would want to send back to your friends and loved ones if you should die as you are right now, and be whisked into the realm of the departed spirits, as were Lazarus and the rich man? If you lifted up your eyes in

company with the rich man, don't you imagine you would want to send the same message he wanted to send **but couldn't**? That message was: "Don't come to this place of torment!" On the other hand, if as a faithful servant, after death you were carried by angels into "Abraham's bosom," what message would you want to send? Wouldn't you want your friends and loved ones to know that "Heaven is surely worth it all"? And, that the most foolish thing in all the world they could do would be to be unfaithful to the Lord and lose that heavenly reward? Either way, if those who have departed this life could talk to us right now, what would they tell us? That's exactly right, they would tell us that the most important of all things in life, by far, is to love and serve the Lord while the opportunity is ours to do so, in order to win that crown of life.

These things have been written because of real concern for you. The greatest thing anyone can do for you is to encourage you to faithfully serve the Lord. No one can make you do that, but many are concerned. In closing let me make this one request. Please don't let anyone, because of your own condition, experience the sad and distressing situation that occurs when an unfaithful member of the church knowingly approaches death unprepared. It has been my experience to witness such occasions and it is not an easy thing to do. If you are of that unfaithful number, why allow your soul to be at risk? Why not REPENT and return to faithfulness while you are still on the side of time?

- - - *Walter W. Pigg*

Has Your Address Changed ? If you don't want to miss *Banner of Truth*, and if you would like to help us save on expenses, do yourself and us a favor by sending us your change of address. We will appreciate this greatly. - Editor

“Morals Have Changed”

Alan Adams, Assistant Editor

Editor's Note: The following article, from March 1996, is very timely more than six years later.

In his last State of the Union Address, president Clinton used the word "values" more than just a few times. He also often uses the cousin to "values," "morals." One wonders what precisely he means by these words. From the standpoint of what the Bible says, Mr. Clinton has the morals of an alley cat. His first, and only really strong, stand on any issue was that of allowing homosexuals free access to the military forces of the United States. He is all out for abortion and the forcible redistribution of personal property. So, I'm a bit confused at his use of words like "values" and "morality." It seems that with him and all liberals these words are to be defined on the basis of what is politically popular at the time. Actually, these concrete concepts are grounded in the nature of God Himself, that is God "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning?" (Jas.

1:17). The meaning and application of these lofty terms is revealed in God's Word. It's scary the way people just so nonchalantly say, "Morals have changed" as though to say: "What was wrong yesterday is right today; and what of it."

A well-known radio personality refers to day-time Talk Shows as "Museums of modern American societal decay." I would extend that description to include almost everything on television, and, in particular, many of the news programs.

According to one of the major networks news programs, there is a case pending involving an unmarried, pregnant teacher. The teacher is a divorcee and the baby was sired by someone other than her former mate. The school where she is teaching has indicated that she must either abort her unborn child or possibly be terminated. The school argues that it is not proper or conducive to good education for an unmarried, pregnant woman to be a teacher and be seen by impressionable Junior High School students.

The school is not so concerned about what this woman **did** that caused her to be pregnant, but rather that she is visibly pregnant. Kids can see, they know she's not married; they conclude, "If it's okay for Ms. Jones, then it's okay for me." The teacher in her defense, says, "Morals have changed." I believe that some analysis is called for here.

When we speak of "morals," this implies a standard, an objective code to which we appeal so as to determine whether a particular action is right or wrong. Morals, or morality, cannot refer to mere subjective choices, likes or dislikes, whether on the part of one person or many. If we say that this or that is "immoral," and we mean that we do not **like** this or that, then the whole concept of moral/immoral becomes meaningless. Under that sort of definition, two people can simultaneously like and dislike the same thing, thus, the same action can be at the same time both moral and immoral. This woman has obviously had sexual intercourse with a man who is not her husband. It is true that a lot, maybe even most, of Americans do not find this type of activity distasteful. They don't mind it, they don't dislike it. So, when this woman says, "Morals have changed," she really means that many or most people like or approve (at least they don't dislike or disapprove) of the type of sexual activity she has engaged in.

Further questions must be raised. If only one person "likes" something that is otherwise "disliked" by most other people, may that person then say, "Morals have changed"? If not just one person, then we ask **how many** people must begin to "like" something (or, cease to dislike it) before we can justifiably say "Morals have changed"? A lot of people now like or enjoy child pornography. May we simply say, "Morals have changed"? No, this woman and others like her are wrong. Morals, i.e. the moral standard, have/has not changed, rather "God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their of own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves" (Rom. 1:24). People like this woman have not "discovered" this simple definition and usage for "moral (or, morality)" through deep thought and analysis, rather "even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Rom. 1:28).

The moral standard has not changed. "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness..." (Gal. 5:19). It doesn't matter one whit how many Americans now "like" these activities or no longer find them distasteful, but "they which practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21).

This woman has "committed great whoredom" (Hos. 1:2), but God loves her just as He does all sinners. If she would stop her foolish word games and genuinely repent and obey the Gospel our Father, of "the multitude of [His] tender mercies [will] blot out [her] transgressions" (Ps.

51:1).

As contemptible as this woman's actions are, her employer's are no less so. Had they simply fired the teacher because of the poor example this would set for the children she is teaching, we would applaud. However, they mentioned another alternative: Abortion. The only thing worse than the brazen and blatant immorality in our society is the absolute unwillingness to accept personal responsibility for its consequences. Through sexual perversion and abandon, people contract **AIDS** and they are called "victims." No, the victims are the innocent people and children who get it through no fault of their own. A woman "plays the harlot" and an innocent baby is conceived: so, her employer suggests getting rid of the baby. How selfish and perverse!

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, we are not immune from this type of sophistry. So many Christians seem to "like" (or, do not find distasteful) short, tight, revealing clothing, so-called "bathing suits"; they "like" dancing and drinking; they enjoy movies and music that are full of sex, violence and

innuendo. I'm told we must be more "progressive" in our thinking. "Morals have changed, you know." No! "Nakedness" is a shame" (Rev. 3:18). Modesty and discretion are to govern the way we dress (I Tim. 2:9; I Pet. 3:3). "Revelling" and "lascivi-ousness [the unchaste handling of males and females; AA]" are still "works of the flesh" which will keep one out of heaven (Gal. 5:19-21).

We Are Drifting

*The following thoughts were penned, under the above title, by the late Franklin Camp. I think perhaps his title should be updated to **We Have Drifted - AA***

"Is it possible to picture Timothy taking the young people at Ephesus on some retreat, then reporting in the Ephesus bulletin the following: 'Young people at Ephesus have just experienced a new high in spirituality. Saturday night at 11:30, we blew out the lights and started spontaneous prayer, with the girls leading as well as the boys. We held hands while we prayed and you could feel the holy spirit working. At five minutes past twelve, we observed the Lord's Supper. It has never been so meaningful at Ephesus. Instead of passing the trays in the old folks' way at Ephesus, we were asked to pass by the table in single file. Each passed by the table, partook of the bread and wine, then returned to his seat. Titus led us in singing while we were observing the supper. That communion service was so meaningful! Every heart was touched. Each communicant experienced renewal and forgiveness! It was beautiful and we praised God for a 'full cup of blessing!' The highlight of the retreat was the speeches made by Hyumenaus and Philetus. Both of these men really know how to turn young people on! Hyumenaus discussed the subject of 'Church Traditions,' and Philetus discussed 'The Holy Spirit and Spontaneous Worship Services,' and really got things going. Both really laid 'The Establishment' low. We are looking forward to our next retreat, to be at the Moonside Motel, on the Sea of Galilee."

[Some churches have been wrecked because thoughtless elders hired a self-professed expert on young people and turned them over to him].

Editor's Note: The above article is reprinted from the *Messenger* of the church of Christ in Cowan, TN. Alan Adams was the editor.

When the late Franklin Camp wrote the above article several years ago, the tomfoolery which is becoming more common every day was then in a growth stage. It is now less likely that one will be surprised at the things which are happening within the Lord's church. Some of the antics make me think of things which I've seen going on in Hinduism or some other pagan religion. How sad that leaders are leading souls in such a way of disrespect for our Lord and His will!

The Thief on the Cross

Alan Adams, Assistant Editor

It is sad that about all some people know, or think they know, about the Thief is that he was saved without being baptized. Their conclusion then, if the thief can, so can I. Never mind the fact that Jesus, after His death, said, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned" (Mk. 16:15-16). Besides the Thief, Jesus, while alive, said a lot of things to a lot of people. But Jesus also spoke of His purpose to put in motion a New Covenant under which all mankind would be amenable. This covenant would be (and has been) ratified by His blood. When He instituted the Lord's Supper He took a cup of "the fruit of the vine," gave it to his disciples, told them to drink it and said, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which was shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Jesus shed His blood when He died. Inspiration is careful to record that a soldier, in order to insure that Jesus was a corpse, rammed a spear into His side and forthwith came out blood and water.

The Book of Hebrews contains all this discussion about Old and New Covenants. First Law and Second Law. The writer makes clear **when** the Old Covenant was abrogated and when the New Covenant took effect: "a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (Heb. 9:27). Whatever else might be said about the thief on the cross, he was saved before Jesus died; thus, he was saved before the New Covenant became law. In 2002, we are living in a world which has been governed (and is governed) by the New Covenant for 2,000 years. Pointing to what happened before the New Covenant came is pointless. If a man immigrates from China to America and becomes an American citizen, it will do him no good in a court of law to point out his rights and obligations under the law of China. He doesn't live under that law.

While Jesus was alive on the earth, before he, the testator of the New Covenant died, he had every right to dispense with, give out His blessings to whomsoever He chose. However, even then, those whom He chose to receive the blessings of salvation (that is, before the New Covenant became law), did so based on various conditions.

To the palsied man in Mark 2:5-12, Jesus asked the question, Which is easier? to tell a man, "your sins are forgiven," or to tell a "palsied man, get up and walk"? Then He went on, "that you may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins, I say unto thee Get up, take your bed and go home." Was that man told to be baptized? No. Neither was he told to believe on Christ, nor to repent to be forgiven. But, it clearly says Jesus forgave his sins. Is it reasonable to take what happened before the New Covenant and conclude that now under the New Covenant, a sinner does not need to believe, repent or to be baptized to be saved? No. The New Covenant

plainly says that all three of these are necessary to salvation. In Acts 2, after Jesus had died, shed His blood, after the New Covenant had gone into effect, then men who believed in Jesus as the Christ, the son of God were straightway told to “repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

For approximately 1,971 years neither the case of the thief, nor the palsied man, has had anything to do with the price of tea in China, much less how a penitent sinner is now saved. The same thing would be true of the woman who bathed the feet of Jesus with her tears, and Zaccheus. These were all “erring” Israelites, living under the Old Covenant, which was still in effect. Or what of the rich young ruler? Jesus told him that to have eternal life he must sell everything, give the money to the poor and come “follow me” (Lk. 18:18-32). Must people do that today to be saved? That was no more a universal command, any more than were the conditions by which the thief or others were saved during the time of Christ’s earthly sojourn. To be saved today, a sinner must trust in the Lord, and obey His commandments to repent, confess and be immersed for the remission of sins.

1653 Pine Ln. Dr., Cantonment, FL 32533

The Lord has never given man the choice of how he wants to be saved. It is either the Lord’s way or no way at all.

Listen to God – Not Man

Alton W. Fonville

In recent weeks and months, we have been bombarded with a tremendous amount of news regarding the big religious organization whose headquarters are at Vatican City [Roman Catholic Church]. News is “coming to light” regarding so much of the homosexual activity and child molestation among their leaders and the resulting lawsuits..

The courage which some of those offended ones has used in reporting these events is encouraging. Now that the door has been opened, more and more will have the courage and conviction to come forward and report such ungodly acts, and maybe stem the tide of this long running history which is abomination with God. Many of us have been hearing of these incidents for most of our lives, but they were not generally believed by most people.

Any time we set out to “bypass” God’s Holy word and set our own rules and regulations, we have stepped over the line and are destined for trouble. God definitely spoke about “homosexuality,” calling it abomination and “unnatural.” And yes, we can even look to nature for some of our activities. Homosexual activity is against nature. Like Paul taught about men wearing “long hair,” he said, “doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?” (I Cor. 11:14). Long hair on a man and homosexual activity are both shameful according to God. They both are unnatural. And when a “religious system” changes God’s laws and makes their own, they are putting their wisdom up against Almighty God’s wisdom, who has already spoken his own will. When we willfully change it, or just ignore it, either way, we will be the loser. Many years ago, when the Bible was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we

were warned that the time would come when false teachers would come and change the will of God, “forbidding to marry” (I Tim. 4:3; 2 Thess. 2). Departure from the truth began in the first century, and by 606 AD [when the Catholic Church was fully established] this religious system [Catholic Church] made it a part of their laws to forbid certain ones to marry (I Tim. 4:30). This, naturally, is one of the big reasons for so much abuse and fornication within the system.

The church does not have “authority” to change God’s laws and make its own laws. Jesus said that “the church” was subject to him, even as the wife is subject to her husband (Eph. 5:23-24). That does not seem so hard to understand, if we want to. The wife does not go around and make rules for her husband which the husband does not wish for or condone. Now, some of these “liberated women” may want to see it differently, but, God has spoken to that issue already. If we choose to ignore what He has said, we will be the loser.

Yes, when we choose to ignore the will of God, we put ourselves in authority against God who made us in the beginning. Whether we kneel down to God in this life or not, it is for sure that **one day we will!** “For it is written, As I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:11-12). If in this life, we bow our knee to God, it will make a difference. If it is “then,” that it happens, it will be **too late!** Which will it be for you: Listen to God, or to man?

- - - 337 Madison 4605, St. Paul, AR 72760

Editor’s note: The Roman Catholic Church is just one of the many man-made religions wherein people listen to man rather than God. It is however the largest of the man-made religions. History is replete with much evidence of many ungodly things which have been done and taught by it. The second largest man-made religion is that of Islam, which now is said to number two billion people! Its evil is being evidenced in an increasing number of ways in recent times.

Other man-made religion, where people listen to man rather than God, are numbered in the multiplied hundreds if not thousands. It is indeed a tragic irony that billions claim to believe in one God and then go about to follow their own will rather than that of the God in whom they claim to believe. This should serve as a great and forceful lesson to those of us who claim to be true Christians. That is, we must not follow man rather than God. Yet, it is increasingly evident that many of us are doing that very thing!!!

“REDEEMING THE TIME”

More attention is probably focused upon TIME at the beginning of a new year than at any other season. Due to this, we are setting forth a few thoughts on the New Year’s Day of 1985, trusting that our readers may be encouraged to recognize TIME as one of man’s most precious possessions, providing the proper use is made of it [As you note, this was written more than 17 years ago, but I thought it still timely].

The apostle Paul commanded the proper use of TIME when he wrote: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, **REDEEMING THE TIME**, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16, emphasis mine, wwp). The expression “redeem-ing the time,” is also used in a command issued to the brethren at Colosse, when Paul said, “Walk in wisdom toward them that

are without, redeeming the time” (Col. 4:5).

“Redeeming the time” carries the idea of making the very best use of the opportunities which are made available by **time**. The marginal reading of this expression in the *American Standard Version* is, “buying up the opportunity.” That this is the correct meaning is attested by other authorities. *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* defines the Greek word EXAGORAZO in the middle voice (from whence comes “redeeming”) as used in Ephesians 5:16 and Colossians 4:5, as: “to redeem, buy off, to secure for one’s self or one’s own use; to rescue from loss or misapplication.” *Thayer* says of the word: “The meaning seems to be to make a wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good, so that zeal and well-doing are as it were the purchase-money by which we make the time our own.”

REASONS FOR REDEEMING THE TIME

That a great many within the church are not redeeming the time is clearly evident. They either do not see the reasons for redeeming it, or else they don’t respect the reasons. At any rate, they are not “buying” the time by seizing its opportunities. To buy the time a price has to be paid and that price is the doing of one’s duty. Undoubtedly many have not recognized the true value of time’s opportunities. Otherwise, the crime of “killing time” would not be committed so often. The serious consideration of reasons for redeeming the time should help us to see the urgency of seeking every opportunity for doing good that time offers us. Consider the following reasons:

“Because The Days Are Evil.” This is the reason given by Paul in the command to the Ephesians (5:16). If that was a valid reason in Paul’s day it is no less so in our day. Evil has been around since the devil appeared to Eve in the Garden of Eden, but at no time in our life time have the days been more evil than at present. Mankind is wrapped up in sin and “love of the world” has become most respectable. So many things are vying for our time, some of which are not wrong within themselves, but countless opportunities are passed by. Perhaps some of the most insidious evils of our day are what we might call “respectable worldliness.” Most of us are not without some guilt in this area. Like the rich man in Luke 16, we want to “fare sumptuously every day.” Therefore, we have little time to do “church work.” We are too busy “redeeming the time” from a worldly standpoint. We are looking for opportunities to “buy up” so that we can have bigger houses, finer clothes, more cars, better boats, sizable bank accounts, and the latest in luxuries. If that heavenly bank depended upon our spiritual deposits it could fail, as physical banks some times do.

Time Is So Limited. James says of our life, “It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas. 4:14). When life ends, whether it be many years or but a few, time will have run out. When time runs out we shall find ourselves in eternity, where there will be no time to redeem, no opportunities to pursue. Paul indeed spoke wisely when he said, “Behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). If we knew that our time would run out in one more day, most of us would not be guilty of wasting that remaining time. We would surely seize the remaining opportunities. But for all we know, we have only one day of time remaining. If we have more, some time we will have no more than that remaining. But whatever the remaining time, we have **no time to waste!** We need to avail ourselves of every opportunity for doing good which remains. We need to be making our “calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10).

Time Lost Is Lost Forever. When time has come and gone we cannot call it back to seize its opportunities. The idea that there will be a second chance for those who waste life’s time by spurning its opportunities is a device of deceit put forth by false teachers, servants of the devil,

even if unknowingly. When our time is all gone, wasted, we are finished with it forever, except for giving an account of how we used it, and paying the penalty due.

TIME'S OPPORTUNITIES

There are many opportunity seekers in this life, but most overlook the greatest ones, those having to do with our eternal, spiritual well-being. As humanism and other Godless "isms" increase their influence upon society, fewer are they who seek opportunities relating to another world, an eternal home for the soul. Some who become enamored with the pleasures and sins of this world simply lose sight of the heavenly country, while some who seek it are led astray by the false teachers who conceal time's greatest opportunity. What are the opportunities which time affords? We note a few important ones.

Knowing The Truth. It was Jesus who said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jno. 8:32). Jesus told the apostles that the "Spirit of truth" would guide them "into all truth" (Jno. 16:13). That **Truth**, referred to by Paul as "every scripture inspired of God" (ASV), will thoroughly furnish "unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Truth is available; we can know it and be made free, unless we choose to waste the time by not "redeeming it" as God demands of us.

We Can Know Continual Forgiveness. The Christian cannot live above sin. Therefore, it is necessary that sins committed along life's pathway be forgiven. Provisions for such have been made. John says, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 Jno. 1:7). This forgiveness is continual as long as one is "walking in the light." If one does not have TIME to walk in the light he cannot have that forgiveness.

We Can Have Eternal Salvation. The writer of Hebrews says of Jesus the he "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9). That salvation is "in Christ" (2 Tim. 2:10). To get "into Christ" one must have a living and active faith. (Heb. 11:6); repent of sins (Acts 2:38); confess Jesus as the Christ (Rom. 10:10); and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

CONCLUSION

Are we walking "circumspectly" and "not as fools"? Are we walking "as wise" by "redeeming the time"? Our time will soon be "cut off" and we "will fly away." It will then be too late to answer those questions in the affirmative.

In general it seems that we are busier than ever, going nowhere! With all the time-savers that we have today, it seems that we should have more TIME to **redeem** in a proper and meaningful way. But the fact is, more of our time than ever is being used in ways to satisfy our own selfish purposes. The failure to use our time in such ways as to provide more opportunities for serving the Lord is very evident within the church. Today, when weeks are still seven twenty-four-hour-days long, we have fallen for a number of "quick fixes." There are One Day Vacation Bible Schools, three-day gospel meetings, and three or four lessons in one-day seminars.

The fifteen or twenty minute sermonettes, with "clowning around" in Bible classes, and periods of fun and entertainment, are not providing the spiritual food which is necessary for spiritual growth. We are seeing the sad results of the misuse of the time which God has so freely given us.

The way in which the church used time in its very beginning might be something for us to think about. Just think! The following is a description of their use of time. "And they continuing daily

with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meet with gladness and singleness of heart...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:46)

- - - *Walter W. Pigg*

FELLOWHELPERS
March and April , 2002

Lou Nell Elkins	50.00
Anonymous	100.00
Mrs. John H. Brown	50.00
Anonymous	50.00
Elizabeth Sublett	21.00
Anonymous	205.00
Robert M. Price	400.00
Alvie Byars	10.00
Anonymous	50.00
Larry Pennington	50.00
R. D. Lawson	20.00
Thomaas A. Harris	10.00
Thomas Uzardo	5.00
Jeanette Pinkslon	20.00
Florence St. church of Christ	100.00
Alhambra church of Christ	50.00
Pine Ridge church of Christ	200.00
Maple Hill church of Christ	200.00
Berea church of Christ	100.00
Church of Christ, Deer, AR	<u>240.00</u>
Total May & June contribution	1,931.00

***“That ye may be fellowhelpers
to the truth” (3 John 8)***

For the way our brethren support our work in a financial way we are sincerely thankful, and it is most encouraging. We have recently seen another increase in mailing costs, but thanks to our good brethren we have the needed funds to cover that cost. We firmly believe that the printed page is still the most effective means of communication. When that is considered we believe the benefits of *Banner of Truth* on the part of the thousands of readers are well worth the cost.

As ***fellowhelpers to the truth*** our supporters have a part in sending God’s word to a number of foreign countries and about 3350 individuals here in the U.S. About 110 bundles of BOT, from about ten to more than 50 are mailed to our brethren in our own country. Positive responses from readers are many. - - -*Editor*

Banner of Truth Financial Report
March and April 2002

Balance on hand March 1, 2002	14,740.29
March and April contribution	<u>1,931.00</u>
Total funds available	16,671.29
March and April expenses:	
Mailing March & Apr. BOT	1,263.58
Mailing labels	52.91
Phone and supplies	<u>9.44</u>
Total March & April expenses	1,325.93
 Total funds available	 16,671.29
Total March and April expenses	<u>1,325.93</u>
Total on hand April 30, 2002	15,345.36

Passages Sometimes Misused

Years ago I misused some passages of Scripture due to a failure to understand them. It may be that I do the same today in some instances, but at least not as often. There are a few passages which are quite often misused by a number of people. Let us note a few.

To the church in Smyrna Christ said: "...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). — This is quite often used in invitations to mean, be faithful as long as one lives. Though the New Testament teaches us to remain faithful as long as we live, this is not what the above is teaching. From the context it is clear that Christ was telling His followers to be **faithful unto the point of death**. That is, be faithful to the point of giving up one's life.

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

The above is often used to mean the same thing which is meant by Romans 10:10. That is, to orally confess one's faith in Christ before men, as the Ethiopian confessed his faith in Christ in Acts 8:37. It hardly seems likely that one would be called upon to "deny" or "confess" Christ as the Ethiopian did. It appears that the confessing or denying Christ in the above passage involves more than just a single statement. One can deny or confess Christ by manner of life.

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11).

The above passage is some times used to mean the same thing as the Great Commission, that is, to

take the gospel into all the world. The “principalities and powers in heavenly places” are to know the wisdom of God as demonstrated by the church, which was in God’s purpose eternally.

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (I Cor. 2:9).

How many times have you heard this used at a funeral, in an effort to describe what heaven would be like? The context shows that the benefits of the gospel, “a mystery,” are under consideration, not what heaven will be like. Other passages do give some description of what the heavenly state will be like.

Matthew 24, about the first 35 verses, is a lengthy passage which is often misused, especially among denominational people. This passage undoubtedly refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and not the final end of the world.

READERS' RESPONSE

“I just wanted to thank you for sending a bundle of BANNER OF TRUTH for the congregation here. We are one of the few, if not the only congregation here, that is still seeking the Old Paths - **Maurice Brown.**” - **IL** (*Thank you for making use of BOT. We are happy to send it. Do tell others about it - Editor*).

“I recently picked up a copy of Banner of Truth at a local congregation and found it of much interest and full of knowledge. I would like to subscribe so I can enjoy it more often. Please find my name and address enclosed. Thank you - **Richard McDonald.**” - **AL**.

“In the July issue of Seek The Old Paths I read about the paper, *Banner of Truth*, you being the editor, so I would be very interested in receiving it, and if there are others who show the truth the way S.T.O.P. does I would be much encouraged in receiving copies. There are so many liberal papers, even of the Lord’s church, that it really builds me up as I see those who are sincere in His word. I’m on a very scant income, but hopefully I can send a little money for at least postage once in a while. Thank you much - **Sue McDaniel.**” **TX.** (*We are happy to add you to our mailing list. The paper is sent free to those who want it. Contributions are appreciated, since that is the way we make the paper possible, but we do not expect those who are not able to contribute - Editor*).

“Here is a small donation for receiving *Banner of Truth* all these years. I wish I could give you more, because I really do appreciate you sending it to me. I want you to know that I really like it. We need more ministers like you to continue standing up for God’s truth. I’m glad I know ‘what is going on,’ even though it is so sad to hear! But we need to be informed. God bless you in all that you are doing, by always standing up for the Truth! And God bless your family - **Helen McCasland.**” - **TN.** (*Thank you for your encouraging words. Your “small donation” is appreciated, but your great concern for the Truth of God is of greater value. How wonderful it would be if multitudes had the concern that you have - Editor*).

“Greetings, hope and pray that all is well with you and yours. I appreciated the article in the

Banner of Truth, March 2002, entitled, ‘Scriptural Response to Liberalism.’ Our brotherhood fails to recognize the serious situation. Thanks for your words of truth - **Dean M. Roach.**” - **KY.**

“I have enjoyed reading your excellent publication and have used several articles in the ‘E-Mail Truth’ an internet publication devoted to halting the spread of liberalism in the Lord’s church. Your light of truth continues to expose the false teaching and un-biblical positions of the change agents among us. Please use this small contribution to assist in your good work. Please add the following addresses to those who receive BOT. - **Joe F. Travis.**” - **TX.** *(It is good to know that you are making use of BOT in your internet publication. We do appreciate those who make use of the paper and let others know about it. There is a great need for what you are doing, halting the spread of liberalism. Thanks for your contribution to help in our work - Editor).*

“Please add my name to your mailing list. I would appreciate back copies, especially beginning the first of this year. Here is a small contribution to help with postage - **Jerry Moon.**” - **TN.** *Thanks, Editor.*

“Thank you for sending Banner of Truth each month. I thoroughly enjoy the sound and scriptural emphasis of your paper. Please begin sending 20 copies for the church here. I believe our people will be richly blessed by what they read. Send them to my home address. Thank you - **Maurice Brown.**” - **IL.** *(We thank you for your concern about the members and their need to read. Many preachers could be of assistance to the members where they preach by receiving a bundle of Banner of Truth. People uninformed are in danger. - Editor).*

“Take my name off.” “Refused” - **Lois Maxson.**” - **MI.** *(Thanks for letting us know that you don’t want BOT. This helps to save on postage expenses - Editor).*

“I really enjoy receiving Banner of Truth. Your warnings of liberalism are sorely needed. My late husband has gone home to be with the Lord. I would like to send this check in his memory. He was a strong believer in truth. May God bless you in all you do - **Myrtle W. Wyatt.**” - **AL.** *(Our heart goes out to you in your loss, but you have much for which to be thankful in that your husband was a lover of God’s truth. Thanks for the check to help in our work of getting the truth to people - Editor).*

“I hope this note will find you doing well in body and spirit. I am a preacher with the Lord’s church doing the work of an evangelist in Harare. I saw and read your Banner of Truth and found it good, so I have written to you that you may subscribe me. My address is Church of Christ. . . Harare. Zimbabwe - **Augustine Chigodho.**” *(It is good to hear from a perching brother in Africa. We shall be getting BOT out to you soon - Editor).*

“I would like to have your paper, Banner of Truth, sent to my mother. While visiting my home she read several of my back issues and requested to receive future papers. - **Tim Noblin.**” - **AR.** *(We shall add her name - Editor).*

Special Request: If you are a preacher, or an active member of a congregation, why not have us send you a bundle of 15 copies of BOT each month? If BOT is passed out to members, some will appreciate it and be profited as well - Editor.

Editor’s e-mail: < wpiggbot@apex.net >

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

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Welcome to our New Readers! Do let us hear from you and have your comments - Editor