

Banner of Truth

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

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The Blessings of God-Approved Unity in Christ

As God's awesome power of influence through unity is weakened by evil division, the Lord's church suffers greatly, and fewer souls are being saved. But let God be thanked that unity is attainable, and He has provided the instructions to make it so.

Some might ask: Why discuss the negative subject of *evil division* as well as the positive subject of *God-approved-unity*, since those new in the faith might not be mature enough to understand? Our main emphasis in the following discussion will indeed be on the subject of unity. However, in a fair and profitable study on unity it is necessary to discuss the antithesis to unity, division. Division prevents and destroys unity; therefore, an integral part of God's plan of salvation for man involves both unity and division, and both must be considered.

Members of the church, even those new in the faith, need to consider and learn what God's word teaches on all the subjects possible. In Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders he says, "...I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). As the elders needed the whole counsel of God, so does the new Christian, that there might be a balanced growth in spiritual things. The Hebrew

christians had not grown as they should. When they should have been teachers, they needed to be taught the first principles again. They had failed to develop as they should and still needed "milk," though they should have been taking some "meat" (Heb. 5:12-14). While the babe in Christ starts off with milk, the diet must also soon include meat if proper spiritual growth is expected.

The words "unity" and "division" are found only a few times in God's word, but the idea of both words is found many times, and is of great importance. Though the idea of "unity" is emphasized and found in many instances in God's word, there is still a great misunderstanding of the true meaning of the unity God desires for man. We are limiting our thoughts to God-approved unity and now proceed with a definition of terms.

I. GOD-APPROVED UNITY DEFINED

We shall note several examples of unity found →

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in God's word, but let us first note what *Webster* has to say about unity: **1.** the state of being one; oneness... **4.** absence of diversity; unvaried or uniform character... **5.** oneness of mind, feeling, etc., as among a number of persons; concord, harmony, or agreement." *Thayer* defines unity as, "Unanimity, agreement."

Unity, in the sense of oneness, is found in Genesis 2:24 — "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." This passage is quoted in the New Testament (Eph 5:31), where Paul explains that his analogy is "...concerning Christ and the church" (v. 32). The point being; from the beginning, God intended the type of oneness that should characterize husband and wife also characterize Him and His church.

The New Testament emphasizes unity in many places. In the early days of the church, it is said of the converts, "...the multitude of them that believed

were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). Paul exhorted the Romans: "Be of the same mind one toward another" (Rom. 12:16). He said, "...the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:5-6). To the Ephesians He speaks of "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." There is "one body, and one Spirit..." (Eph. 4:3-4). To the Philippians he wrote: "...stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel"; "Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (1:17; 2:2). These are just a few of the many biblical references to unity.

Perhaps the most expansive passage about unity is in First Corinthians: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1:10). This is Paul with the full authority of Christ speaking to christians. To be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment is the ultimate in the sense of unity.

This imperative of Paul is some times wrested from its context. Not uncommonly it will be applied to the denominations for the purpose of showing that they should be united and speak the same things. But Paul is speaking to the "church of God" at Corinth, not to those who are not true christians. Before the passage would apply to the denominational people they would have to be "in Christ," members of the one church. So, all who would serve our Lord must be in His church, and then Paul's command for unity would apply to them; but there are certain things which must be done in order to be "in Christ" and a member of His blood-bought church. Though this is a fact clearly set forth in God's word, many still do not understand.

Becoming a member or part of Christ's church involves a number or actions or steps to be taken. This we notice when the conversions recorded in the New Testament are examined. Let us note those steps: (1) FAITH in God. No one ever became a Christian without first coming to believe in God. The writer 1

of Hebrews says, "...without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). (2) If one truly believes in God he will be willing to take the next step required of God, REPENTANCE. This is a change which takes place in the mind, which is demonstrated by a change of life. Speaking to the Athenians at "Mars' hill," Paul said, "...the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commanded all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). (3) The penitent believer will take another essential step, CONFESSION of faith in Christ. Paul said, "...with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). The Ethiopian made confession saying, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). (4) Now the would-be convert is ready to take the step which puts one into Christ, BAPTISM, which is the consummating act or step in conversion. One will note that in every conversion recorded in the New Testament, baptism is the final act. In Acts 2, when some of those guilty of crucifying Christ, asked Peter and the other apostles, "what shall we do?"; Peter by the Spirit told them: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38).

Those who responded to the words of Peter were baptized [about three thousand souls] (v. 41), "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (v. 47). Those who will not take this last step are still outside Christ, where salvation is found (2 Tim. 2:10). Paul said to the Galatians, "For as many of you has have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (v. 27). True baptism is a burial in water (Rom. 6:3-4) and for "the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), and of one who is mature enough to "believe" (Mk. 16:16).

Now that we have pointed out what is involved in becoming a part of Christ's church, where true unity is found and which pursuit is commanded (I Cor. 1:10), we shall note a few things which are some times considered unity, but are not true unity at all. It is only "truth" which makes men free (Jno. 8:32). Misunderstandings never set men free from sin.

Over the years there have been various ecumenical efforts or movements. That is, a group of denominations would come together to advocate a sort of "union" among them. Agreements might be made for different

groups to be involved in some activity. There was a "union" in the sense of people coming together, but true unity was always absent. The people were not united in the "same mind and same judgment." They still believed, taught and practiced different things. There was union but not unity. All of these efforts have failed thus far. Underlying this failure is the fact that God's word was not accepted as the only basis for God-approved unity. Somewhere years ago I heard this rather crude illustration pointing out the difference between unity and union. It went something like this: Tie the tail of a cat and tail of a dog together and hang them over the clothesline. There would be union but not unity.

"Unity in diversity" is an effort, even by some of our brethren, to arrive at something they call unity. But such efforts do not make sense. Unity and diversity are opposites. How can people speak the same thing, be of the same mind and judgment, when they are different? One of *Webster's* definitions of unity is "lack of diversity." That corresponds with things said in the New Testament about unity.

"Unity by compromise" is rarely admitted, but more often attempted. That is, in order to have what is mistakenly called unity, certain compromises are made. Certain subjects are "out of bounds" for the preachers and teachers. "Old leaven" is not purged out that there may be "a new lump."

Some seem to have the idea that all that is necessary for unity to exist is for all to profess to have faith in Christ, and that different teachings and practices do not prevent that so-called unity. It appears that some have the idea, when it comes to unity, that God can be sort of hoodwinked and not know what is going on among people, even within the church.

Lack of understanding of and respect for the unity which God demands is evidenced by the hundreds of "churches" claiming to be a part of the "one church" which Christ said He would build and did purchasing it with His blood (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). These people are not even "in Christ," the only place where God-approved unity can be found. People without Christ are also without "hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). It will be a tragic thing for accountable people to face the judgment having only a false hope for salvation. Yet, Christ says many will be lost and few will be saved (Matt. 7:13-14). Dare we doubt His words? →

As we look round about us on a divided religious world, we must know that the Father and the Son are not well pleased. The true Lord's Prayer is found in John 17. In His prayer to the Father for the apostles He prayed:

Neither pray for these alone, but for them which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (Jno. 17:20-21).

An important point which may be overlooked is that the unity for which Christ prayed would be that which is found *only in Christ*. The belief in Christ for which He prayed is certainly not the condition which now exists in so-called Christianity, and that is because of the absence of the true unity for which He prayed. In view of this important fact we can see the urgent need for that unity.

II. THE CRUCIAL NEED FOR UNITY

We have already called attention to the divided religious world of today and the fact that this is not what our Lord wants. He did not give Himself to die to bring about such a condition as this. As we noted from His prayer, He wants unity, that which God approves, not that which man mistakenly calls unity.

In our continued discussion of God-approved unity, we shall primarily give attention to the need for it within the Lord's church. Christ's Great Commission — "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19-20); "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15) — presents us with the opportunity and responsibility to take the gospel to the lost of the world, so that they might be saved becoming a part of the church which Christ purchased with his blood (Acts 20:28). As people are converted, and only then, they may enjoy the blessings of that true unity which is found only "in Christ."

The Lord's church is suffering from evil division: more now than anytime since I have been a part of it. The condition grows worse rather than better, as many people act in irresponsible ways and contribute to evil division. Our precious Lord and Savior must be terribly saddened over this. I often think of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. Luke describes it this way: "And when we was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Lk. 19:41). *Lenski* says, "he sobbed over it." This shows

something of the intense sorrow our Lord felt, as He viewed the city of Jerusalem from some distance. Why was He made to sob or weep? The city had rejected Him. They had rejected that which was and is the only way to peace, God's powerful word. Now, destruction was about to come upon them, and they would not hear. Now, even within the church, more than a few will not heed His word, that there might be unity.

If Christ would pour out his heart, as He did because Jerusalem had refused Him, does He not now also weep over the evil division which is wreaking such havoc within His blood-bought body? Do we forget that our Savior still lives today (cf. Heb. 7:25)? We must surely realize that, but some act as if they do not.

From early on there has been some evil division within the church, but it has never been pleasing to God. But the division which now exists dwarfs that which existed fifty years ago and earlier. Why is this so? God's provisions for unity have been ignored and cast aside, and the will of man has prevailed in so many instances. The evil division which now exists should not serve as a discouragement to those who want to serve God in sincerity and in truth. There are many warnings in the New Testament that people would cease to love the truth and turn away from it. What we are seeing now is the strongest of evidence that God's word is true, and that which has been predicted has so often come to pass.

I have been using the term "evil division" several times, as you have noticed. Why so? It is time that this should be explained. So, here goes: Not all division is "evil." Evil causes division, but does not make those who are innocent evil. Paul rebukes division in the church at Corinth, but he also said, "For there must be also heresies [sects] among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (I Cor. 11:19). When division of this kind occurs it has a beneficial effect by showing who the "approved" are.

Christ said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against, his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be those of his own household" (Matt. 10:34-36). This shows that those standing up for the truth may have to withstand those of their own house, or family. This shows that true unity in the truth is more important than family unity, or

any unity with men. Perhaps we all know of divisions that have occurred within families when one obeys the gospel of Christ. This is a division that must occur when the truth is at stake, and is not “evil division” on the part of those putting God and His will first. On the sad side, however, sometimes a person will not stand up for the truth at the cost of division within a family. But those who put family or others before Christ are “not worthy” of Him.

Another division which is approved, or actually commanded of God, is that of separation or withdrawing from those in error who will not repent. Paul said, “...I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause division and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). In Ephesians 5:11, he said “and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Other passages teach that the faithful servant of God must not have fellowship with and bid “God speed” to those who are not in fellowship with God.

As stated, this kind of division is not evil since it is commanded by God, and results in that which is right in God’s sight when it is practiced; but this is an area where there are many failures. It seems that sometimes brethren have the idea that the way they think is an improvement over what God’s word clearly teaches. I have heard members of the church who had the audacity to say with regard to withdrawing of fellowship, “I just don’t believe it will work.” I have known of instances, more than a few, where brethren thought division was just about the most evil thing that could happen, regardless of the need for it. I do not mean “evil division,” but that which God has commanded. When God says to do something, it is right, whether men think so or not. It is indeed a sad day when brethren will not carry out that which God’s word teaches, just because they “don’t think it will work.”

We are living in a time when a great portion of society doesn’t believe that which is right in God’s sight will work. There is an increase in efforts to get God’s influence completely out of society. More and more are saying the family as God ordained it “won’t work.” Multitudes don’t think the divine moral standards will work. Therefore, lying, cheating, stealing,

laziness, drug use, immodesty in dress, abortion, homosexuality, and sexual permissiveness are on the increase. People “don’t think” God’s way will work. We are fast becoming a nation which has completely forgotten God. Ruin, temporal and eternal, will be the outcome, when it doesn’t have to be so. As just about everything God demands is being hindered by one means or another, it comes as no surprise that the same is true of the unity which God approves.

III. OBSTACLES TO GOD-APPROVED UNITY

The apostle Paul speaks of Satan’s “devices” and “wiles” (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11). These are employed against those who would be servants of the Lord. When things hinder or serve as obstacles to the doing of God’s will, we may know that somehow or somewhere the Devil is behind it. One of the greatest evils I can think of is that of preventing or destroying the unity which God wants among His people.

Although our society in general is a hindrance to the unity we are discussing, we are limiting our discussion primarily to obstacles within the church, where true unity must be found. We will not exhaust the list of such hindrances, but mention a few that it may encourage some to be more mindful of the opportunity and responsibility we have to contribute to the well-being of the church and the unity which should exist therein.

Failure To Accept God’s Word. By this we mean a failure to accept what God’s word teaches about unity, and accept it as the only basis for the unity which God wants. Since God’s word furnishes us completely unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17) we may know that by following it we can be a part of the true unity. When God’s word is followed in the true sense of the term, it serves as an unfailing guide in accomplishing that which our Lord wants. As our brethren have been generally lax in the study of the word, division has increased. Not only has there been a lack of study, but also a failure to accept and respect what is known. God said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6). If people were destroyed for that reason then, is it not true that people can be destroyed for the very same reason today? Brethren, we are not the “people of the Book” that we used to be and that is having a telling effect →

with regard to the evil-division which has overflowed within the church. This ought not to be so, and we know it.

False Teachings. False teaching was an evil in the early days of the church, and many warnings are set forth. John said, "...try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I Jno. 4:1). Christ said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing..." (Matt. 7:15). Just as Christ warned of vain worship of those who were "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9), we need to be warned now, today. I can well remember the time when a false teacher got unfavorable attention within the church, and there were few of them. But that has changed greatly. False teachers are on virtually every hand, and the sad thing is that so many people "love to have it so." There is evidence that many want to hear that which is false, since it suits their needs, or what they want, better. The words of Isaiah should be ringing in our ears and arousing us to action.

Through Isaiah the prophet God said, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (5:20-21). This must apply to brethren who would join hands with the Christian Church, use instrumental music in worship, and replace true worship with a variety of entertainment. Others are to be included, and all are contributing to division by their disregard for God's word.

I suppose that just about every gospel preacher has had some to oppose the truth that was taught. But it has only been during the past couple of decades that I have been opposed to the extent of being fired for standing up for what is right. I have been the brunt of false witnesses more than once. I believe the same would be said by a great many brethren who have preached for any length of time, if they stood uncompromisingly for the truth. This is evidence that the love of truth has waned and the love of error has increased. Only the Lord knows just how much division has resulted from false teaching, and I will oppose it as long as I preach and teach God's word. There

is no other option for me.

Poor or Unqualified Leadership. A congregation will seldom rise above its leadership. Whereas elders are to be "apt to teach" (I Tim, 3:2), it is often the case that they are, as we used to use the word, "apt" to teach almost anything, or allow it to be taught. It is not uncommon for elders to fail to qualify in the area of "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9). In the absence of elders, the brethren have the same responsibility to "hold fast the faithful word" to the best of their ability. Not only is error allowed to be taught, the leadership is some times in the forefront of that evil.

A Desire for Preeminence. Humility should be a crowning virtue for every Christian, but that is not the way it is. It is not unusual for a person to want to have the preeminence among those with whom he is associated. Paul cautioned, "every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think..." (Rom. 12:3). Some times this instruction is not respected, as individuals vaunt themselves. Making the matter worse is the fact that often such people over rate their ability, and their efforts are harmful rather than that which is edifying.

A splendid example of a desire for preeminence is that of Diotrephes. John said, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not" (3 Jno. 9). There have been many Diotropheses since the time of John, or at least close cousins to him. An elder is not to be "self willed" (Tit. 1:7), but this applies to others as well. But it is this kind of person who is more likely to desire preeminence. Such people as this often contribute to the kind of division which is sin, by leading people into error.

Following Men rather than the Lord. The main problem at Corinth was the following of different men. The brethren are not charged with false doctrine. We find the same thing today in a great many instances. Brethren become followers of men, and though they may not teach a false doctrine, they join themselves to certain men and become followers of them, in whatever direction they take.

The above is a current problem which is

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affecting the proper unity among brethren. This might be aptly described as “playing church politics.” Make no mistake about it, lest anyone misunderstand — We are opposed every practice and teaching of error. Those who have known me over the years know this is true. But that does not mean that I am not castigated by a church politician whose bandwagon I am not riding.

A driver of one such bandwagon, after castigating others for not jumping on, turns his castigating gun toward me. I have known this brother for have known for many years, though we have had little or no association. Now he recognizes me as another target. Though I have never told this brother what to write or with whom to take sides, he is not being the same with me. In an e-mail (dated January 31, 2007) to more than two dozen people, not including me, Dub McClish makes the following statement:

Another editor who has never been known to be shy about exposing those whom he considers deserving (and with whom I generally agree, BTW) has not spent a drop of ink on the current raging fire, as far as I know. I speak of brother Walter Pigg. Again, does he not know about these cataclysmic events (hard to imagine), or has he misjudged their significance? Or is there some other reason? Whatever, the reason, his silence is exceedingly strange.

I do not know why this brother thinks he is in position to tell me what to write, and whose wagon to ride. There are many raging fires and cataclysms; I guess one cannot deal with them all. Anyway, I do not consider this reasonable or fair.

But we are now seeing a rash of opposing brethren, primarily because they are on different political bandwagons. It is as if the driver of the bandwagon thinks everybody else should ride with him. Much effort is being spent that could be put to better use. Personally, I am doing just about all that I can to uphold the truth, and I do not have time to write about everything which transpires in the brotherhood, and have not tried to do so. I am trying to follow the Lord, and not some individual or party.

The Influence of Our Schools. The time was that many of our schools rendered a great service, as they provided a good environment in which young people could get an education, and be taught by God-fearing

teachers, who upheld the truth. Great changes have taken place in the past fifty years. We can no longer look to any of our larger schools that I know about, to uphold God’s truth. In fact, some are known for their far-out teaching. When young people sit at the feet of teachers who do not have the proper respect for God’s word, the chances are great that this will rub off on the student. I say without reservation that some of our schools are a disgrace to the cause of Christ.

Another danger we see issuing from our schools is their hurtful influence on congregations, as they are ready to send out preachers, and render other services to those congregations. It is a personally attestable fact that some congregations have such loyalty for a school, that as the school goes so goes the congregations. Also, some preachers who would claim to be “sound in the faith” still go along with the schools. What does all this do for the unity which God wants among His people?

IV. THE WAY TO GOD-APPROVED UNITY

We used to hear the slogan, “Back to the Bible.” We desperately need to hear that again often and throughout the land. That is the only place where God-Approved unity can be found. If there is a true desire for this slogan to be a reality, then, with regard to our teachings and practices, we will hear: “Is there a ‘thus saith the Lord’ for it?” If God wants unity within His church, and He certainly does, then we must know that it is possible when His instructions are followed.

Apart from God’s word as an all-sufficient guide, we may expect all manner of evil, including that of evil division. We have seen what lack of respect for God’s word as the only rule of faith and practice has produced in the ever changing religions around us. It will, and is, doing the same within the church.

There has never been in our lives a more urgent need within the church for the highest respect for God’s word. This reaches into the home where respect for God’s word should be given the highest priority. Children, beginning at a very early age, should be taught to respect God’s word, rather than just play and have fun. The same thing holds true with regard to older children. Bible classes for adults should be permeated with a high regard for learning what →

God's word teaches, and how it applies to us. Preaching should by all means be of the "book, chapter and verse" type, rather than the mollifying presentations which please far too many, who need to be hearing the whole truth without compromise. Efforts toward unity which are not based on God's word will never succeed, but foster more division.

V. THE BLESSING OF GOD-APPROVED UNITY

We now come to the heart of our discussion. We have given considerable attention to that which prevents or destroys true unity, but we believe it is needful to point out that which may prevent the blessings of the unity which God has made known to us. The various blessings which God has made known and promised to man are of paramount importance, and should be sought by every person.

Christ said, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). This should be the ultimate goal of every person, but most especially every member of God's family. One cannot have this blessing, except by being of one God's family, which is the church (I Tim. 3:15). Conforming to God's will for unity is one of "his commandments."

Not only is unity a blessing for those doing God's commandments, but it will encourage others to seek those blessings. In Christ's prayer to the Father, one of the benefits of unity for which He prayed was that "the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (Jno. 17:21). Brethren, our plea for unity in Christ, is shot full of holes by division amongst us. While living in Taiwan was asked by some as to why there are so many churches? That is indeed a valid question. The answer is simply that people will not abide by God's will. If the question is raised as to why there are so many divisions amongst us, the answer is exactly the same.

Just think what a blessing it would be if we were all working together in the unity and harmony that God intended. The church would be greatly strengthened and more able to do the Lord's bidding of taking the gospel into all the world. The number of brethren involved in mission work today is far less that it used to be. Why so? One reason is that our strength

is being wasted by division.

True unity encourages greater love (agape) among brethren. The Lord hates discord among brethren (Prov. 6:19). Even with our limited understanding, we can understand why; it destroys the love which fosters unity and brings blessings.

The will to work and serve is a great blessing which comes from unity. This involves a spirit of brotherhood and closeness among brethren. One great blessing, which has come to me as a result of working with brethren in other parts of our country, and especially in foreign countries, is that I have come to know other brethren, not as foreigners, but as spiritual brothers in Christ. This is the way that it should be. We are working for the same Master and for the same blessings which are there for those who serve Him. We come to realize that we are indeed, "all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

The blessings of true unity in Christ are seen in the difference between Heaven and Hell, these being the only options for existence in eternity. One place or the other will be our eternal abode. If we do not choose Heaven as our eternal home, Hell is the only other place.

What part does true unity play in this? Brethren, we need to stop and think, Heaven is not a place for division. Can you imagine heaven as a place where brethren are at one another in division? Would those who truly love God's word and submit to it, have much in common with those who have little or no respect for it? In our Lord's message recorded by John, he said, "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or make a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27). Will those who cause division by their error be found in the "Lamb's book of life"? We all know the answer.

Finally, brethren, the only true cause we have for living is to serve God. Heaven, as we sing, "will surely be worth it all." God gave His Son, and His Son gave His all, that we might live eternally in that home of the soul. By serving God in true unity we can be assured of that blessing, and have a part in leading others to do so. May the Lord bless us as we strive for the unity God which God wants. —Editor

Beware Of Con Artists

The Paducah Sun had a front page article in the February 11, 2007 issue, which began with the following words:

By Internet, in person, by mail or by phone, call scam what it is...

Crime of deception

The article is by Matt Sanders, and points out many needed warnings about “con artists,” a term which I have added. Citing the Federal Trade Commission the article gives the **Top 10 Online Scams**, and includes comments on **Common Mail Fraud** and **Common Telephone Fraud** from *Protecting Your World* magazine.

The article contains much useful information to help people avoid being taken in by crooks. But my reason for calling attention to the article is primarily to warn brethren from being taken in by some of the many crooks which are now preying upon churches and individuals.

I guess it was just a coincidence that at about the same time the above article appeared, a couple of congregations that I know of in this area were ripped off by a crook, or perhaps I should say “crooks” since a whole family was involved.

There is no foolproof way to determine with certainty whether or not one is a crook. But there are some ways to get a pretty good idea. In the first place, people who are worthy of help are usually those who are less likely to ask for it. If they do, they are ready and willing to give references which can be promptly checked out, and not a month away. We are simply asking for it when we do not request such information.

Experience is the best aid in spotting crooks. I refuse to naively be taken advantage and have always encouraged churches where I worked to be prudent. I have a certain feeling about people who ask for help. If I know, or the habit is obvious, I do not believe in helping people who smoke or buy booze. One time a man came by the preacher’s house and asked me for help. I told him I could not help him financially, but that I could give him some food which we had in the church building. On the way to the building I asked him, “Do you smoke?” His quick reply was, “Yes, but I’m going to quit.”

When we worked with a congregation in Missouri, we had many requests for help. Oddly, the often given reason for needing help was a transmission that had gone out. Common sense should tell you that you cannot fix a transmission for ten or fifteen dollars. That congregation is located in what is called the “lead belt.” I wondered back then, facetiously of course, whether it may have been the lead that made their transmission go out?

There are scriptural principles involved in benevolence, which should be considered as on any other subject. Paul flatly says, “...if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2Thess. 3:10). In many instances people who hit up the church for help are those who will not work, but want to live off the proceeds of those who do. It is wrong to help such people because it is bidding God speed to evil.

What about helping those who are not worthy? As I said earlier, there is not perfect way to know, but there are reasonable actions we can take to determine worthiness. Years ago I remember a well-known preacher who made the statement that he “Would rather go to Hell for doing something wrong than for doing nothing.” One might reason that way about helping someone who is not worthy, rather than not helping at all. Well, the facts are that in most cases we do not have to take a chance. As for going to Hell for doing something wrong rather than doing nothing, I am glad that I do not have to choose either option. God’s word teaches me what is wrong; therefore I do not have to do wrong. It also teaches me what I must do to be saved, and I do not have to fail in that.

When people come asking for help, there are steps we can take to give us pretty good assurance as to whether or not they are worthy of help. This will prevent helping the crooks or undeserving. The money which is given by members of the church is to be used in accordance with God’s will. There are those who go a long way in making a living by asking churches to support them, when they could work and support themselves.

—Editor

Are You Moving? Would you help us by sending us your change of address? It will help is to avoid unnecessary expense and enable you to have every copy of Banner of Truth. — Editor

Baptist Seminary President's View on Homosexuality Sparks Opposition

The March 15, 2007 issue of *The Paducah Sun* carried a front page article — **Mohler Views on homosexuality angers opposing sides.** By David Crary, AP National Writer, the article's sub-title is: ***Baptist seminary president says orientation may have biological basis that could be altered before birth.*** The first paragraph of the article reads:

NEW YORK – The president of the leading Southern Baptist seminary has incurred sharp attacks from both the left and the right by suggesting that a biological basis for homosexuality may be proven, and that prenatal treatment to reverse gay orientation would be biblically based.

The president's name is R. Albert Mohler Jr. and is said to be "one of the country's pre-eminent evangelical leaders." It is interesting to note that his stand on homosexuality has incurred attacks by people on both sides of the issue of homosexuality. How could that be?

In the first place, we can understand how that people who believe God's word would be opposed to the position that God would make people homosexual, and then condemn them for the practice, as He has clearly many places in Scripture. The example of the homosexuality of Sodom and Gomorrah is used throughout the Bible a number of times as an example of God's condemnation of this sin. I think that most Baptists would be opposed to the sin of homosexuality, as certainly all people who take God's word seriously are.

But, then again, why would people who are homosexuals, and those that uphold the sin, be opposed to Mohler's position? Though Mohler says, "he would strongly oppose any move to encourage abortion or genetic manipulation of fetuses on grounds of sexual orientation, but he would endorse prenatal hormonal treatment — if such a technology were developed — to reverse homosexuality."

Endorsing Mohler's stand was "a prominent Roman Catholic thinker, the Rev. Joseph Fessio, provost of Ave Maria University in Naples, Fla..." Fessio said, "Same-sex activity is considered disordered," and "If there are ways of detecting disorders of children in the womb, and a way of treating them that respected the dignity of the child and the mother, it would be a wonderful advancement of science."

Jennifer Chrisler "of Family Pride, a group that supports gay and lesbian families," was "dismayed." She alleged that it would be wrong because it would be wrong to "perform medical treatments on them because of their own moral convictions, not because there is anything wrong with the child."

We can see why homosexuals, were it possible, would be against doing anything to prevent one from being one of their kind. When God is put out of the picture all kinds of evil can be expected to prevail. People who believe in, practice and encourage homosexuality cannot possible believe in God, and more and more religious people are falling into that category. Anyone who claims that homosexuality is not immoral and not a sin in God's sight is a hypocrite.

We have already mentioned the example of Sodom and Gomorrah being used several times to show that homosexuality is a sin, and that God punishes sin. Scripture abundantly teaches that homosexuality is a violation of God's word —

"If a man also lieth with a 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" (Lev. 20:13). Abomination! Can that be misunderstood? Because the Gentiles had no respect for God, He "gave them up unto 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; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their of their error which was meet" (Rom. 1:26-27). The "...unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God," which category includes the "effeminate" or homosexuals (1Cor. 6:9).

Thank God that homosexuals, like all sinners, can be "washed...sanctified...justified" (v. 11) through obedience to the gospel, God's power to save.—*Editor*

HOW DO YOU REAR A CHILD?

William H. King

If a person could bottle the perfect formula to answer this question and market it, he could, as the saying goes, “laugh all the way to the bank.” We all know that there are no patents on rearing children, but God’s word offers some much needed help. We are taught that God’s word is to be taught always, “. . .when thou sittest in thine house, when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deut. 6:7). To teach children, Proverbs 22:6 and Ephesians 6:4 generally always come to mind, but other scriptures should be considered also.

Luke 2:52 should be considered for the ways our children should grow. In this verse we find that Christ grew in four areas. Our children should and must do likewise. These are: (1) wisdom (mentally); (2) stature (physically); (3) in favor with God (spiritually); (4) in favor with men (socially). David and Karen Mains, in their book, *Living, Loving, Leading*, made the point that we as parents must stop and ask ourselves, “Is my child growing in each of these areas and what more can I do?”

As a helpful guide to teaching children, I offer the following thoughts on Romans 12:11-18 —

“Not slothful in business.” In all your business dealings to you give your all or just enough to get by? Are you always fair in your dealings? The eyes and ears of our children, like the eyes of the world, are watching.

“Rejoicing in hope. . .” Parents must live in ways that show that their hope is grounded on God and Christ. The child needs to know how we as parents accept the trials and tribulations that come. The child must know that life goes on, that the parent goes to God in prayer when there are no problems just as they do when there are problems.

“Distributing to the necessity of the saints, given to hospitality. . .” If parents do not give to the Lord’s work and train the child to give as he or she has prospered, how are they going to learn? If a child never sees guests, other than friends and family, in the home, even those new in the neighborhood, how will they learn to be hospitable and know its true meaning?

“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse

not.” How do we as parents treat those who have wronged us? A child will never speak well of a playmate that has wronged him, if the parents have hard feelings against a co-worker, a boss, a neighbor, or worst of all, a brother in Christ.

“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” It is difficult for a child to be happy when he doesn’t receive a gift similar to that which a friend received, but if we parents let our children see us happy for another’s good fortune they will soon learn to be happy also. The same is true about teaching them to weep with a friend or letting another know that their shoulder is there to lean upon to help share the load.

“Be of the same mind one toward another. . .not wise in your own conceits. . .” Parents must treat all people in like manner. Don’t show favorites because of financial status. Don’t feel that you have all the answers. This verse could do much to stop racism in our world. Be aware that your child, regardless of how old he may be, is both listening and watching (v. 16).

“Recompense to no man evil for evil. . .” Next is one, which really must be worked at. When we are wronged, human nature says, “get even” (wrong him back). We parents must do good and teach the child that “getting even” is putting self on the enemy’s level. Be honest in all your dealings and with all people great or small.

“If it be possible. . .live peaceably with all men.” Live at peace with everyone as best you can; showing your child how to leave peaceably. Don’t forget the child, because the first time he sees or hears a parent, mom or dad, downgrading a family member or neighbor, any verbal lesson that has ever been learned, is lost.

These verses from Romans give a fuller meaning to Deuteronomy 6:7, in that they teach that training is an around the clock activity and responsibility. Being a parent is not an easy task, but by using God’s word as our guide, both we parents and our children have a better chance of succeeding.

—3607 Rainbow Place, Nashville, TN 37204

15th Annual *Labourers Together With God* Lectures

This recent lectureship (February 18–22, 2007) was hosted by the Milestone congregation in Cantonment, Florida, home of THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA SCHOOL OF BIBLICAL STUDIES.

Though health concerns prohibited my speaking on the lectureship as in years before, I was able to attend each of the twenty-eight lectures.

The theme of the lectures, *Issues Destroying Homes and How to Build Fire Walls of Protection* was indeed a most timely subject. The home as God intended it has never been under such great such attack in our society as at the present time. Therefore, there has never been a greater need to encourage the strengthening of the home by the faithful people of the Lord's church.

A number of NWFBS graduates spoke on the lectures and did an excellent job. This served as good evidence for the training those students have received. The school is small, but this has some advantage in that students can receive more personal attention. As far as the quality of teaching the students receive, I don't know of any school where the quality would be greater.

One of the greatest needs within the church today is that of well-trained and devoted preachers who will uphold the truth. Few and far between are those young people, and some not so young, who are willing to give two years of their time in an intense study of God's word. Those who are willing are worthy of our support and encouragement.

Those who support this effort of training men to preach are making one of greatest uses of their resources. We are thankful that we can have a part in that, and greatly appreciate others who do so.

—Editor

A Medley of Matters

Unsigned Correspondence. Occasionally we receive correspondence with no name attached. Since it is usually of a critical nature, we are inclined to think the writer has been overcome by cowardice or a lack of courage. That which is said by one who lacks courage to stand behind what he says is seldom worth a reply. We invite our readers to respond to what we carry in Banner of Truth, and appreciate those who have the courage to do so when they disagree with something.

Joe Beam at Brentwood Baptist Church bldg. The Church of Christ at Joelton, TN, has the following announcement in their bulletin of February 4, 2007: "2/24 — Love, Sex and Marriage Seminar with Joe Beam hosted by Family Dynamics @ Brentwood Baptist Church bldg – 8:30 AM – 6:00 PM – Cost: \$75 per couple or \$65 per couple for groups of five or more couples – For more information contact Tonya Hagan at 627-0751.

Send Your Friends Banner of Truth. Each issue has several copies returned because people have moved and did not send their change of address, or "Temporarily away." If you have friends who you think would be profited by BOT, do send their names to us to be added to our mailing list. This keeps our mailing list up, and we also encourage new names to increase our mailing list.

Readers' Response. We encourage our readers to respond to the material we carry. This helps us to know what people are thinking, and what is happening that is of interest within our brotherhood. We solicit your personal comments about the paper. Many of our readers like to read what others are thinking. We are not carrying Readers' Response this month, but will do so in the April issue.

Is Your Request Ignored? Gathering material for publication, responding to calls and requests is a one-man operation. It is inevitable that I some times fail to enter a name for our mailing list or answer some question. Accept my apology; call it to our attention. We appreciate it.

—Editor

SCHEDULE FOR BOT LECTURES — JUNE 25-28, 2007

MONDAY, JUNE 25

10:00 a.m.	<i>The Need and Basis for Optimism within the Lord's Church</i>	Alan Adams
11:00 a.m.	<i>Fight To Lay Hold on Eternal Life</i>	Roger Scully
1:30 p.m.	<i>Power To Overcome Temptation</i>	Rick Knoll
2:30 p.m.	<i>Overcoming the Influence of Busybodies</i>	Garland Robinson
3:30 p.m.	<i>Always Abounding in the Work of the Lord</i>	Guyton Montgomery
7:00 p.m.	<i>He That Winneth Souls Is Wise</i>	Roger Campbell
8:00 p.m.	<i>God's Faithful People Will Be Saved</i>	Ken Burleson

TUESDAY, JUNE 26

10:00 a.m.	<i>Some Will Turn Away Their Ears from the Truth</i>	Roger Campbell
11:00 a.m.	<i>Being an Example of Believers</i>	Steve Baisden
1:30 p.m.	<i>Committing the Truth to Faithful Men</i>	Ken Burleson
2:30 p.m.	<i>Overcoming the Devil by God's Armor</i>	Caleb Campbell
3:30 p.m.	<i>The Blessings of True Unity in Christ</i>	Walter Pigg
7:00 p.m.	<i>A Crown Laid up for Me</i>	Garland Robinson
8:00 p.m.	<i>Overcoming Non-Contenders for the Faith</i>	Leon Cole

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27

10:00 a.m.	<i>A Rest for the People of God</i>	Leon Cole
11:00 a.m.	<i>Beware Ear Ticklers and the Tickled</i>	Jacob Campbell
1:30 p.m.	<i>The Eyes of the Lord Are over the Righteous</i>	Jeff Bates
2:30 p.m.	<i>False Prophets in the World</i>	Lloyd Gale
3:30 p.m.	<i>Loyalty to Christ, Not People or Places</i>	Richard Guill
7:00 p.m.	<i>The Lord Is Not Willing That We Perish</i>	Virgil Hale
8:00 p.m.	<i>I Know Whom I Have Believed</i>	Alan Adams

THURSDAY, JUNE 28

10:00 a.m.	<i>On the Right Hand, Eternal Life</i>	Robert Alexander
11:00 a.m.	<i>Food To Prevent Spiritual Starvation</i>	Rusty Stark
1:30 p.m.	<i>Continued Forgiveness by Walking in the Light</i>	immy Bates
2:30 p.m.	<i>Beware the Influence of Lukewarmness</i>	Paul Curless
3:30 p.m.	<i>The Lord Is with Us When We Take His Word</i>	David Lemmons
7:00 p.m.	<i>Victory for the Overcomers</i>	Roger Scully
8:00 p.m.	<i>No Death, Sorrow, Crying or Pain in Heaven</i>	Lenard Hogan

Fighting for Their Rats

The Killer Angels is a historical novel about the horrible carnage at Gettysburg, that decisive battle of the Civil War. Our title is actually a sadly humorous quotation from that book.

At one point during the battle, a subordinate tells Union Colonel, Lawrence Chamberlain about an exchange he had had with a Confederate prisoner:

...you want to hear a funny thing? We were talking to these three Reb prisoners, trying to be sociable, you know? But mainly trying to figure 'em out. They were farm-type fellers. We asked them why they were fighting this war, thinkin' on slavery and all, and one fella said they was fightin' for their 'rats'... They kept on insistin' they wasn't fightin' for no slaves, they were fighting for their 'rats.' (Shaara, 170-171).

Further conversation, the subordinate said, had clarified that the Rebs were fighting for their "rights"— which to the unsophisticated non-southern ear may sound like "rats" — but, that they could not identify the specific rights which they believed were being violated.

When the battle was over and the field was strewn with corpses, yet another subordinate said to the same colonel: "How can they fight so hard, them Johnnies, and all for slavery?" (Shaara, 343). Then the first subordinate said,

When you ask them prisoners, they never talk about slavery. But, Lawrence how do you explain that? What else is the war about?... If it weren't for the slaves, there'd never have been no war, now would there?" (*Ibid.*).

Even granting that other factors contributed to this awful war, it would be hard to contest this man's conclusion. What a horrible irony that most of the Southern blood that was shed in that war was by people who could not have afforded to buy and take care of slaves had they wanted to. No, that horrible commodity was purely the prerogative of the powerful few. Reckon, then, who convinced average Southern men to die by the tens of thousands, and to do so thinking they were in fact "fighting for their rats"? As a Southerner, I think about that and wonder what I would have

done? There is little value in subjunctively declaring: I would have done thus and so.

It so often is the same old thing: Big man's war, little man's fight.

Jesus implied that the "sons of light" can learn some things via the "sons of this world" (Luk 16:8). Let us do so.

Speaking only of those I know about, there have been so many battles waged between brethren during my thirty plus years of preaching. Such conflicts are apparently inevitable (cf. Matt 18:7), and I concur that sometimes it is the right thing to "fight" and "war" (cf. 1Tim 6:12; 2Co 10:4). Let us be sure, though, that we are not marching into battle on someone else's pretext, or for that matter, pretense.

The latest battle royal has been dubbed by one of the power brokers as "the current raging fire." Not only has this pronouncement been made, but the pronouncers have decided that truly *faithful* people must fight with them. Before, however, you cut cordwood for some burning issue stop, think, ask: How long has it been burning? When did the fire start? What started it? Who are the folks putting wood on the fire? Why? Good preaching friend: Do not so readily be a joiner, lest you find yourself being cannon fodder for someone else. Be mightily careful with whom you "strike hands" (cf. Prov 22:26). Things are not always as simple as "fighting for our rights," or even, "truth."

When observing warring sides and their battles, there is nothing wrong with looking at who the principals are. Can it be, in this present slugfest, other than odd to see folks who were former confederates in sticking it to others, now sticking it to each other? As a having-been-by-both-sides-stuck one, this whole thing gives me a surreal sense of watching the *Gingham Dog and Calico Cat* eat each other up. It is not at all unlike the Pharisees and Sadducees, who, where Jesus and his disciples were concerned, could go from common cause to enmity and back again. Some comic relief in all this has been to recently hear one side say of their former confederate: "He really pulled the wool over our eyes"; and, then †

days later to hear from the ostensible wool-puller that he has had “his eyes really opened.” Whom should one follow into the fray? The wool-puller, or the eye-opener? It is folly to “strike hands” with people like this.

There can surely be a no more pathetic sight than that of preachers flitting around looking for relevance and so attaching themselves to a “somewhat” (Gal 2:6), or that *somewhat*’s cause or fight. Let your sense of relevance and worth come from thinking for yourself and working hard to build up the congregation where you preach. The Lord, through Jeremiah, invited Judah to go and check out “Shiloh” and see what had become of her (Jer 7:12). It would be enlightening — actually depressing — to go and check out the state of some of the churches where these relevance-seekers and their power brokers work. I am thinking of a church that played a big role in my life. She was once thriving and vital with over two hundred in attendance; she is now barely a shell of her former self. To hear those responsible for her demise tell it: It has all been for a noble cause; we’ve been fighting for “rats.”

I humbly speak as one who does not have an unblemished record in these matters of relevance and attachment. My moment of clarity came roughly twenty-threes ago in the city of Manila. I attached myself to an entourage whose leaders I admired. We went forth to challenge some folks who indeed needed challenging. I challenged them. Right in the middle of a tense, yet civil, meeting of brethren, any sense of civil discourse was destroyed. It came several rows behind where I was sitting. A raucous bellow turned eyes, including mine, back to the source. There was a man — and by extension, his cause — to whom I had attached myself; eyes bulging, face red, and jowls quavering, he was literally yelling at the brother who had the floor. Like I said, it was a moment of clarity. I determined to never be such a groupie again.

Fight for the cause of Truth? Yes. But, you let it be your own study and conviction and not because someone told you to join up. You be sure that you really are, spiritually speaking, “fighting for rights,” and not for “rats.”

—AA

Shaara, Michael (1993), *The Killer Angels* (New York: Ballantine).

Reluctant Addendum

In connection with the preceding article (Page 14), if I have the cast straight — a roster, I might add, would be helpful — the “eye-opener,” as opposed the “wool-puller,” has taken a less than charitable view of the recent *Labourers Together With God* lectures, which were held at the Milestone church of Christ. Brother David Brown says, “...the whole Milestone lectureship is manifesting the spirit of compromise on several issues” (*Contending for the Faith*, Feb. ’07, p. 3; and so, all following quotations). The lectures are an adjunct of the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies, and both are works of the church at Milestone. Since I am teacher in the school, and a member and elder of the church, the comments concern me.

Brother Brown says, “...Milestone and Bellview congregations have had no fellowship for years...” I have been here nearly six years, during which time several Bellview members have several times attended our lectures and meetings. Several Milestone members have likewise attended Bellview functions. Milestone’s preacher, Kenneth Burleson, was asked by a now deceased Bellview elder to speak at his wife’s funeral. At that service, Milestone members were asked to stay and “eat” with Bellview members. What part of this does not bespeak fellowship?

On top of all that, in recent times we received a communication from the Bellview church which, among other things, explicitly says Bellview has never withdrawn fellowship from Ensley [Milestone]. Being an elder at Milestone, I know for a fact that Milestone has never withdrawn from Bellview. Brother Brown, Where’s the beef?

Brother Brown links his erroneous claim of “no fellowship” to “the late Max Miller and friends’ rebellion in 1988...” and their having been “withdrawn from.” He calls it “this mess”; I concur. To many brethren, equally as astute and well-intentioned as the gentleman — and certainly closer to the events and facts — the best one could conclude about “the mess” is that many things were done by many people that ought not to have been done.

Brother Brown is not prescient; he knows no more or less about “the mess” than anyone else. He knows what he has been told and he has decided to believe that. He surely knows that it is not as easy as asserting that “*So ‘n So* has withdrawn from *Thus ‘n So*.” If it were, what then of brother Brown’s predecessor, the late Ira Y. Rice? He was by a church in California charged with specific sins and withdrawn from, and “[no] repentance [was] forthcoming...” Perhaps overtaken by “the spirit of compromise,” brother Brown did not himself “withdraw” from brother Rice?

Brother Brown also spearheaded efforts several →

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years ago in defense of the practice of women, as translators, taking the floor to address assemblies of the saints. One of brother Brown's protagonists just recently said that a false teacher becomes a false teacher when he teaches false doctrine. That means that these brethren have been false teachers since—I believe—back in 1994. To this day “no repentance has been forthcoming” on brother Brown's part.

What of those in brother Brown's present coterie of contenders? Do you uphold brother Brown in this? Have you read brother Brown's highly illogical attempt to formulate a composite, or constitute element argument? — “The Constituent Element Argument and the Female Translator” (*CFTF*, Feb. '96)? First, he includes things that are not constituent, and omits the main one. Most glaringly, were his argument sound, it would warrant the conclusion that a woman could preach in assemblies of the saints. One of brother Brown's writers (p. 14) implies that a woman may “wait on the table,” as long as she does not speak; that it, does not speak other than to translate. This is why we should all be mighty careful about joining ourselves to, or attaching ourselves to others' causes. “To put it mildly [this whole thing] is manifesting the spirit of compromise on several issues.”

Brother Brown fixates on “Bobby Liddell,” more particularly his son, who spoke on our lectureship. Brother Bobby Liddell preached at Bellview for a number of years, and according to Milestone's preacher of many years, Kenneth Burleson, he and brother Bobby had a cordial relationship including mutual participation in preachers' gatherings initiated by brother Burleson; this again belying brother Brown's “no fellowship” assertion. Brother Brown charges that the son was speaking with people “...that sought the undoing of Bellview all of the time Bobby was their preacher.” As said, I am an elder at Milestone; and, if brother Brown can point out anybody here, or on our lectureship, who has sought the demise of a sister church, I will do my duty.

Milestone is a sound and active church. Our pulpit and classrooms are second to none when it comes to “*reproving*, *rebuking*, *exhorting* with all long suffering and doctrine.” We send forth more soundly and clearly the “whole counsel of God” than many who just talk about it. —AA

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