



# THE Reflector

October 1991

Published by Fultondale Church Of Christ

Volume 31 • Number 10

## The Church For Every Body

By Sewell Hall

I agreed to go with a group of Christian friends to a Braves game. This was going to be different. The field was covered with performing high school bands - an appeal to all who like music. And that was only the beginning. For those preferring opera, a Metropolitan Opera star sang the national anthem. For those more political in taste, the Attorney General of the U. S. led the pledge to the flag. Lovers of money were tantalized by a \$500 door prize. Cartoon fans were entertained by a million dollar scoreboard featuring cartoon characters. Those living on the level of the flesh were treated to the sight of a young lady in short shorts running around the diamond sweeping off the bases between every inning. And to climax it all, there was a huge fireworks display. I don't remember what team the Braves were playing, much less who won, but that was a game I shall never forget. *That was baseball for people who don't like baseball!*

Far too many churches are trying to remodel the religion of Jesus Christ to make it a religion for people who don't like religion! For those desiring recreation, they offer recreation. For those desiring enter-

tainment, there is entertainment. For those whose primary interest is secular education, they offer day care, kindergartens, schools and colleges. For those whose appetite is for food, they build church kitchens and dining rooms. The attempt is to be "the church for everybody."

Such carnal, temporal appeals were never authorized by the Lord. He intended that the church be a "called out," separated body of people. If the gospel is the only appeal, it will make that separation. In Corinth, where the wisdom of men was valued, Paul "determined not to know anything ... except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" I Cor. 2:2. In a city where oratory was highly esteemed, he refused even to dress up the gospel with "excellence of speech" I Cor. 2:1. His purpose was to see that the materials he built into the temple were "gold, silver, precious stone" rather than, "wood, hay and straw" I Cor. 3:12. No, the Lord's church is not for everybody just for those who have those qualities which set them apart as God's elect and chosen ones.

## Compliments

By Paul Keller

It is probable that all of us like to be complimented by others. We like for nice things to be said to us and about us. Such statements from others can be greatly encouraging and beneficial if properly received. However "some may become egotistical" and conceited because of such statements, feel they have "arrived" and there is no need for further improvements. If one is humbled by compliments and realizes that he falls far short of what he "ought to be" he may be encouraged to try all the harder to make improvements, so as to more nearly measure up to the confidence others have expressed concerning him. Compliments may benefit some but harm others, depending upon the attitude and reaction of the person complimented.

*Continued Page 3*

### NEXT MEETING

December 1-6  
David Hartselle

### REGULAR SERVICES

#### Sundays:

Bibles Classes ..... 9:45 A.M.

Worship ..... 10:45 A.M.

Worship ..... 6:00 P.M.

#### Wednesdays:

Bible Class ..... 10:00 A.M.

Bible Classes ..... 7:30 P.M.

# Paul's Daily Care Of The Churches

By Bobby Graham

No more sacrificial life could be described since the life of the Lord Jesus Himself than that of Paul in II Corinthians 11:23-27. Devoted reading of the apostle's labors and sufferings should be sufficient to arouse within each profound gratitude for that selfless spirit of the former proud Pharisee, as well as motivation to serve the Lord in the same self-emptying spirit. Perils both ordinary and extraordinary, distresses both physical and mental, and hardships from both Jews and Gentiles seem to have been frequent in the service of the persecutor-turned-preacher.

"Besides the other things, what presseth upon me daily: my anxiety for all the churches" (II Corinthians 11:28). The verb "presseth" is used only here and in Acts 24:12 ("stirring up a crowd"). A T. Robertson said that the idea was the rushing upon him of those cares/anxieties "like the rush of a mob upon Paul" (Word Pictures, Volume IV, Page 263).

Paul's frequent journeys, his open proclamation of truth, his speaking to congregations of Christians, and his teaching from house to house invited opposition, destroyed friendships, strained family ties, and brought persecutions of all sorts. In addition, he made for himself a busier life, filled with inquiries from brethren, requests for visits, and efforts initiated by him to instruct and unravel the knotty spiritual problems created where immature Christians from diverse backgrounds worked together. The cares that crowded around Paul would have distracted men of smaller heart, but Paul's was the heart of a shepherd. What would have been burdens to others were genuine concerns of the apostle to the Gentiles.

## Alertness To Conditions And Needs

It was those matters of the spirit that most challenged Paul's attention in communicating with the churches. The number present for worship last

Sunday, the latest contribution figures, and the number of men being supported for preaching somehow never found a place in his writings. It was not that such factors had no spiritual significance and concerned Paul none, but he went straight to the heart of the matter of a right relationship with God and sought to stress that which will always serve as a strong foundation making the other matters measure up.

It was the toleration of fornication, the removal from Christ to a different gospel, disbelief in the resurrection, and the proper treatment of busy bodies that elicited apostolic instructions, exhortations, and warnings from Paul (I Corinthians 5; Galatians 1; I Corinthians 15; II Thessalonians 3). In addition to the collection of matters, he went to some lengths to commend attitudes and actions that were right and to encourage goodness in all. Holding fast apostolic traditions in Corinth, confirming love to a repentant brother in Corinth, faith in the Lord and love for all saints at Ephesus, the appointing of scriptural elders and deacons at Ephesus, the sanctification of the Thessalonians, and the comforting of them regarding their deceased brethren were both commended and urged among God's people by this man of God (I Corinthians 11; 11

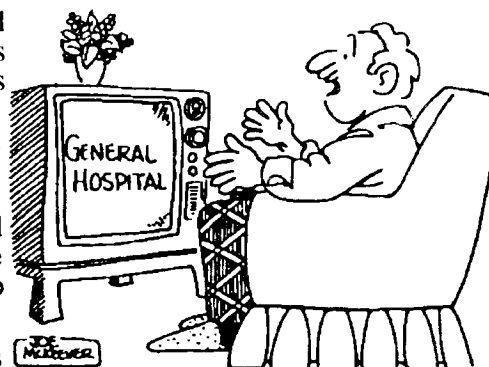
Corinthians 1; Ephesians 1; I Timothy 1; I Thessalonians 4).

Through all of the distractions crowding Paul life, he was neither unmindful nor unthankful for his brethren's moral and financial support, or for the increasing yield of the gospel (Philippians 1:3-7; 4:10-17; Colossians 1:6). "For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all in the tender mercy of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:8).

## Different Concerns In Different Churches

While the message of the gospel has certain fixed elements which Paul emphasized wherever he preached or wrote, it was his application of the gospel to the varying conditions of the different congregations that is one measure of his great care for the Lord's people. He was never content to preach a message sterilized of all offensive references to cherished beliefs or practices or to write letters void of helpful instructions on pressing problems, for to do so would have been to express his unconcern and unwillingness to give needed help. He often wrestled with agonizing church problems, doctrinal departures, looming apostasies, backsliding members, and useless bickering and dissension (Earlier passages cited; I Timothy 1:20; Philippians 4:2; Galatians 5:15).

In Paul's expressions of concern he mentioned the name of dangerous parties a very few times, but he usually refrained from doing so. Brethren today could probably profit much from such a course, for genuine care of God's people will always try to measure the good achieved by such a measure with the harm resulting therefrom. He always focused on the problem in the letter sent to the affected congregation, never bringing up such a matter in correspondence to another church. Local church matters never became known to the brotherhood because of Paul's letters. Issues involved in local problems were often discussed,



THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THE SOAPS  
THAT A LITTLE SOAP COULDN'T FIX.

but personalities and hurtful information were not spread abroad. Paul as not the "informer of the brethren" of his day, as some today try to be.

### Means Of Solving Problems

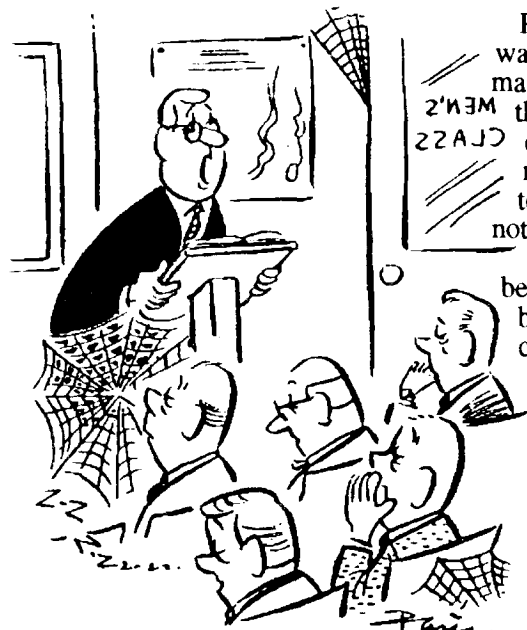
As earlier indicated, the conditions of churches challenging Paul's attention were spiritual; and spiritual problems require spiritual remedies and means. The carnal tactics of his day found no place in his spiritual arsenal. Even when having to deal with the problem of those false apostles plaguing Corinth, Paul did not resort to backbiting, rancor, and evil speaking. He instead entreated them "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" and disavowed warring according to the flesh, "For the weapons of our warfare are not those of the flesh, but mighty before God to casting down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ..." (II Corinthians 10:4-5).

His personal visits, encouraging and reproving epistles, frequent prayers, and selection of faithful fellowlaborers were constant reminders to brethren of this deep care for them. His honorable means of handling the money collected from churches was still another indicator of his

concern for brethren, lest they be doubtful of his honesty and lest his reputation be clouded at all (I Corinthians 16:34; II Corinthians 8:16-21). Brethren who today truly care for their brethren will be careful in their handling of problems, personal finances, and matters involving the opposite sex. Frequent problems in these areas make it almost impossible in many cases to continue the same degree of influence that earlier was wielded. Preachers, elders, and all brethren (sisters included) must be consecrated to the Lord and to one another in the cause of truth.

Suspicious (evil surmisings), half-truths, misrepresentations, temper tantrums, caustic speech, abusive language, unbridled tongues, political pressure, stubbornness, reporting of confidential conversations, and wrong motives have never been associated with Paul's caring ministry, but with the apostle's opponents. It is likewise true that such carnal tactics ought never to be found in the spiritual battle fought today by modern soldiers of the cross, for sin does not advance righteousness, but retards it. Genuine anxiousness over the cause of the Lord and the state of churches and the saving of souls demands that all of us today adopt the means and weapons of those ancient spiritual warriors, including Paul. To do otherwise is to be unconcerned about that which concerned Paul.

Paul's relationship to the churches was special. He had established many of them, being an apostle to the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. He had powers not conferred upon any person teaching today, as well as guidance not possessed by any today. His care for churches, however, ought to be ours; and in our care, we must be just as demonstrative of that care as he was (see Colossians 1:24-29). - *From Gospel Truths*



PERHAPS I'M KEEPING YOU A LITTLE LONG  
THIS MORNING...

## Compliments

From Page 1

On the other hand, some compliments may be worse than worthless; they may be greatly exaggerated and they may also be insincere. Insincere compliments -flattery-not only fail to be helpful, but are harmful-both to the giver and the receiver. Too many people are given to the practice of making complimentary statements about which they are not sincere. It is a device they use in the effort to ingratiate themselves into the favor of another, make themselves popular and make a following for themselves, and thus gain an advantage over the unsuspecting. It is no wonder the Bible warns against such and condemns it. Of some of his enemies, the Psalmist wrote: "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue." (Psa. 5:9) Again, "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity every one with his neighbor: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak." (Psa. 12:1-2) In Proverbs 20:19, the wise man warns, "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips." The talebearer and the flatterer is frequently one and the same person. You may well suspect the one who flatters you to have some design upon you. Stand your guard. He would pick out of you that which will serve him to make a story to someone else against you. "A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet" (Prov. 29:5). One needs the wisdom to guard against those who flatter him. Be assured, they hope to gain some advantage over you. Do not be deceived.

In contrast, there are others who seem to pride themselves in rarely speaking a compliment. They withhold compliments that are due and which ought to be spoken. This, too,

may be done with ulterior motive. Often, it may spring from foolish vanity-silly pride. One wishes to be "sought after" and so he tries to build a reputation for rarely giving compliments, hoping that others will try hard to do the things that please him. And, if he compliments, you are supposed to think you have indeed been "honored."

However, let it be emphasized that neither of the above mentioned practices is right. Neither practice is Christ-Like: Jesus never gave an insincere compliment; neither did He withhold compliments that were due. Jesus did compliment some people and since He did, and since His compliments were sincere, it will be good for us to note what He complimented, that we may cultivate those characteristics in our own lives.

In this connection, it is noteworthy that Jesus complimented Nathanael for his guilelessness. "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (John 1:47) Jesus knew that Nathanael was a man of deep and genuine honesty-a man without one single flaw of insincerity or deceit. Sometimes we speak of "common honesty," but genuine honesty is not a common thing.

Recognizing it in this man, Jesus gladly spoke of it, for there is no vice Jesus hated with greater intensity than hypocrisy. The hypocrite injures others. More than this, he injures himself. Hypocrisy has reached the climax of evil when one no longer recognizes it as hypocrisy. The prayer of the Pharisee in the temple (Luke 18:11,12) showed that he was all the more hopeless because he had come to believe in his own sincerity. And just as Jesus hated hypocrisy with intensity, so he loved sincerity with equal intensity. Hence, he appreciated Nathanael, and wanted him, and others to

know it. And since Jesus complimented complete honesty and sincerity we ought to seek earnestly to cultivate such in our own lives. Let us make every effort to lay aside all sham and hypocrisy; let us speak truth forthrightly, sincerely, and let our words and deeds be without sham, or "cover-up". Let us cultivate what Jesus appreciates -and complimented.

Other compliments Jesus gave may be studied with profit, as we seek to develop and strengthen the characteristics in our own lives which our Lord commended in the lives of people then. Such an effort commends itself to us, and can be followed with great profit. To this end may God bless us. - From  
PAUSE - PROFIT - PONDER

## Dead Weight

I've been a dead weight many years,

Around the church's neck.  
I've let the others carry me

And always pay the check.  
I've had my name upon the rolls,

For years and years gone by;  
I've criticized and grumbled,  
too;

Nothing could satisfy.

I've been a dead weight long enough

Upon the church's back,  
Beginning now, I'm going to take

A wholly different track.  
I'm going to pray and pay and work;

And carry loads instead;  
And not have others carry me  
Like people do the dead.

ANONYMOUS

## The Reflector

(USPS 606-140)

is published monthly by the  
Fultondale Church of Christ  
2005 Elkwood Drive  
Fultondale AL 35068

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.  
Editor

Second Class Postage Paid  
at Fultondale, Alabama

POSTMASTER: Send address  
changes to:

The Reflector  
3004 Brakefield Drive  
Fultondale, AL 35068

