

The Reflector

Storm Damages Our Building

The clock still on the wall still reads 7:47. It was the time on Saturday evening, Feb. 3, that a tornado hit our meeting house. Our building along with several dwellings in the area suffered extensive damage. Part of our roof was blown away. The entire outside wall behind our pulpit and baptistery was laid flat.

We had extensive water damage to the inside of the building. It will take us several weeks to repair it.

We have much to be thankful for. No one was injured. We have full-replacement insurance. The response of friends from within and beyond this community has been overwhelming. People from several communities came in with chain saws to help clear our prop-

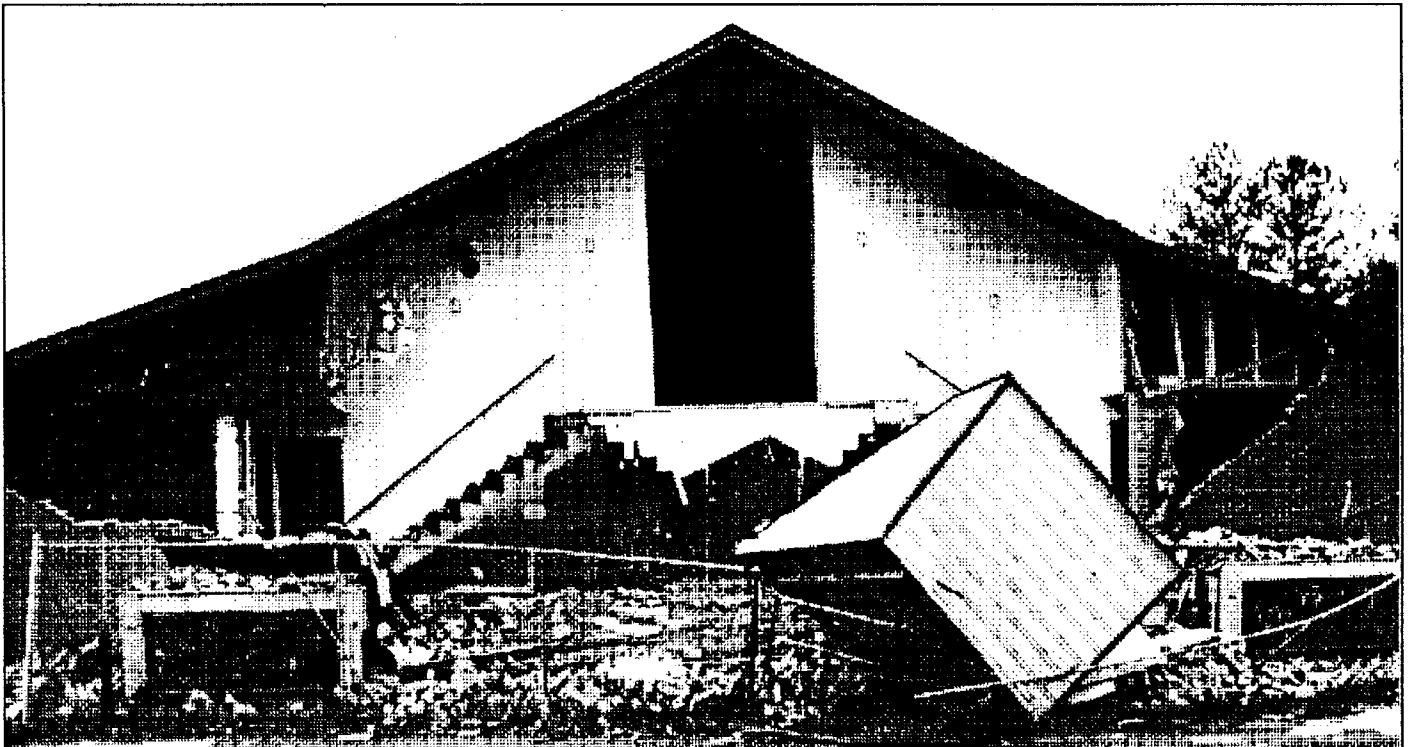
erty of the fallen trees and other debris. After our phone service was restored our phone seemed to constantly ring with calls from people far and near wanting to know if there were any needs that they could meet.

The membership here has rallied to the occasion and have spent hours working where needed. The spirit of cooperation and support by them has been wonderful. Though there was some damage to some of the homes and property of some of the members here, there were no injuries. As far as we know, at this time, all have adequate insurance to cover the expenses of repairing the damage done.

The officials of the City of Fultondale have been wonderful.

The city immediately offered us the use of the Fultondale Community Center. We held Lord's Day services there the day after the storm and will be able to continue with all of our services and classes at the Center until our building is repaired. Various ones connected with the Community Center have performed various acts of kindness to make things as comfortable and convenient for us as possible. We indeed owe them a huge debt of gratitude. It confirms what we have known for many years, and may have at times taken for granted, that Fultondale is a great community in which to live.

Thanks for all the acts of kindness and expressions of concern from all of us at the Fultondale Church of Christ.



Rear of building after tornado ripped out back wall

Photo Courtesy of NORTH JEFFERSON NEWS

Don't Criticize Me Until You've Walked A Mile In My Shoes

Following is a part of an article I clipped from a recent bulletin I received:

"It was thirty years ago when churches of Christ across the nation were dividing among themselves over what has come to be called the 'institutional issue.' I was only a boy at that time and not involved in the bitter, and often personal, confrontations among brethren. As I grew older, since I had no emotional investment or personal opinions to defend, I began to study the issues involved from a scriptural, rather than an emotional, basis. It is from that angle I approach the subject now. . . I make no defense for those, on either side of the issue, who, in times past, may have approached the subject with bad attitudes. Truth and the means used to propagate it, are two different things. A person may be teaching the truth, yet do so with insincerity, indifference, or even malice. I do not condone such behavior, and the Lord God will bring all such as these to account. My simple plea to you now is to lay aside the prejudices and the animosities of the past, and look at the issues involved..."

Commentary

The description of the bitter battle some of us have fought since the late 1940's is quite typical of how some (maybe many) of today's younger preachers feel about the struggle. Having been deeply and very personally involved in the fray, I can tell you that his paint brush is a bit too wide to suit me, and I think a whole bunch of others! I doubt not that there were some in the battles of the past 40 years who weren't always models in their motivation and behavior, but it's always easy to pass judgment upon something one admits that he had no part in. "Monday-morning quarterbacks" can sit in their easy chairs and tell us just exactly how the game should have been played to have won it!

Our young brother says, "I was only a boy at the time..." Well, he's about half my age now, (and about the age of my oldest child), and still in college! He's an able and very likeable young preacher, but poorly qualified to judge the motives of those who fought a battle of which he, admittedly, was not a part. Had this battle not been waged and a remnant saved, there is a very good possibility that he would not now be preaching for a nice sized congregation of faithful and loyal people who held the line, bore the heat of the battle, and survived the struggle, and pay him a bigger salary than I ever did or ever will receive and

refutation of such mistaken charges is to read the debates on these issues that were held during the heat of the battle. I don't deny that personalities sometimes got involved, but they usually got involved because they were inseparably connected with an effort to make of the Lord's church just another human denomination, and had we not protested with such vigor and strength, these young Monday morning quarterbacks with 20/20 hindsight would likely be in the camps of the liberals, or some denomination.

Life was not always easy on the front line. While our young critics were in knee pants (or maybe in

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allow him to attend college at the same time.

Several young preachers have taken his position and some of them have wound up in the big middle of the liberal camp. If one lies down with dogs, he gets up with fleas! I would say that our young brother rates himself quite highly: he has no "ax to grind", "no emotional investment", "no personal opinions to defend", and he studied the whole issue "from a scriptural, rather than an emotional basis." Whether he meant it or not, these are all tacit indictments of those of us who bore the burden in the heat of the day. It almost accuses us of insincerity, and of approaching the issues from an emotional and prejudicial standpoint rather than from a scriptural one. I deny it! The best

diapers), I was shoved over a pew, had brethren threaten to whip me at the front door of the church building, was harassed in Bible classes, was picketed by liberal brethren while I preached, (and they passed out gum and cough drops while we took the Lord's supper), had a gunshot fired through my living room window at two o'clock in the morning, was sued (along with the church for which I preached) in the court, had my family harassed on the telephone when I was absent, had my life threatened to my wife by anonymous phone calls when I was out of town, and had lies told about me that couldn't have been further from the truth.

I seldom mention these unpleasant matters because they are water under the bridge, and I have

laid them aside. I almost never think of them, but they do come to mind when my motives and intentions and those of my compatriots are questioned. I don't like to talk about these things, and I mention them here to say that our young critics might see the struggle a bit differently had they endured some of the insults and abuses that many older preachers and their families suffered. It comes with poor grace for those who had no part in the battle to tell us how it should have been fought, and boast of their pure motives and model behavior after the battle has been won and the cannons silenced. They are like the soldier that never fights but rather stands behind the line of battle and criticizes the way the fighting soldier holds his weapon, and tells us how he would do it, if he ever decided to fight.

It is easy to be idealistic when you're not in a foxhole and the bullets are not whistling by your head. And I suppose that the idealism of youth serves a good purpose too. But we should understand that there is a vast difference between what we say we should do under certain circumstances, and what we actually do when those circumstances arise. This is not a defense of wrong conduct, but a statement of fact that all experienced people will understand.

From time to time older preachers talk about the church and its prospects for the future. I hear older preachers wondering out loud about what the future holds for the church when many of our young preachers are more interested in a good church and salary, than in working where they can do the most good. We also wonder when we hear them preach sermons that would fit rather nicely in most denominational pulpits. We are also wondering what will happen in the future when momentous issues arise that have to be met with courage, solid Bible knowledge, and a spirit that says, "I'll never give up or give in." Pray about it!

—By James P. Needham in TORCH

Infants and Sin

"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3).

This writer's first efforts at debating denominational error was with a Lutheran preacher. The issues were total hereditary depravity and infant baptism. We expected our opponent to argue that little children were only guilty of inborn or inherited sin — not personal sins of their own. So, we were surprised, indeed, when he said that infants were guilty of actual transgressions of their own. He was very insistent that infants needed baptism to remove both kinds of sins—inherited and actual. He was the first one that we had heard attempt to specify acts of sin that infants and small children commit. I remember his using temper tantrums as one example.

We insisted that if those little fellows were sinners, then Jesus would be saying that, "unless you are converted and become as *little sinners*, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." If not, why not?

In all the years, since then, we have only heard one or two others openly argue that little children actually commit sin. If they are right, then surely God has some plan for saving infants from their sins. If the wages of sin is death, then they would be lost without some means of pardon. The Lutheran preacher solved the problem by baptizing the little sinners for remission of their sins. A brother, whom we have been reading after lately, has solved the

problem by having God continuously forgiving the sinners even as they sin.

We believe that the basic error of the Lutheran preacher and the other one mentioned is their unwarranted supposition that little children sin. It is a conjecture, in both cases, that accompanies other doctrinal positions that they hold. The Lutheran preacher's assumption accompanies his position that infants should be baptized. The other person's assumption goes along with his position that God forgives some people even as they sin.

We believe that to teach that little children sin is, not only without Scriptural foundation, but is contrary to what the Scriptures teach.

There are certain principles taught in the Bible that preclude an infant's being guilty of any sin.

1. The parable of the talents clearly teaches that responsibility before God is contingent upon one's ability. Since infants are incapable of understanding the law of God, they have no responsibility to the law. Not being held accountable to the law, they can have no sin, since sin is lawlessness. (1 John 3:4).

2. Isaiah recognizes that there is a period in a child's life before he is capable of choosing between good and evil: "For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings." (Isa. 7:16).

3. Paul refers to a time in his life when he was alive (spiritually) and without the law (commandment). "I was alive once without

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the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." (Rom. 7:9). Since the law had existed all of Paul's life, the only possible time for him to have been personally without the law and alive was during that period of innocent childhood before he was held accountable to the law. The time before he transgressed the law and sin entered his life, bringing death.

4. James comments on the nature of sin: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires (lusts — KJV) and enticed. Then, when desire (lust — KJV) has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." (James 1:14,15). Unless an infant can be drawn away by lust and enticed, then he cannot sin. It would be interesting to know the specific lusts that infants are capable of producing. Just what there is to entice an infant to lust and thus give birth to sin.

This should suffice to show that infants or little children are without either law or lust, thus without sin. They are, as we have taught over the years, innocent and safe.

If infants have no sins to be washed away, then there is no need to baptize them. If they have no sins, then there is no need for any cleansing of their sins — continuous or otherwise.— *By Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.*

Where Are Your Children?

Several days ago I had an interest in a case to be tried in our city court, so I was seated in the audience. During the process, I had the opportunity to hear other cases. One was particularly interesting.

Police were called to a convenience store with a complaint about drinking and disorderly conduct in the parking lot. The car the people left in was described. In answer to the call an

officer stopped a car with 6 occupants, all teenagers, 4 young men and 2 young women. Neither of the women had been drinking — one was only 15 years old. This was at 11:30 p.m. One young man was arrested. According to his own testimony, he and the other three men had been drinking since about 9 p.m. About 11 p.m. they all got into the car with the two girls. He admitted, almost boastfully, that he had four or five beers but that he had drunk more than that many times and never gotten drunk.

My point is this: what were two teenage girls (one only 15) doing in a car with four half drunk (or more) men at this time of the night? Did their parents know where they were? This was NOT a ball game night. It was just another night of the week. True, no one was injured, only one was arrested and convicted of a crime. Prov. 29:15 says, "...a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame".

Too many parents provide a car for their children as soon as they are 16 years old and get a license to drive. Then they let them more or less do as they please and then wonder WHY they have accidents, WHY they are arrested, WHY they become addicted to alcohol or WHY they become pregnant or end up in court CONVICTED of a minor crime. We need to allow our children some freedom and give them some of the good things of life, but we must train them up in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6). Parents, do you know where your children are?

Do you know where they were last night at 11:30 or midnight? Don't say, "My child wouldn't do that." Someone's children did! — *By J. F. Dancer, Jr., in STAND*

**When the Bible says one thing
and the people think another,
the Bible(not the people)
is right!**

Schedule of Services

Sundays:

Bible 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.

Fultondale Church of Christ

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