

# The REFLECTOR

VOL 19  
NO 1

A monthly publication of the **Fultondale Church of Christ** meeting at 2005 Elkwood Drive, Fultondale, Alabama. Our mailing address is 3004 Brakefield Drive, Fultondale, Alabama 35068.  
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JAN. 1979

## SO YOU WANT A PREACHER?

By H. E. Phillips

A large number of churches, large and small, are now looking for preachers. I have read many appeals and have received a number of requests to help find preachers to fill the vacant pulpits across the nation. Brethren are learning that it is much more difficult to find a good preacher than it was a few years ago. I do not know all the reasons for this condition, but at least two seem evident: 1. Many young preachers have become discouraged because of the general attitude toward preaching and preachers and have turned to other labors; 2. The present standard required for preachers and the many extra demands made of them that will not allow time for study and plain preaching.

The extreme demands upon preachers by some brethren sometimes grow out of their experiences with lazy, unprepared, self-centered, fun-loving men who have called themselves preachers of the gospel. They give about four hours or less each week to pulpit preaching and class teaching, and the rest of the time they loaf and play. But these poor excuses for preachers of the gospel should not cause brethren to set unscriptural standards for **"the right man"** to work with them. But who is **"the right man?"** What kind of preacher do brethren generally want? I have heard some amazing qualities and strange standards for **"the right man."**

One brother asked that I help find a preacher "between 35 and 40 years old, with a friendly wife and not more than three children, who has a good disposition to get along with all kinds of people, and who can get his sermon across in not more than 30 minutes." This man must have been a novice or very naive, but I guess he was speaking for the church who wanted this kind of preacher. The apostle Paul would not fit the demands of this brother. He would not have come within the age limits, he did not have a wife or children, his disposition did not keep him from spiritual conflicts with false brethren, and he preached until midnight and then talked to the brethren until break of day on at least one occasion, Acts 20:7-11. Paul "was long preaching," Acts 20:9. I doubt that Peter, James, John, Timothy, Titus or any of the first century preachers of truth would have measured to the standard required by this brother.

Another brother wrote: **"Will you help us get a preacher who will really do the work of the church?"** I wondered what the church intended to do when they found a man "to do the work of the church." This is one reason there are so many dead churches across the nation today. They "hire a preacher" to do all the work and the members do little more than warm the pews once a week, or maybe twice.

An elder asked if I knew a preacher who was about ready to move. "Our preacher is moving in three months. He has been with us two years and we think that is long enough for a

preacher to stay at one place. He gets too close to the members if he stays longer." He may mean that the preacher learns enough about some of the members to preach what they really need. When I suggested a preacher who might want to move, this elder asked: "Where did he go to school and how many degrees does he have?" I told him I did not know, he would have to ask the man.

And there was the appeal for a preacher who had the tact and diplomacy to preach without offending people, not calling names nor debating with the sects. This preacher must have the political skill to "preach the gospel" without those in error knowing that they are sinners and lost. Teachers of this sort can be found for the right price, who will tickle the itching ears of those who have turned from the truth and have turned unto fables, 2 Tim. 4:3-4.

These are typical requirements for preachers today. Have you noticed that there is not one single scriptural requirement in any of these? Apollos was "an eloquent man" and mighty in the scriptures, "instructed in the way of the Lord: and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord," but he lacked something to be the kind of preacher God wants. "Knowing only the baptism of John," he needed to be taught the truth before he could do the work of an evangelist, Acts 18:24-26. If a man does not know the truth or will not preach it, all else makes little difference.

If you want a preacher, why not look for one who loves the truth and will preach the word in season and out of season? 2 Tim. 4:2; Who will declare all the counsel of God? Acts 20:27; Who will do the work of an evangelist? 2 Tim. 4:5; Who will fight the good fight of faith? 1 Tim. 6:12; Who will do nothing by partiality? 1 Tim. 5:21; Who will reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine? 2 Tim. 4:2; Who will not hold back anything that is profitable but will teach publicly and from house to house? Acts 20:20; Who will give no place by subjection to false brethren? Gal. 2:4-5; And who will preach to please God and persuade men? Gal. 1:6-10; 2 Cor. 5:11. If one does all this, what difference does his age, looks, family, education, personality, popularity, and background make? If he preaches and practices the faith once delivered he will do any church good.

But then after **"the right man"** is found and "employed" to work with a congregation in preaching the word, there are always some carnal-minded "church-goers" who can criticize and find fault until the preacher leaves or a squabble starts through the long and loose tongues of these "experts" on what a preacher should be. The spiritual babies, who have not grown one inch spiritually in 20 years, never learn anything from a sermon or Bible class. They are too busy looking for the faults of the man doing the preaching to hear the message which he proclaims. This is exactly the attitude of the Pharisees and Saducees, who found fault with Christ but never learned anything from his doctrine.

What difference does it make how fat or skinny the preacher is? How does the color of his suit, tie or shirt affect the message he proclaims from the word of God? John the Baptist would not have rated in any fashion contest, but he moved a lot of people with his message. What if he is "too young" or "too old" (whatever that may be), how does that hinder the truth of the

gospel? What if he does foul up the "King's English" a few times during the discourse, does this destroy the power of the gospel?

Brethren, when we come to fully realize that men are lost in sin, and that the gospel is the power of God to save, Rom. 1:16, we will be concerned, not about all these unimportant characteristics of the man, but the message which will convict men of sin, bring them to repentance, and obedience to the gospel of Christ. The man or woman who stresses the dress, good speech, personality, financial standing, crowd-pleasing, soft-soaping and entertaining qualities of the man, will never know very much about the saving power of God because they are really not listening to learn. These are the self-appointed experts on preachers and preaching techniques, but they know nothing about the message. They really know nothing about preachers either, because one must know the message to know what God requires of preachers.

If you are looking for a preacher, do not consider anything before you know of his knowledge of the gospel, his love for the truth, his courage to preach it fully, and his determination to please God and persuade men. Other matters are secondary and unimportant.

Articles like this one is not easy for preachers to write. One runs the risk of being charged with the wrong motive, i.e., of writing it to improve his own lot and to "get at" his own critics--and what preacher doesn't have them? Yet, he feels keenly his responsibility to "keep back nothing that is profitable" unto the brethren. We commend the article to our readers and commend brother Phillips for writing it.

I hope that it is not just because I am getting old, but I am getting less and less concerned with what brethren WANT to hear and read and more and more interested in what brethren NEED to hear and read. If we do not point these things out to the brethren, who will? Like brother Phillips, I receive many calls from brethren asking if I know where they might find a preacher to work with them. I have observed many of the things he has observed. I wish brethren would consider these things more seriously than they have in past. It would make for better churches and better preachers. It would encourage more young men to devote full time to the Lord's work. Think about it brethren.

-Ed

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## OPEN MINDS OR OPEN-ENDED MINDS?

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And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." - Acts 17:32.

An open mind is essential to receiving the truth, if it is not open at both ends. A closed mind will not receive truth. An open-ended mind will take in any new thing (Acts 17:21), but does not retain it to the point of forming any real convictions upon it. Neither a closed mind nor an open-ended mind will accept the truth of the gospel.

Gospel preachers, like Paul, have had to fight prejudice with all their being. Some at Mars Hill were prejudiced against the resurrection, so they mocked. People often refuse to listen to anything that disturbs their preconceived opinions. If a doctrine does not fit their creed, either formal or informal, they reject it outright. People have rejected the simple gospel message in droves because their minds are made up and they don't want to be confused with facts. This problem is still with us, but not as acute as in recent generations.

Gospel preachers are now finding less prejudice. People listen courteously as the gospel is taught. Some obey it, but I doubt that there are any more than in more prejudiced seasons.

The decline in bigotry is just cause for jubilation. But, let us not let our euphoria get out of hand. Many of these "open minds" are open at both ends. They like the Athenians, are indeed willing to listen (Acts 17:18-21), but after they listen they "will hear thee again of this matter." They are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7). They are long on questions but pitifully short on answers. We are living in an age of investigation, questioning, dialogue and toleration. People are willing to listen to the other fellow's doctrine and philosophy. They listen, they consider, they **tolerate it all**. They seldom form any concrete conclusions. They consider truth relative, so why get too worked up over conclusions that might be overturned by one's next study? There is a time and need for deliberation, but there is a time and place for one to **make up his mind**. "How long halt ye between two opinions?", asked Elijah. (1 Kings 18:21). Truly, you may be forced to change your convictions (and you certainly should) when and if new facts are presented, but this is no excuse for the habit of vacillation.

Lord, give, give us neither **bigots** nor **jellyfish**.

-Ed

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## "THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY SALVATION"

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"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

- Hebrews 6:9

Good people sometimes confuse "things that accompany salvation" with salvation itself. One attains some trait that goes with salvation and thinks he must be saved. Another thinks he can be saved totally apart from any trait that accompanies salvation. Both are wrong.

Good morals accompany salvation. (Titus 2:11,12). But a man might be the cleanest moral man in this community and still be lost. Cornelius was an **outstanding** moral person, but he was lost (Acts 10). It does not matter how good a husband, father, citizen or neighbor a man may be morally - if he has not obeyed the gospel of Christ he is not promised salvation. (Heb. 5:8,9). Yet, one who lives in obedience to God must be a good husband, father, citizen and neighbor. While such goes with salvation it is not evidence of salvation itself.

Kindness and humility of disposition go with salvation. But it is a mistake to assume that every kind and humble person is a Christian. Some of the kindest men I know are not Christians. They have never obeyed the gospel's first principles. We cannot accept their religious philosophy simply because they may be kind. Yet, we know that as Christians we must be both humble and kind.

Persecution accompanies salvation. (2 Tim. 3:12). Yet, one must not consider persecution, per se, as evidence of his salvation. We think we know folks who do just that. The "Jehovah's Witnesses" pride themselves in being persecuted all over the world. To them, this is evidence that they are right. They forget that men who have claimed no connection with Christianity have been persecuted. I think that a few of my brethren feel that if folks criticize them often it means that they must be on the right track. If they go off on a tangent and brethren firmly deal with them, they console themselves in being persecuted like the early Christians. But, is this "persecution" evidence of their rightness? Hardly. If so, then many could claim rightness for opposing causes. Unless one understands this principle he might seek to provoke criticism and persecution for its sake alone. Preachers sometimes develop a harsh, abusive, arrogant and down right mean

approach to preaching. Brethren refuse to support them in it and the preachers then cry "persecution". They think persecution is the stuff that salvation is made of. Unless one understands that persecution is a thing that goes with salvation and not evidence of right within itself, he might seek to provoke folks to wrath for its sake alone. Yes, if we live godly in Christ we will suffer persecution, but it will find us - **won't have to hunt it.**

Militancy goes with salvation. New Testament Christians were militant in their defense and promotion of the truth. This seems to be hard for this generation, raised on a diet of "**how to win friends and friends and influence people**" to comprehend. One just must not try to "force his religion" upon another. Such is beneath the dignity of this enlightened(?) and tolerant age. It is sickening to hear some half-baked brother degrade the name of a sincere teacher for being a **fighter**. Christians must be fighters with **spiritual** weapons. (2 Cor. 10:5). But militancy is not a sign of salvation within itself. One who is militant, for its sake, will fight as one beating the air. He will likely become a soldier without a cause. If he runs out of a **just** cause he will invent a cause. He will become a contentious troublemaker in the church. Such are ready to take on anyone in argument for the sake of taking on someone. Such misrepresents the militancy demanded of a Christian. -Ed

occasionally, but we can be pretty understanding if a man turns a bit "cowardly" when confronted with such a possibility.

No, we are not saying that all are unapproachable. We have talked with both types, with the approachable and the unapproachable. We know literally hundreds of Christians whom we would be willing to approach about any question. But we also know of some who are terrors. We would just about as soon come face to face with a bear in the woods as to have to talk with them.

Genuine Christians are "**easy to be intreated**" (James 3:17). They receive others with humility, meekness, and understanding. They know how to approach others when a problem exists, and they know how to receive others. While "**contending earnestly for the faith,**" they refuse to be of a contentious spirit. They "**suffer long**" and are "**kind**"; they are "**not easily provoked**"; for they love others (1 Cor. 13:4-8). They exercise self-control. Recognizing the possibility of error in their lives, they appreciate efforts on the part of others to correct them, even when they are convinced that the correcting ones are in error themselves.

Two needs exist: Self-evaluation and repentance. Each must ask himself. "**Am I among the approachable ones--as a husband, as a wife, as a parent, as a preacher, as an elder, as a fellow-Christian--or am I one of the terrors who tends to explode whenever anyone crosses me?**" Improvement is possible. The welfare of a Bible class is at stake; or the welfare of the church as a whole; or of greater consequences, eternal happiness.

## SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

### Sundays:

Bible Classes	9:45 A.M.
Worship	10:45 A.M.
Worship	6:30 P.M.

### Wednesdays:

Bible Classes	7:30 P.M.
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## 'Why Didn't You Talk To Me?'

By Bill Hall

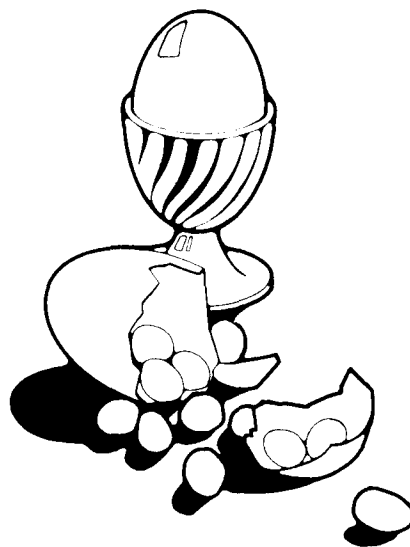
"Why didn't you talk to us?" ask the hurt parents as they face their son for the first time after he had run away from home, leaving them panic stricken for five long days.

"Why didn't you tell me you felt this way?" asks the grieving husband as he begs his "fed up" wife to return home and give it another try.

"You could have called to verify the report before going into print," scold the "innocent elders, who have just been exposed for leading a congregation into yet another unauthorized activity.

"Doesn't the Bible say to go to the offending party alone?" asks the person whose ugly attitude and presumptuous moves have just precipitated a major crisis within the church.

"Why didn't you talk to me?" everyone is asking. How cowardly it makes the other person look! How unconcerned! But, the truth is, in each of these cases, the person didn't "talk" because he knew that any approach he might have taken would have set off a major explosion. There are just some people you can't talk to. They get mad. They fly off the handle. They threaten you. They misrepresent you. They will do anything they can to destroy you. Step into a cage all alone with a roaring "lion" or vicious "tiger?" Yes, the Lord expects us to do so



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## WHY NOT? if men come from amoebas

If you think the hen is surprised at hatching peas, what of the shock that amoeba must have had? In all fairness to hens (and amoebas) we should point out that this is not their doing. Evolutionists are the one who "laid the egg." And neither the egg nor the theory are what they are cracked up to be.

— Jere E. Frost

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# The Unselfish Life

Foy W. Vinson

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In setting forth certain principles regulating the acceptance of his religion, Jesus said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 16:24,25) In this language our Lord lays the foundation for the Christian's life and that foundation is **unselfishness**. Let a man "deny himself" and "lose his life for my sake" the Lord declares. Jesus knew that this principle of unselfishness was an essential ingredient in the life of a Christian and that without it the whole effort would be characterized by frustration and failure. Hence he gives emphasis to it in connection with initially coming to him.

Now in the society of the first century this principle of unselfishness was not too difficult to relate to among the masses. They lived in a climate of relative suppression of self, in a culture where slavery abounded, in a society where a great gulf separated them from their rulers and the elite. In other words many of them had "denied themselves" and "lost their lives" for others' sakes because necessity was laid upon them.

However, by way of contrast, consider our circumstances today. We live under a great Bill of Rights and a Constitution which guarantee personal and individual rights and liberties. So instead of the suppression of self there is rather the liberation and exaltation of self. Much of American history has been made and recorded in terms of determining, asserting and defending the rights of self. Especially have we witnessed this in recent years. Consequently each of us is very conscious of and sensitive with respect to his rights. And while such freedoms and rights are a great blessing in a social and political sense, yet ironically and even tragically they tend to be antithetical and counteractive to the self-denial imposed upon every disciple of Christ. No wonder then that the average American is completely nonplussed by the Lord's teaching which says that "whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." (Matt. 5:39-41.) Though this kind of conduct may be politically weak and completely un-American, yet it is spiritually strong and altogether Christian.

Another instance of the unselfish principle being applied is seen in 1 Corinthians 6:7. It reads: "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" The apostle is discussing the matter of brethren going to law against each other and in verse 7 is addressing the brother "in the right" or the one being wronged by another. He tells him to take the wrong and suffer the loss rather than go into court. "But what about my rights?" someone may exclaim. That's just the point. Sometimes I must forego and sacrifice "my rights" to follow Christ. We sing "where he leads me I will follow" and yet want to circumvent the path of self-denial. Impossible!

In Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 Paul teaches the sacrifice of individual rights and liberties for the sake of weak brethren. I know that to many in our society any form of weakness is looked upon as contemptible and not to be tolerated, but to the follower of Christ such a condition evokes a

spirit of compassion and understanding. So Paul says: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." (Rom. 14:21) These were not unlawful actions, but rights were not to be exercised to the harm of others. "But I like meat and I enjoy wine!" That, my brother, is beside the point. So, the apostle concludes: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." (1 Cor. 8:13.)

Oh what a difference the unselfish life makes! What a difference to the individual who so lives and thereby learns what the religion of Jesus Christ is all about. What a difference to the family structure which is disintegrating today in a mire of selfishness. What a difference to society in general. And above all, what a difference to the church of our Lord. Most all of the bitterness, strife and division of the past quarter-century would have been avoided if each professed Christian would have "denied himself" and "lost his life" for Christ's sake.

