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VOLUME 22 NUMBER 10

Dear Reader,

Please accept this issue of the Reflector as a personal invitation to attend our upcoming Gospel Meeting. Brother Chumley has selected the following lessons for our benefit:

- ✓ SUNDAY MORNING - 10:45 A. M.  
Can He Say That About Me?
- ✓ SUNDAY EVENING - 7:30 P. M.  
What God Is Able To Do
- ✓ MONDAY EVENING - 7:30 P. M.  
A Man After God's Own Heart
- ✓ TUESDAY EVENING - 7:30 P. M.  
He Stopped Too Soon
- ✓ WEDNESDAY EVENING - 7:30 P. M.  
What It Takes To Make One A Christian
- ✓ THURSDAY EVENING - 7:30 P. M.  
Mending Fences
- ✓ FRIDAY EVENING - 7:30 P. M.  
I Sat Among Them Seven Days

We are looking forward to seeing you at the meetings each night.

Sincerely,

The Members of Fultondale  
Church of Christ

# HEAR THE GOSPEL OCT. 24-29

# "Recall The Former Days"

32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:

33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;

34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have a better and an enduring possession in heaven.

35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. (Hebrews 10:32-35.)

There is a time to forget. Grudges should be forgotten. Hatchets should be buried. Personal injustices (real or imagined) laid to rest. Forgiveness must be practiced.

But, there is a time to remember. The Hebrew writer reminds his readers of the sacrifice they had made, the struggle they had endured, and the injustice they had suffered in the past for their convictions (confidence) in Christ. He further reminds them (in verses 36-39) that if they turn back now that all that would be in vain.

We need this reminder today. I sometimes hear a call from some "conservative" brother that disturbs me. Some are trying to lean over backwards to unite with liberal brethren. Now, I am all for unity. But if it means that I am going to have to throw in the towel in my open opposition to their unscriptural practices - then, thanks, but no thanks.

I cannot forget the sacrifice and suffering of great and good men in order to preserve the purity of churches. I cannot forget how little bands of brethren were forced out of facilities that they had helped build and pay for - because brethren forced their institutional idols into the work of the church without regard to the consciences of their brethren. I cannot forget the young men in the 1950's who, struggling to get started preaching and to establish their homes, were "fired" between Sundays for nothing more than preaching on the "all-sufficiency of the church". I cannot forget the "quarantine" of the Gospel Advocate against those who opposed institutions and sponsoring church arrangements. I cannot forget how pulpits were suddenly closed to good and honorable men who had spent years building up churches from those very pulpits. I cannot forget those godly elders who backed preachers in their preaching and debating against those unscriptural innovations, even in churches where the majority were not sound.

Now, if there are brethren somewhere willing to abandon their innovations and allow preachers to freely preach against those things - that is one thing. But, if it means that I must soften my stand - that's another thing. I have too much regard for the teachings of the scriptures and too much memory of past sacrifice for such.

If we were wrong to have taken such a stand and to have brought such treatment upon ourselves in the past, then LET US SAY SO AND REPENT of having made an issue of these things and go to these brethren and ask their forgiveness. If we were right, then let us not cast aside our confidence, nor make all those hardships of the past for nought, by sacrificing our convictions upon the altar erected to a make-shift peace.

Brethren, if you have some indication that the the elders or preacher where you attend may be toying with such an idea you would do well to insist that they declare openly their position and intentions. If they have been suspected of such, but really are not, it would only take a clear-cut open statement to clear the matter up. Too many sacrifices have been made for the truth in these matters to be weak-kneed now in our stand for the truth.

Those who sacrificed and suffered for truth did it joyfully. They have no regrets. They hold no bitterness. But, they love truth and love those who love truth too much to see past efforts to preserve it go to waste.

# The Weak And The Strong

Christians are at different levels of development in their knowledge and application of the doctrine of Christ.

New Testament writers speak of the "weak" and the "strong", of "babes" and "perfect" (mature) among Christians (See Rom. 14 and I Cor 8-10).

Those "weak in knowledge" or "weak in the faith" may tend to be to be overly-scrupulous (or even under-scrupulous) and overly critical of those with whom they disagree. On the other hand, the "strong" sometimes tend to be proud (I cor. 8:1-4) and impatient. (After all, any idiot ought to be able to see that") If care is not taken by both classes, trouble will come to churches and the cause of Christ damaged in the community.

The "strong", because of their strength, bear the greater responsibility to maintain peace and to edify the weak. The welfare of the weaker brother and the peace of the church is more important than the exercise of a mere right under the gospel.

We would do well to read 1 Cor. 8-10 and consider two reasons given for the one "with knowledge" (strong in the faith) not going to feasts in the idol's temple -- even though neither the meat nor the idol meant anything to them. They considered themselves strong enough to handle the occasion without harm.

1. They should consider the effect it could have upon a weak brother.

Granting that the act itself was lawful (10:23) it was still not expedient (profitable, helpful). It could have offended weak brethren who had not grown to the point that they could separate the meat from the idol (8:7). If they saw the strong brother eating the meat and were encouraged by his example to eat the meat, as meat offered to the idol, thus sinning by worshipping the idol. The strong would then be responsible offending (causing the stumble) the weak. Paul shows that one cannot insist upon his rights under the gospel without regard to the effect it has on others. Paul even forfeited some of his rights for the gospel's sake (I Cor. 9).

2. They should consider the effect it could have upon themselves.

The strong also must be careful lest he fall (10:12). It would be easy for him overly estimate his strength and to think that he could remain in such close association with idolatry and not be personally affected by it. After all, he had knowledge. He knew the truth. He knew that meat was meat and that offering it to an idol did not change its character. He could handle that closeness. He was not worshipping the idol. He was just having a good meal. The fact that he was in the idol's temple, surrounded with idolators, was incidental to him. It is precisely this arrogant self-confidence that Paul is dealing with by pointing out the examples of the Israelites' apostasy (I Cor. 10:1-12) and the danger of becoming in communion with idolatry (I Cor. 10:14-22) and concluding "to him (that puffed up strong brother) that thinks he stands to take heed lest he fall". We would all do well to think about this warning.

Brethren often place themselves and their families close ties with false teachers in their innocent (and even morally beneficial) activities. When questioned about it they respond, "Well, We don't go along with them in the issues that separate us. They know that we do not endorse their unscriptural doctrines and practices. We understand each other's position, but we simply work together in areas of mutual interests. The fact that it is under the control and direction of these religious teachers is incidental. We are strong enough to handle it."

Brother, don't over-estimate your strength or that of your children. Don't underestimate how effectively continuous contact and close association (working with) false teachers can erode your faith and soften your resolve to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered. Don't think that you are so strong that constant exposure to their company, teaching, and influence will not weaken you spiritually.

While the weak need to watch so as to not "judge" the strong (Rom. 14:3) and the strong need to be careful not to lead others into sin by carelessly exercising their liberty in Christ. -- the strong must not think that they, themselves, can not be subtly contaminated by the unscriptural views and practices of others - if they place themselves in too close a relationship and almost daily association with them.

# A Condensed Bible?

I have read in newspapers that a famous publisher, known for condensed books, has published a condensed Bible. No doubt, it will receive high praise by many critics and by those who are too lazy or indifferent to study the Bible as it really is. It might even appeal to some brethren who seem to want us to reduce its teaching into small simple capsule lists of do's and don't's for them so that they will not have to study for themselves. It will be interesting to see just what is left out in order to condense the Book.

I read where a convention of one of the leading southern denominations has expressed concern over such a Bible. They should be concerned and so should all of us. But, I can't help but wonder out loud as to why leading protestants should be so concerned, since they have been condensing the Bible for years. You know, like the milk folks condense milk - take the water out. Those faith only folks have condensed the Bible's plan of salvation to "just believe" - as one said, "Faith plus nothing, faith minus nothing". Many have condensed the essentials of the Christian life down to nothing. Yes, nothing! Oh, it is good to live right as a Christian - to be a good "witness". But, once one believes then he is saved eternally and cannot be lost, in the gospel according to these folks. Nothing that one does as a Christian has anything to do with his salvation. Now, that is a condensed version! Such passages as 1 Cor. 10:12 ("Take heed lest ye fall") and Gal 5:4 ("Ye are fallen from grace") had just as well be removed from the text - if once saved always saved.

Now that the ice has been broken for the benefit of those who want less Bible, maybe someone can come up with an expanded version. Maybe it could be called the American Expanded Version (AEV). It could include all of those passages that folks would like to see in the Bible, but have been unable to find. It might even be acceptable to some of my brethren. There are several short books that could be expanded. Maybe add a couple of chapters to Jude, II or III John, or Philemon. A verse or so could mention instrumental music in worship. Another verse or two could mention a New Testament church that supported an institution separate and apart from the church or an example of a church that promoted and supported social and recreational activities for its members. These chapters would be helpful to a lot of brethren.

But, there is a problem with all of this: "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18,19).

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THE REFLECTOR is a monthly publication of the Fultondale Church of Christ, meeting at 2005 Elkwood Drive, Fultondale, AL 35068.

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