

A Quarterly Journal

(A presentation by email)

“LIGHT FOR OUR AGE”

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*“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”
Psalm 119:105*

Feature One: Editorial

We Need To Remember: For the Christian, Death Is Victory

Psalm 116:15

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

When I was preaching for the church in Briensburg, Kentucky, I had the chance to visit with one of the members of the congregation living in a nursing home. He was 94 years of age, and I about 23. His mind was sharp and he enjoyed telling me stories about his childhood. He also brought up the subject of death on several occasions. He spoke of heaven as a place he longed to be. He spoke of heaven as his next big trip.

Internally, I was somewhat horrified. Yes, I wanted to go to heaven, but to me dying was so frightening, yet he looked forward to it. We talked about this one day, and he told me that he had been fearful of death as well when he was young. But he told me that for a Christian, growing old changes our perspective.

Now that I am older I have begun to understand what he was saying. For me, the idea of dying is like a great new adventure. I understand what Paul was saying when he wrote in Philippians 1:21-24.

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”

My fear of death now is more a concern of leaving those I love behind. Yet we need to remember we were not created for this life; we were created for eternity. As we grow older, more and more of our loved ones have already passed beyond this realm into the eternal realm. Think of the joy we will have being reunited with those that have gone before us.

So many from the East Ridge congregation have passed into eternity this year. They are missed so much. Yet another way of looking at it is that they have graduated from this part of their life and will await us as we graduate to our eternal lives.

I have known some that lost heart and stopped working for the Lord when they lost a loved one. We can't afford to do that. I am reminded what King David said when his infant child died in 2 Samuel 12:21.

Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. 22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? 23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

Those we have loved that have gone to their reward before us cannot return to us, but we can go to them. That is our entire purpose in life. We need to live so we can be with the faithful not only of our age but of all ages. As the song says, "Heaven will surely be worth it all."

Feature Two: *an article by R. C. Oliver from June, 1955*

Light Magazine

SOUND DOCTRINE VS. TRADITION

God Heareth Not Sinners

Tradition says that God will not hear an ALIEN; however, that which is written, "Now we know that Go heareth not SINNERS" (John 9:31), does not say, neither does it necessarily mean, that God will not hear an alien's

prayer.

Whether a man is in the church, or out of the church, if that man has “turned away his ear from hearing the word of the Lord” (Proverbs 28:9), and neither worships God nor does His will, “even his prayer shall be an abomination” before the Lord!

When the man who has been blind uttered the words of John 9:31, he did not have in mind a penitent sinner, for then he would have contradicted Jesus –See Luke 18:13. Neither did he have in mind an honest alien –an honest man out of the church, for then he would have contradicted what Luke later affirmed –Acts 9:11 cf. Acts 10:4. What then, you ask, did he mean? He simply meant that if any man, whether in or out of the church, should turn away his ear from hearing the word of the Lord, God will not hear that man’s prayer.

The very purpose of the healed man’s statement was the overthrow of the Pharisee’s argument that said, “This man is not of God.” Let us therefore that any man who works in opposition to God’s will, a sin of which the Pharisees were accusing Jesus, God will not hear him; but “if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.”

Christ And The Wise Men

It was the shepherds in the nearby fields, and not the wise men from the far away east, who came and found “the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:7-17).

According to Matthew 2:7, compared with 2:16, it is obvious that the wise men, who came from the far away east, did not arrive until Jesus was

almost two years old. They were not the ones who saw him “wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger,” as is affirmed by tradition; for he had long since been removed from the manger. Neither does it say the wise men even went to the stable; rather, it says: “When they were come into the HOUSE.” (Matthew 2:11).

Therefore, let us not make the mistake of following tradition here, as the masses do; rather let’s correct it.

Feature Three: Sandy’s Women’s Corner

A WOMAN OF GREAT WORTH

Last week I lost a dear friend and Christian sister. I lost her to illness, but she is now at peace in a place far better than the place she had here on earth. Although those of us who loved her are sad that she is gone, we all know that she has entered a well-deserved award.

Elaine was her name. Her mission in life seemed to be to be a life-long learner. She could do most anything. She was a nurse, a musician, an artist, a tea connoisseur, a terrific hostess, an airplane pilot. But the most important thing she accomplished was that of being a superb Bible school teacher to our 3rd grade students.

I teach 4th and 5th grades, so I am on the receiving end of “Mrs. Elaine’s” class. When I get her children, I get young minds filled with a love for God and a good, sound knowledge of the first part of the Old Testament.

Elaine and I had a chance to work together on some Bible school projects. She attended one of my Bible Teacher Workshops, and she immediately went home to capture some of my visuals in her own artistic way. Of course, she exceeded her own expectations and created masterpieces for her own classroom.

Two weeks before Elaine became ill, she provided the tea for our annual tea event at our congregation. She insisted on providing her wonderful scones along with clotted cream and lemon curd. She set one of the 20 tables for our event with her lovely china and silver. Everything was done to perfection.

Elaine had no children of her own, but she had many children from her Bible classes. One young man that attended her funeral spoke last year at our Teacher Recognition and Promotion Day about his favorite teacher. He spoke about “Mrs. Elaine” and the special teacher she was to him. She not only taught him in Bible class, but she took him to museums and even to tea at a local tea room. When he graduated from high school, he took her to tea.

Every time I talked to her, I learned something new about her. I am still learning about things she did, places she went, and interests she possessed. What a woman!

But I have learned some things from “Mrs. Elaine” not just things about her. Our minister read Proverbs 31 at her funeral. So many of the things in that passage remind me of Elaine. She was not afraid of work. She was strong and honorable. She was wise, and she was kind to everyone. She certainly feared God.

Elaine’s precious husband, Richard, praised her for the kind, loving wife she was to him. Her friends are devastated by her death, but we praise her as the kind of friend everyone should have. Her co-teacher praises her for her love for the children and for the Bible.

I just feel blessed to have known this woman. She sounds perfect, but she wasn’t. She would have been the first to tell you that. Just as David was called a man after God’s own heart, having disappointed God many times, I think Elaine was a great example of a virtuous woman, and her price far above rubies. Her own works will praise her for years to come.

There is a song on an old cassette tape I play sometimes in the car. The name of the song is, “I Dreamed I Went To Heaven”. The song speaks of someone that died and went to heaven. In heaven, this person met a young man that this person had taught in Bible class. Because of this person’s influence, this young man became a Christian. I think “Mrs. Elaine” will meet many young people who became Christians because of her influence. She has blessed many lives, and she most certainly blessed mine.

Feature Four: Our Communication:

When possible, keep your communication positive. I remember when my daughter was in her early days as a social worker and she related to me the following scene. It was suggested to a parent that was having trouble with her child that she and the child sit down and write the rules on paper, then frame it and put it on the wall. It wasn't long till the child broke one of the rules. The mother asked the child what would be the punishment. The child ran to the wall and read the rule and punishment for breaking the rule. Excitedly, the child ran back to the mother and said, "I get spanked."

Even with the punishment coming, the child was a part of the process. I believe that will work in most of our situations. If we keep things positive when working with others, good will result. Much of Jesus' teachings were positive rather than negative. A good example of positive teachings is the Beatitudes. Later in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told us to seek God's kingdom first, and the good things he mentioned would be added to us.

Feature Five: Bible Question

Is it ever correct to compromise for the sake of unity? This is an important question for our time. There are those that are telling us that we need to compromise our beliefs so we can be unified religiously.

My first question is how far should we take this concept. If it is a good Biblical principal, then should we not at least acknowledge that Joseph Smith (of the Mormon religion) or even Mohammed (of the Muslim religion) as true prophets? I don't know anyone that would want to go that

far. Yet, why not? If we are allowed to give up what we believe the Bible teaches for the sake of unity, that is what we would be doing.

The question many in the brotherhood today are facing is the use of instruments of music in our song service to God. If instrumental music in our worship is wrong, that cannot be compromised any more than giving up our belief in baptism for the remission of sins for the sake of compromise. We know that singing is scripturally approved. There is nothing in God's word that approves of the use of instrumental music in worship. (Ephesians 5:19).

It is true that God loves unity, but only if it is in unity based on what He wants of us. Jesus is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23). There is no one other than He that has the right to establish doctrine.

Humor:

After the church service a little boy told the preacher, "When I grow up, I'm going to give you some money."

"Well, thank you," the preacher replied, "But why?"

"Because my daddy says you're one of the poorest preachers we've ever had."

In Closing:

In March of this year I had a kidney cancer removed. The doctor told me he was able to get all of it, and I did not need any further treatment. It was a rough go for a while, but I have come out of it just fine. Many of you

knew of this and offered many prayers for me, for that I am very appreciative.

Sandy and I will be attending the Christian Training Service at Freed-Hardeman in July. This is a wonderfully refreshing program, and I strongly recommend it to all that can attend. The dates are July 18-20.

Bob Oliver