

Be Willing to Change

By Paul Southern

"God grant that I may always be right," said a Scottish Theologian, "for I never change." One of his Calvinistic brethren declared, "I am always open for conviction, but I'd like to see the color of a man's eyes who could convict me."

Each used different words, but both came out at the same destination. Neither one entertained the idea of change. Both were stub-born, prejudiced, self-satisfied. They had closed their eyes, ears, and heart to the truth, "lest haply they should perceive with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and should turn again and I should heal them" (Mt. 13:15).

The person who is always right and never changes is usually wrong on many things and always wrong in spirit. The Christian's life begins with a fundamental transformation, the new birth, continues with constant change. The born again creature (Jn. 3:5)

feeds on spiritual milk that he may grow thereby unto salvation (1 Peter 2:1-2). God's children are to press on unto perfection, that is, full growth, maturity (Heb. 6:1-2). The person who thinks he has reached the top of Pisgah, beyond which no progress can be made, is "dead while he liveth."

It is necessary to have definite ideals and strong convictions. God hates a wishy-washy, namby-pamby, un-steadfast person (1 Cor. 15:58, Eph. 4:14, 2 Tim. 4:1-8). Truly, "a double minded man is unstable in all of his ways" (Jas. 1:8). But we must make sure that our ideals and convictions coincide with those of heaven. Strong convictions may degenerate into stubborn opinions. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (Jn. 8:32). Our desire should be to know his will and then do it.



1 Timothy 4:12-16 - Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. ¹⁵ Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Sick			
Richard Wood (Melanie Smith's Uncle)	Ray Hambric (Elder at North Gardendale)	Mike Reed (Friend of Long's)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	Bill Rhodes (Toni Herd's Uncle)	Philip Locke (Jeremiah Johnson's Uncle)
Josie Keith (Friend of Heath Fowler)	Grandparents of Mary Ann Roberts	Easton Alexander (Phillip Box's cousin's baby)	Jerry Sandlin (Megan Lee's Grandfather)
Gaylord Huffman (Jennifer Daniel's Grandfather)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Erlene Davis (Walker Davis' mother)	Mary Smith (Nathan Smith's Grandmother)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)	Dale Herd (William Herd's brother)	Larry Alexander (Friend of Phillip Box)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Betty Bradford	Ann Robinson (Sharon Bailey's Mom)	Debra Lowe (Toni Herd's Friend)

December Birthdays

- 1 - Preston Guthrie
- 2 - Brady Peek
- 4 - Justin Padgett
- 5 - Rusty Weldon
- 7 - Tim Morton
- 8 - Macy Johnson
- 10 - Kyle Gibson
- 11 - Will Holcomb
- 12- Hannah Marsh
- 13 - John Henderson
- 18 - Hannah Liu
- 18 - Tim-Yau Tam
- 20 - Joshua Melson
- 21 - Manna Jones
- 21 - Holly Johnson
- 22 - William Herd
- 22 - Laura Abell
- 24 - Jessica Yates
- 24 - Ryan Yates
- 25 - Dustin Marsh
- 29 - Joel Dembowski
- 30 - Holly Law

News and Notes

- Remember Matthew Johnson and Tim Morton in our prayers as they are deployed overseas.
- We extend sympathy to Carla Humphrey's family in the loss of her mother, Fran Snyder, on Monday.
- Betty Bradford has been diagnosed with breast cancer.
- We need those to sign up for the 2012 schedule to prepare the Lord's Supper. (See Bulletin Board)
- Congratulations to Blake Edwards, Clay Jones, Scott Shields, Caralise Hunt, Susan Sullivan and Megan Lee on their graduation! Also we are thankful for Caralise Hunt in receiving her Doctoral degree.

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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Thoughts to Ponder

Only by desertion can we be defeated. With Christ and for Christ victory is certain. We can lose the victory by flight but not by death. Happy are you if you die in battle, for after death you will be crowned.

"A Stone of Witness"

By James W. Adams

After having lead the children of Israel triumphantly into the land of promise and not long before his death, Joshua called all of the tribes to Shechem and delivered a valedictory address. In his eloquent, emotionally charged oration, he traced the history of the nation of Israel from the planting of its first seed by God in His calling of Abraham in Ur of Chaldees, through the bondage of the children of Jacob in Egypt and their marvelous, Divine deliverance and wilderness wanderings under Moses, up to and including their entrance into and possession of the land of Canaan.

The climax of Joshua's address was reached when he issued the following stirring challenge to the newborn nation of God's people: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served which were on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served which were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:14, 15).

In response to this challenge, the children of Israel answered confidently and fervently, "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods, ... we will serve the

Lord" (Joshua 24:16, 21). As a result of this exchange, the record tells us: "Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us; it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God" (Joshua 24:25-27).

An Analogy

Though Joshua was a prophet, hence divinely inspired, there is no evidence to suggest that his "stone of witness" was a thing specifically authorized by God as was the tabernacle, its furniture, and its worship. It was simply a thing which was not antagonistic to and thoroughly consonant with God's revealed will which Joshua used as a reminder to all succeeding generations among the Israelites of a principle of conduct to which they were dedicated by covenant promise; that is, "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice will we obey" (Joshua 24:24).

A recognition of this principle was inseparably linked with a proper relationship on their part to God. Therefore, the "stone of witness" served, throughout the history of its existence, as a mute but

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eloquent and persuasive guide, like the lodestar to an ancient mariner, to hold Israel on course in her turbulent journey from smoking Sinai to Bethlehem's manger, Golgotha's cross, and the glorious consummation of the Abrahamic promise. "In thy seed, shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" (**Gen. 12:3; Acts 4:25; Gal. 3:16-18**).

Heirs of the ideals and accomplishments of "The Restoration Movement" of the nineteenth century (members of professed churches of Christ) are related to a slogan or motto much as ancient Israel was to the "stone of witness" though the author of the slogan was not, as was Joshua, inspired. Reference is made to the slogan, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent; we are silent." (Thomas Campbell in his famous speech at the house of Abraham Altars not long prior to the writing of the "Declaration and Address," *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, Robert Richardson, Vol. 1, pp. 235-239.)

This statement was, and yet continues to be, the watchword of "The Restoration Movement." It expresses at once an ideal and a purpose. It was born in the pious mind of Thomas Campbell whose heart was torn with anguish by reason of the divisions of professed Christians of his time and whose dedicated spirit yearned for the unity of all true believers. Though humanly conceived and expressed, the slogan enunciates a clear and unequivocal principle everywhere taught in the inspired Word of God (**2 Tim. 3:16,17, 1 Pet. 4:11; 1 Cor. 4-6 ASV, Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9,10; Col. 3:17; Acts 3:22, 23**).

The application of this slogan gave rise to a return of millions of believers to the faith and practice of apostolic Christians, "the ancient order of things." It also wielded an almost incalculable, tempering and modifying influence upon the thinking, the faith, and the practice of a great number of the outstanding denominations of so-called "Christendom" who were never a part of "The Restoration Movement." In fact, many times these bodies were inveterate foes. The true scope of the impact of this movement will not be completely known until, in the presence of Him who knows all, human history in time is laid before the redeemed as a finished book in which all things, men and movements, appear in their true perspective.

Our Present Situation

The above statements being true, the slogan, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where

the Scriptures are silent, we are silent," well serves as a sort of "stone of witness" to keep professed New Testament Christians and churches on course as they plow through the turbulent waters and capricious winds of world chaos and religious and moral revolution. It demands: (1) a recognition of the Scriptures as the very word of God, complete, infallible, and immutable, (2) the absolute compliance with that which they enjoy "either in express terms or by approved precedent" (Declaration and Address); (3) unity among professed believers standing squarely and without apology upon the truth thus revealed; (4) responsibility and accountability to God in eternal judgment with reference to the foregoing. (In a later article, I shall deal with current misuse and abuse of Thomas Campbell by false teachers and uninformed, neophyte Zealots relative to the "binding of inferences and deductions from Scripture.")

There are studied efforts being made among professed churches of Christ to undermine faith in the verbal inspiration of Scripture; attacks, often violent in character, upon demands for a "thus saith the Lord" for religious practice as a legalistic shibboleth of sectarian bigotry, and concentrated efforts to disembowel the restoration" slogan by a broadly permissive application of it to a few so-called essentials which are arrived at by subjective and purely arbitrary choice among Divine mandates. Truth is made subservient to unity and unity exalted as an end within itself. The answer to religion, those find division, who are instigators and agitators of these efforts, in a restudy of the plan of God for the redemption of man and a consequent discovery of a neo-Calvinistic concept of salvation by grace through faith. Fellowship and unity are restored on the basis of the fact that all are sinners saved by grace and the teaching, belief, and practice of Scripture cease to be valid considerations in said restoration. As a result, our so-called "stone of witness" (the T. Campbell slogan) becomes to them not a memorial to call us back to God from our faithless wanderings, but a monument to the birth of another human denomination.

Conclusion

In articles to follow, I shall be examining the matters to which reference is made in the paragraph just preceding. For the present, I categorically reject them. In my review of these matters, I plan to be clear, specific, and thorough, yet I shall write in the love of Christ, the love of truth, and the love of man with as much moderation as our present situation will safely permit. I shall not sacrifice either clarity or truth on the altar of a false sense of obligation to men, their feelings, or their reputation among the brethren. - **Truth Magazine 1973**



Assuming the Better

By Robert Turner

Rather, suggest it is very realistic to expect that brethren in Christ really want to do what is right. True, many are cumbered with traditional concepts, and may have a somewhat sectarian view of the church. But this is rarely by choice.

Those who have made a study of such matters tell us that we tend to measure up to what certain "peers" expect of us. If those to whom we look as "leaders" or models indicate their high hopes for us, we strive to meet those goals. If they indicate a lack of trust in us, a feeling that we will fail, we may lose confidence in ourselves -- and fail. I do not believe man is completely "programmed" by his environment, but it takes a lot of "inner strength" -- "built-in" character available to those who look to God for the standard of integrity and righteousness (**Prov. 11:3-6**) -- to buck the predictions of failure, and succeed in spite of the gloomy odds against us. Sinful man must be encouraged to believe that he is made in God's image, and is capable of living "to the glory of God."

The Hebrew writer recognized this principle, for throughout an epistle directed to backsliders, that necessitated many warnings of failure and of its dire results, he repeatedly encouraged. They were "brethren" with Christ, and in Him could be glorified (**2:10-13**). They were "partakers of the heavenly calling" (**3:1**). God's oath and promise offered them "strong consolation" (**6:17-20**). And after a direful warning he reminded them of past successes (**10:31-ff**) and says, "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

The "back-slappers" have stretched this principle to include insincere compliments -- using us (and our pride) to accomplish their ends. They would "palaver" us into doing their bidding or buying their products. By the same reasoning some

would rule out all negative teaching and correction -- including that of the Apostle Paul's, I suppose. Such maneuvering we abhor.

But elders, preachers, and parents (to name a few) may do a gross injustice to those who look to them for guidance, by failing to properly encourage. Must we always assume the very worst? Love "thinketh no evil" (**1 Cor.**

13:5-6), but tends to place the best possible interpretation on matters. It most assuredly "rejoice not in iniquity." (Think that one over!) Lawlessness calls forth sadness, compassion, a desire to help, on the part of those who love.

Some much needed teaching re: the church, creedalism, fellowship, and many other subjects, has been ineffective and is rejected, because the teachers assumed a superior attitude and spoke or wrote as though they did not expect the message to be heeded. We do not advocate a Pollyanna, head-in-the-clouds attitude. Rather, suggest it is very realistic to expect that brethren in Christ really want to do what is right. True, many are cumbered with traditional concepts, and may have a somewhat sectarian view of the church. But this is rarely by choice. They have inherited such error, over a period of years, and the "surgery" must be done with TLC and consideration. It is a fair assumption that genuine saints desire to be rid of all human error.

So, think positively! Warn in hope! Let your speech be seasoned with salt! Fight sin because you love the sinner!

