

LOST: ONE HEAD

By David Deffenbaugh

Sometimes people's irrational or even ludicrous behavior is explained by their having "lost their head." Not that it actually becomes detached from their body, but their actions, at least for a little while, are not governed and directed by sound reason and right thinking. Probably all of us, at one time or another, have lost our heads. Hopefully, when it happens, it's only a temporary condition.

That "every man did what was right in his own eyes" is the famous reason given for the horrible condition of the time of the Judges. Remember, though, this is preceded by the statement that "in those days there was no king in Israel." (Judges 17:6; 21:25.) This phrase is generally understood as an historical reference. That is, it was written of a time chronologically prior to Israel ever having a king. Others have seen this as a statement of spiritual condition. When God's people initially requested a king

which marked the end of the period of the Judges), God said in so doing they were rejecting Him as their king. (1 Samuel 8:7.) Understood in this way, the statement expresses the fact that these people were acting as if they had no head, or king, which was supposed to be God. All of the immorality and bloodshed and oppression and hardship suffered during the time of the Judges was because they had lost their head.

Losing one's head is serious business.

Christ is the Christian's head. That means that Christ gives the directives and guidance for behavior in all of life. Being Christ-like is allowing Him to function as head. Sometimes Christians lose their head. They act in un-Christ-like ways. It is, unquestionably, a serious situation. When Simon of Samaria did so, Peter observed, "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." (Acts 8:23.)

Christ is the head of the church. This is a very plain teaching of basic Bible doctrine, but has proven to be quite challenging to apply practically. Christ can be head only when Christians are willing for Him to so act. Christ is head only when the body functions according to His will. That will is made known in no other place than Scripture. When such little regard is given for biblical authority then Christ is no longer the head. This is true in matters of doctrine, worship, organization and everything else that comprises the life of the church. Being religious, attending worship and participating in good deeds does not constitute being Christ's body. It may be a church, but it's not Christ's church. His church is His body and He is the head of His body.

Losing one's head spiritually is much more than an excuse for poor behavior, it's the recipe for spiritual catastrophe.

Oklahoma City, OK

MID-LIFE CRISIS

by Danny Tunnell

Have you ever had or are you having a "mid-life crisis?" It is a common term that may encompass any struggle of life that occurs between the ages of 31 and 55.

In modern times people no longer commit adultery and break up their marriage; they go through "mid-life crisis." This "crisis" goes on while they ignore passages such as: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14.) Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled (kept pure): but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." (Hebrews 13:4.) Or Jesus' words, "Whoever divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastely, makes her commit adultery: and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." (Matthew 5:32.)

Some in the throes of the "crisis" may protest, "I know what the Bible says that I am supposed to rejoice with

the wife of my youth (Proverbs 5:18-20), but I have changed. I am a different man today than when I married her. I can see why I used to love her. But now I'm attracted to another woman who truly understands me. She just happens to be ten years younger than my wife."

Such people believe their actions are justified and even motivated by "love," however it is more a matter of selfishness and lust. True love is unselfish (1 Corinthians 13:4,5), and husbands are to love their wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." (Ephesians 5:25.)

The Bible doesn't use our current buzzwords and common parlance to describe sin. God's Word tells the thief to "steal no more." Those who are tempted are told to "flee temptation." To "flee fornication." (1 Corinthians 6:8.) To "flee youthful lusts." (2 Timothy 2:22.)

It is sad to see husbands and fathers (or wives and mothers) leave spouse, children, often their faith and church, to follow lustful longings, while they try to disguise their sin by calling it a "mid-life crisis." They say, "I have to do it, after all this is something bigger than I am. I just cannot resist it."

The temptation may be strong for some. But God is faithful, and will never allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear, but with the temptation He will provide the way to escape also, that we may endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13.) Don't listen to the world's psychobabble about having a "mid-life crisis."

Instead, rely on God to help you resist Satan's temptations.

Miami, OK

Old Paths

Vol. 38, No. 13 January, 2014

"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

DID ALEXANDER CAMPBELL START THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

By Mark Lindley

It is not uncommon for someone to affirm that Alexander Campbell started the church of Christ. Recently, a preacher on television taught this and, as a member of the church of Christ, I feel obligated to address the matter.

Alexander Campbell was a prominent man who lived and worked during the days of the Restoration Movement. This was a movement that began in the early part of the 19th century. Campbell, along with Barton Stone and others began working to bring unity to a religious world that was divided. The plea of the movement was to "speak where the Bible speaks, and to be silent where the Bible is silent." Those of the movement believed that religious unity would be possible only by rejecting man-made creeds and returning to the Bible. Because Campbell was a key figure of the movement some believe that he started a church called, "the church of Christ."

The truth is that Campbell never intended to start a church. Rather, it was his intention to return to the pattern of the original New Testament church. He understood that denominationalism is unscriptural and causes division in the religious world. Campbell promoted unity by returning to the Bible as the only proper standard of religious authority.

Members of the church of Christ who are aware of this history appreciate the efforts of men such as Campbell. However, neither Campbell nor any other man started the church of Christ. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the founder of His church. He said, "Upon this rock, I will build my church." (Matthew 16:18.) Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it. (Ephesians 5:25.) Jesus shed His blood to purchase the church. (Acts 20:28.) Jesus is the Head of His church. (Colossians 1:18.) It is clear from all these passages that, in the first century, the Lord Jesus Christ started His church. (Acts 2:1-47.) His church was not and is not a denomination.

In view of these facts, the question we should ask is this: Is it possible to be a member of Jesus' church without joining a denomination? Some who desire membership in Jesus' church are not aware that there is an alternative to denominationalism. The alternative is membership in the church of the New Testament. None of the Protestant denominations of our day are in the Bible, but the church started by Jesus is in the Bible. Early Christians were part of that one body (Ephesians 4:4), and it is still possible to be part of that body today without denominationalism.

The term "church of Christ" is not a proper name; rather, it is a designation which shows ownership. It is the church "of" Christ (belonging to Christ). This is what we mean by "church of Christ." It is not a denomination. Paul wrote: "The churches of Christ salute you." (Romans 16:16.) This was written long before the birth of Alexander Campbell!

Ripley MS

TIME TO GROW UP!

By Bobby Key

Everybody loves a baby. Baby monkeys, baby alligators, baby bull-dogs, and human babies of all colors. With one exception: most of us have lost our fondness for baby adults. When a person grows to maturity by the clock and calendar, yet retains the disposition of babyhood – that is a real problem.

The apostle Paul had something to say about church babies: "I could not address you as spiritual men . . . but as babies in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with solid food, for you were not ready for it." (1 Corinthians 3:1,2.) It seems that church babies have been around for a long time, at least long enough to grow up!

Church babies are always crying for attention. They must be at the center of the stage. No supporting roles for them; they must be the star, or else. If they missed the business meeting when a decision was reached, they grumble, "They did not consult me in the matter." If they were out of town when some even took place, they are hurt because it was not postponed to suit their convenience.

Church babies need a special diet. They should be eating steak, but they must stick to milk, with a dash or two of pabulum. If the preacher doesn't want to hurt the feelings of these tender-skinned folks, he must water the gospel down so as not to upset their spiritual digestive tract.

If the preacher mentions gambling, drinking or lying he had better have reference to a problem somewhere far away. If he talks about stingy people he should mention someone guilty who lives in Kalamazoo.

Church babies keep the preacher and elders awake at night. A couple of quarreling church babies can do more to give church leaders insomnia than three cups of strong coffee at bedtime!

I once heard a preacher say, "Next time I change churches, I think I will preach a farewell sermon on 'Church Babies.'"

(The foregoing has been reprinted – again - in answer to a number of requests. The problem of "church babies" must still be plaguing many congregations! – DK)

BLOOPERS UPON BLOOPERS

By Dalton Key

Gleaned from both personal experience and testimony from others comes this collection of church service "bloopers":

"Let me assure you that we have gathered here for no other purpose than to think on worldly things" . . . "It would simply be impossible for one to attend every service and get anything out of these sermons" . . . "We have two who are sick of this church" . . . "I am sorry that we don't have any sick to announce; however, we are happy to announce that Brother _____ has the flu" . . . "We pray that if there has been any spark of revival lit during this Meeting, the Lord will see fit to water that spark" . . . "We are so thankful that Brother _____ had the audacity to respond to last night's invitation" . . . "As you know we like to have the truth properly confounded here, so we invite you back tomorrow night to hear this brother dispense with the gospel once again" . . . "I have an announcement here about a debate over at - well, I don't remember who is debating or what the subject is - but you will need to go."

And then there was the flustered maker of announcements who brought one service to a close by blurting out, "I do hope that we will never see you again!"

The point? When next you hear an inadvertent blunder from the pulpit or classroom lectern, be patient. Public speaking isn't as easy as it may appear from a distance.

Editorial . . .

ENOUGH OF POLITICS!

by Dalton Key

According to Jesus Christ, political maneuvering, while standard fare for the world at large, has no place within the church. When James and John came to Jesus jockeying for positions of prominence in the kingdom, the response was sure and sharp: "You know that those who are reputed to be rulers among the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be this way among you. Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wants to be first shall become a slave of all. The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42-45, McCord.)



We have witnessed more than our comfortable share of politics of late. Sadly, such has become more or less expected in realms of secular, power-hungry governance. But when political infighting, mudslinging, and grandstanding ooze their way into the Lord's church, something has gone terribly wrong.

It hurts to say this but it is true nonetheless: Should the political veneer be stripped away from many of today's congregations, precious little would be left. Like the proud Laodicians of yesteryear, many modern brethren project self over Christ, and can almost be heard boasting, "(we are) rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." And like their first-century counterparts, today's spiritual spinners fail to recognize reality-that they are actually "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Revelation 3:17,18.)

Christ's kingdom was established as an arena for selfless service and not as a platform for self-interest and self-promotion. For those of us in Christ, greatness is not determined by our associations, our academic accomplishments, or even our varied abilities. True greatness has always been measured by heaven's standard, solely upon the basis of faithful, Christ-like service.

The body of Christ is just that: our Lord's Body. It is - we are - more than another mere political organization!

WHAT KIND OF PREACHER ARE YOU?

By Milton Smith

The question proposed in the title of this article is no aimed primarily at the gospel preacher but at every member! Have you ever considered how many times you "preach" a message? Let me offer a few examples. You preach a message of good cheer every time you speak to a stranger who is attending our services and make that person feel welcome. When you sing praises to God with your voice and honor him with the "fruit of your lips," you are preaching a sermon to all those around you. Like most everybody else, I can hear the voices of those good Christians who sit near me during our song service. They may not know it, but those voices bring encouragement and joy to my heart. When a man offers a public prayer to God, a strong message is being proclaimed through his lips.

I listen attentively to the words of the one leading us in public prayer every time we enter into that special time of praying together.

When you attend Bible class and do nothing more than sit and listen, you are nevertheless preaching a powerful message. I appreciate so much every person who comes to a class and offers their support to the one who has taken the time to prepare a lesson. Such people also show their love and respect for God's Word by their attendance. And, of course, the one presenting the lesson preaches a great "sermon" to those who sit in class and listen. Teachers always have been and always will be an important part of the growth of any congregation. And when you give of your means, your actions "speak" loud

and clear, your message is a message of love for God's Kingdom.

You preach a message of hope every time you reverently partake of the Lord's Supper. You are being watched by other members as well as your children and grandchildren. You demonstrate your faith in the Lord's death and also in His promise to return. (1 Corinthians 11:26.) You preach a message of love every time you smile, say hello, introduce yourself to guests, and invite them to return. Many important messages are preached before and after the preacher stands in the pulpit. When this happens, the preacher's message will be much better received. Preach a good message at the next assembly!

Bixby, OK

NEVER QUIT!

By Cecil Burch

During the last days of the apostle Paul's life he recorded these words: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (2 Timothy 4:7.)Paul never quit!

The story is told that a high school basketball coach, who was trying to motivate his players halfway through a difficult season, stood before his team and said, "'Did Michael Jordan ever quit'? The team yelled, "No!"What about the Wright brothers?Did they ever quit?'"Again, they said, "No!"'"Did Elmer McAllister ever quit?'"There was a long silence and finally one player said, "Who's Elmer McAllister?We never heard of him."The coach snapped back, "Of course you never heard of him - he quit!"

The early Christians "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and the breaking of bread

and in prayers."(Acts 2:42.)Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, "My beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58.)Jesus said to the Jews who believed in Him, "If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31,32.)To the Colossian brethren, Paul said, "He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight - if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard." (Colossians 1:21-23.) Paul told Timothy to "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." (1 Timothy 4:16.)

How tragic when precious souls are lost because they become discouraged and become enchanted with the affairs of this world and quit the church!The apostle Paul sadly said, "Demas has forsaken me having loved this present world." (2 Timothy 4:10.)Demas quit!

Angel Fire, NM

Old Paths
829 S. Rockford Ave. ,
Tulsa, OK. 74120
On a nonprofit basis.
Published monthly and
supported by Churches of
Christ and individuals.
Dalton Key.....Editor
*"Subscription Free;
Prayers Requested;
Contributions Appreciated."*