

TRUE FAITH

By Danny Tunnell

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1.) If we say, “I’ll believe it when I see it,” then that is not really faith.

Jesus always commended those who had faith. He said to the centurion, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” (Matthew 8:10.) To the woman of Canaan He said, “Great is your faith!” (Matthew 15:28.)

Our faith is vitally important to God. Even a little faith goes a long way. Jesus talked about faith the size of a grain of mustard seed enabling His followers to move mountains. (Matthew 17:20.) He again told them, “If you have faith, and do not doubt, you can do what I did to this fig tree, and cast a mountain into the sea.” (Matthew 21:21.) Faith is powerful!

In Bible times, faith was often necessary in receiving miraculous healing. (Mark 5:34; 10:52.)

Do you and I have real, genuine, true faith? We do when we allow the teachings of Christ to dominate our lives. We do when we are willing,

in a good way, to be different from others in a sinful world.

The Christian should never feel completely at home in this world. We won’t really feel at home until we arrive in heaven. Here we are migrants. We have left an earthly kingdom to be part of a heavenly kingdom. (Colossians 1:12-14.)

We have a complete shift of interest. We are now interested in heaven and going there. (2 Corinthians 4:18; 5:1.) We have the Greater One living within us. (1 John 4:4.) We’re more interested in what God is doing that what man is doing. We not only think about time, but also about eternity. Our interest in earthly gain diminishes while our interest in heavenly gain increases. (Matthew 6:19-21.) We realize that we cannot successfully serve two masters.

We develop a new pattern of life. Old things pass away and all things become new. The change is inward, but it soon becomes outward. It changes our whole manner of living.

Our old friends may tease us as we follow Christ, and that may turn

into opposition and persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12.) The once-born have never understood the twice-born. (John 3:1-8.) If we hate our sins enough, we will be opposed by those who still love sin. That may cause many of our old friends to turn away from us. By implication they may feel that we are condemning their way of life.

If we have true faith, every part of our lives will be affected - what we read and watch, the places we go, what we do with our time, and how we spend our money. Things we once valued have lost their attraction. We may even hate some things we once loved. (1 John 2:15-17.)

In view of what we’ve said, is true faith really worth it? Yes! A billion times YES! Why? Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6.) There is nothing in this world worth forfeiting God being pleased with us. If our faith is not genuine, and we are only hearers of the word and not doers of the word, then we’ve deceived ourselves. (James 1:22.)

— Miami, OK

VICTORY!

By Cecil Burch

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world - our faith.” (1 John 5:3-4.)

On May 13, 1940, Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of England, made his first speech to the House of Commons. Faced with the second World War, people were wondering where he stood. He made it clear when he said, “You ask: ‘What is our aim?’ I can answer in one word: ‘Victory!’ Victory at all costs, victory in spite of terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is not survival.”

Every Christian is in a very serious battle with sin and in that battle it must be “victory at all costs!”

Everyone who loses this battle will hear the words, “Depart from Me all you workers of iniquity. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth . . .” (Luke 13:27,28.)

The Apostle Paul said it like this, “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore 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 15:56-58.)

Our young people have difficult choices to make; whether to follow the world with all its glitter and enticing, questionable entertainment with promises of fun and worldly approval, or enter the battle against sin. When Timothy was a young

man the Apostle Paul wrote to him saying, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” (1 Timothy 6:12.)

Jesus told the troubled church at Laodicea, “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (Revelation 3:21.) The Apostle John, writing to a group of persecuted Christians in Asia, comforted them by giving them a message from the Lord saying, “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10.) Our victory comes with a crown given to us by our Lord Himself!

Even more important than victory in World Wars is our victory over sin and the world! Our goal is VICTORY IN JESUS!

— Amarillo, TX

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

A MAN WHO LIVED TOO LONG

By Danny Boggs

The true story is told three times in Scripture - in 2 Kings 20, 2 Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 38 and 39. He did not outlive his health. He did not outlive his mind. But Hezekiah may have outlived his love for God.

King Hezekiah brought sorely needed religious reform and restoration to Judah. When he fell sick, God’s prophet Isaiah told him that his time was up. He was only 39 years old! “Thus say the Lord, ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die; and not soon recover.’” Hezekiah was as rattled as you and I would be by such news. He wept bitterly, and he prayed fervently. Graciously, God sent Isaiah back with a promise of fifteen more years as a result of Hezekiah’s prayer.

In his prayer, the king asked God to remember how he had walked before Him in faithfulness and with a whole heart and how he had done what was good in God’s sight. He vowed to walk in humility all of his days if he was allowed to recover.

God answered Hezekiah’s prayer, but Hezekiah did not keep his promise. In foolish pride, he showed off his wealth to foreigners who would come back as greedy enemies. Three years after his desperate prayer, Hezekiah’s first son was born to him. What joy! But that son, Manasseh, would become king at age 12, reign for 55 years, and lead the people “astray to do more evil than the nations had done whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel.” And to think he never would even have been born if Hezekiah had died at 39. Isaiah came back to warn Hezekiah about how bad things would turn out in his family and his country after he died. The only bottom line that Hezekiah cared to see was that “there will be peace and security in my days.”

I don’t know what the original illness was that threatened his life, but by now Hezekiah had a serous heart condition. I hope that he did not die with it, but it seems like Hezekiah lived too long.

What would you do if death was knocking hard on the door? If you prayed, and God responded with assurance of a specific bonus span of time to your life, what would you do with that extra time? Would you spend it selfishly or give it back to God in faithful and grateful service?

Here’s the real question: what are you doing with the life God has given you today?

Think about the rest of your life this way: “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’ - yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” (James 4:13-17.)

Pray like Bernard of Clairvaux did: “O make me thine forever, and should I fainting be, Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to Thee.”

— Neosho, MO

THINKING OUT LOUD

By Bobby Key

As a boy, I remember a preacher coming to the little congregation where we worshipped. He lectured us for over an hour on the sins of standing while we prayed and using literature in Bible classes. After he had finished his talk, and invitation was given, and while still standing, he asked one of the deacons to lead us in a dismissal prayer. When the prayer was finished, he said, “I have some papers to hand out that will show the truth of what I have just preached.”

For the first time in my young life, I clearly saw inconsistency. The brother may have meant well, but his logic was faulty.

The more a person knows about the laws of correct reasoning, the easier it is to avoid such obvious fallacies. It is inconsistent to oppose one wrong thing and practice something similar.

“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.” (Romans 2:1.)

An elder said, “Our minister has resigned, and our pulpit is vacant.”

In thinking about the statement, I can’t help but wonder whether several of our pulpits are vacant even though there is a full-time preacher involved!

Gospel preaching has fallen on hard times. In too many congregations these days, the saints listen for half an hour to a display of nothing more than babbling nothingness. If the truth were told as members filed out of the building, they would have to admit, “The pulpit was vacant today!”

Paul admonished young Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2.)

Never before in our lifetime have we heard so many church members complain that their preacher is failing to exalt the gospel of Christ. Worldly knowledge will never be enough.

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32.) The truth must be preached; otherwise, the pulpit is vacant.

— Miami, OK

AMERICANS LOVE TITLES

By Joe Dale Wilson

Will Rogers once said, "Americans love parades." He explained that Americans had parades for everything and enjoyed them all. If he were living today, he would almost certainly say, "Americans love titles." Every email or every letter that is received today has the title of the one that wrote the message. It might read, "Executive Secretary of the Honorable Tenth Vice President of the Waggoner Bank of Trust of Wilbarger County."

Even Christians have gotten carried away with titles. From a church bulletin: "_____ (a Christian college) most prestigious teachers" and it went on to list three men with doctorate degrees that were going to be speaking to the congregation. As far as we know, Paul was the only apostle with a formal education, and none of the apostles would be called "the most prestigious teachers" today because none of them had a doctorate degree.

Americans and many Christians love titles.

Jesus said, "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi,' for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ." (Matthew 23:8-10.) He was talking about titles that elevate one Christian over another. He went on to point out the greatest as the servant. Hugo McCord would not allow anyone to call him, "Dr. McCord." He was a servant! Jesus said two verses later in the text, "And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:12.)

Some Christians want to be an elder or deacon in the church for reasons of notoriety. The words elder, bishop, pastor, and deacon are not titles but are descriptions of these workers in the Kingdom. They are good works that must be done and not titles meant to elevate. Denominational preachers have often sought out flowery titles and even insisted they be called "Reverend," a word used only once in Scripture and then applied only to God, not man. (Psalm 111:9, KJV.)

Christians must be humble servants and give God the glory, not men.

— Vernon, TX

Editorial . . .

"ONE LESS THAN YOU THINK!"

By Dalton Key

Cicero, once billed as "the greatest Roman orator," was a man of tremendous talent and enormous ego. It was reported that often, after one of his speeches, Cicero's hearers would cry out, "Behold, how well did Cicero speak!" It didn't take long for the applause and plaudits to swell the speaker's head.

The orator's massive ego was put on full display when he once remarked: "When I write on philosophical subjects and lay my writings aside and later have occasion to return to them, I can scarcely believe that Cicero wrote them, they sound so philosophical!"

Cicero's mistake was one of pride. He came to believe too much in himself and in all the lavish praise which was heaped upon him.

Herod Agrippa had much the same problem. Luke records the king's sad story: "So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, 'The voice of a god and not of a man.' Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died." (Acts 12:21-23.)

Cicero and Herod, falling for the flattery which swept over them, both succumbed to that "proud look" which heads the list of those things hated by the Lord. (Proverbs 6:16-19.)

When Scripture admonishes that we "be clothed with humility," it further reminds us that "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5.)

Those of us who teach and preach are especially - and continually - in need of such reminders. While many young preachers have been discouraged and decimated by unwarranted criticism, many others have been spoiled and ruined by well-meaning, but overblown, praise.

While we should not believe all the *bad* that may be said about us, neither should we foolishly accept as fact all the *good*! Every sermon is not a home run; we are not involved in preaching competitions; none of us are "superstars" within the brotherhood.

The story is told of one preacher who, after what he considered one of his more stellar sermons, asked his wife, "How many truly great preachers do you think there are in the brotherhood?" Her reply? "One less than you think!"

Paul's attitude deserves imitation: "Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others . . . But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (1 Thessalonians 2:6; Galatians 6:14.) In keeping with our prayers of yesteryear, may we "hide behind the cross" as we preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.



PATIENCE IN PREACHING

By Joshua Ortiz

Be patient when someone preaches to you. Have you ever heard the saying, "Don't kill the messenger?" Well, that's true when it comes to the preacher. As long as the preacher is using Scripture and using it correctly, then the message originated from God. (2 Timothy 3:16-17.) If you're upset with the message, then you're upset with God. Patience is needed in listening. Consider the reaction of the Bereans when they heard Paul preach. Acts 17:11 says, ". . . they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." When they found Paul's words to be true, they followed Christ. (Acts 17:12.) Most of them listened to the whole message without quickly and impatiently rejecting it. Rather, they took time every day to test Paul's preaching. And it helped them turn their lives to Christ. Sometimes the truth is meant to hurt

in order to build up. Paul said, "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." (2 Corinthians 7:10.) A true friend will always tell you the truth to help you stay on the right path. (Proverbs 27:17.)

Be patient when you preach to someone else. Paul told the young evangelist Timothy, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." (2 Timothy 4:2.) Timothy, the preacher, needed patience. Notice that having patience doesn't mean we don't preach; rather, our preaching needs to be done with patience. And it's not just the pulpit preacher's job to preach with patience. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Paul told the Christians, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted,

uphold the weak, be patient with all." We shouldn't be verbally attacking other people. Study how Jesus taught. He did good deeds for people along with preaching to them. (Acts 10:38.) Also, don't get impatient or frustrated when someone isn't converted right away. When you go out and evangelize, you are planting the seed in people's minds. (Luke 8:11.) When someone plants an apple seed, does he instantly get an apple tree? No, it takes time for that seed to sprout. It may be years before someone is converted. When a person is converted, he still needs to be taught with patience. All Christians are always to be growing in knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, we all need to have patience with each other, especially new converts.

Remember God has shown His patience with you.

— Miami, OK

AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST

By Milton Smith

In this world, nothing could be farther removed than the "east is from the west." And as the poet has written, "never the twain shall meet." This is how far God has removed a person's sins from him the moment he stands pardoned through Christ's blood. Other passages in the Bible declare that our sins are cast behind God's back, cast into the depths of the sea, and remembered no more. In other words, they are gone!

Charles Spurgeon once wrote: "Our sins are removed from us by a miracle of love. What a load to move, yet it is removed so far that the distance cannot be measured." A person could never lift the burden of sin from off his back by his own power and volition. Only God can perform this task. Yet each person's sins are his own doing. It has been said that one's sins are the only thing that are truly his own. If man could remove his own guilt of

sin, the death of Jesus would have been the most futile and useless act in history (not to mention a waste of time). As the prophet Isaiah looked to the coming of mankind's Redeemer, he wrote, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him . . . and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:5,6.)

Paul wrote in Romans 5:8, "But God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The prophet Isaiah knew this, and though he lived many years before Christ's flesh, his inspired pen anticipated Jesus's saving work as though it had already been accomplished. In the same manner, the psalmist wrote, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12.)

Through the Lord's death, He

satisfied all the demands involved with perfect forgiveness. To sinners everywhere, Jesus says, "Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28.) The removal of the guilt of sin is the most beautiful and peaceful rest a human being can experience in this life.

— Tulsa, OK

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