

THE VALUE OF KEEPING QUIET

By Joe Dale Wilson

Recently in “The Furrow” published by the John Deere Company, there was a joke about a young college student and a farmer. The agriculture student: “That wheat field looks like it’s in trouble. I’d be surprised if you get five bushels an acre on it.” The farmer: “I’d be surprised too. That’s my corn field.” The farmer knew that what he planted he would harvest. (Galatians 6:7-8.) It was something that God set in order when he created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:11-12.)

The college student was totally without knowledge of what was planted but he wanted to talk to make himself look smart. James said, “But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” (James 1:19.) Solomon added, “He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace: when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.” (Proverbs 17:27-28.) He also said, “He who restrains his lips is wise.” (Proverbs 10:19b.) Many people want to be thought of as wise or intelligent but speak about things of

which they have no knowledge, thus revealing their ignorance. While the little joke is funny, the actual result of such speech is not funny at all.

It is common today to see someone act like they have superior knowledge. This gives the person recognition. It can also cause a person to have a super ego. Such a person is destined to fall on their face. Around 1966 my Dad had read about an accumulator for stacking alfalfa bales of hay. He needed one as his two stackers were leaving the nest. He asked a Vernon, Texas dealer to handle the new device. When it arrived on the farm, it came with great accolades about how it could handle any hay. It did not work on 80 pound bales of hay. Three engineers flew in to see why it would not work. They found that it had been assembled correctly and attached to the baler and tractor correctly but would not work. They said that it should be working and praised their work in the shop. They investigated the accumulator for two days and finally came up with the idea that they needed to install a larger pump. The accumulator did not live up to its original hype. All the advertising

and praise in the farm magazines were not true until a major change was made. They had advertised their product heavily but did not have the actual knowledge of its ability to work in Texas.

This is too common a mistake in our world today. People often gossip about others without knowledge. People often brag about how much they can do without ever really having accomplished such success. Once I listened to a football and track star brag about how fast he was while a few of us were waiting on the hay to case up for baling. A forty-year-old trucker listened to that for awhile and said, “I’ll race you here in the hay field and see how fast you are.” They walked a distance into the dark and asked me to tell them when to go. The trucker beat the eighteen-year-old badly.

Dad had a rule for us growing up: “It is better to be silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.”

— Vernon, TX

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

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

Old Paths

Vol. 43, No. 6 June 2019

“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

By Milton Smith

In Acts 20:28, Paul told the elders of Ephesus, “Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.” In this passage, Paul is affirming the fact that those who have undergone the new birth belong to Jesus Christ in a very special way. When Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world, He literally “purchased” the church with his blood. It thus became his own personal possession. This truth is even made clearer when we consider the fact that the church is described collectively in the New Testament as the spiritual body of Jesus. In a more personal way, Paul wrote that each individual Christian is “bought with a price” and that we should, therefore, “glorify God” by the manner in which we live. (1 Corinthians 6:20.) The phrase “purchased possession” is used in Ephesians 1:14 in reference to each and every child of God.

Jesus feels so close to those of His church that the Holy Spirit refers to individual members as being Jesus’ brothers and sisters. (Hebrews 2:11; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 7:15.) This is an obvious reference to our subsequent adoption into His spiritual body following the new birth. (Romans 8:15.) Nearly 2000 years ago - after offering a prayer for His chosen apostles - Jesus added these words, “I do not pray for these alone, but for those also who shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.” (John 17:20-21.) While Jesus was on earth, He prayed for each and every soul who would make the personal choice to become a member of His family.

There exists no greater blessing than to belong to the family of God and have Jesus as our spiritual brother. In a special way, He is lovingly there for us when we go to the Father in prayer. (Hebrews 4:15-16.) Never forget that if you are a faithful child of God, Jesus views you as His personal possession. You belong to Him in a unique relationship that the world neither comprehends nor possesses. Because of this, He has a genuine concern for you on a daily basis. As a member of His fold, your loving Shepherd will never forsake you. (John 10:27-28.)

A simple word of advice: never allow the deceitfulness of this world to rob you of these unparalleled blessings that reach from here to eternity!

— Tulsa, OK

SCAMS

By Richard Dent

Have you ever been tricked out of money that you would have liked to have used in a more beneficial way? People who do these things are crooks and are not ashamed to steal your material things. We know that in the Old Testament one of the ten commandments was “Thou shall not steal.” (Exodus 20:15.) In the New Testament, Paul told the Ephesian brethren, “Let him who stole steal no more.” (Ephesians 4:28.)

Money may not be the only thing that people are scammed out of. Consider the story of Jacob and Esau. Rebekah favored her son Jacob more than Esau. Rebekah told Jacob just what he needed to do to confuse his father, Isaac. Jacob dressed himself up and brought an offering of food to his father who was blind in his old age. Jacob pretended to be Esau and, what do we know . . . it worked. When the real Esau came to his father with an offering of food, sorrow befell them both. In Genesis 25, we find that Jacob took advantage of his famished brother and got him to sell his birthright to him. Then in chapter 27 we find that Rebekah and Jacob scammed Esau and Isaac again by getting the blessing which should have gone to Esau, as the oldest brother. (Genesis 27:30-40.) Of course we know that things didn’t work out too well for Rebekah and Jacob as he had to flee from the anger of his brother, Esau. Remember that scammer is another word for trickster.

But who is the biggest scammer of all? Why I believe it just has to be old Satan himself. Yes, Satan does not just want your money . . . he wants your soul! Again Paul told the Ephesians, “Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (Ephesians 6:11.) Paul also told the Corinthians that Satan could transform himself into an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14.)

Don’t let Satan scam you out of your soul. “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26.)

— Liberal, KS

“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” (1 Peter 5:8-10.)

FROM THE HEART

By Dalton Key

God seeks rule over more than just the body of man; He desires the heart as well.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:1,2.) We offer to God our bodies as living sacrifices, conjoined with, or perhaps more accurately, resulting from the renewing of our minds.

This inward affection for God is referred to by Christ as "the first and greatest commandment." (Matthew 22:38.)

Heaven's message has always taken aim at the heart and soul of man. Peter's inspired message on Pentecost "cut to the heart" of those who heard it. (Acts 2:37.) The word of God, "sharper than any two-edged sword," pierces "even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12.) "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." (Psalm 19:7.)

Without a sincere change of heart, outward expressions of obedience are both hollow and impotent. We are "set free from sin" and become "servants of righteousness" only after obeying God's teaching "from the heart." (Romans 6:17,18.)

The new birth results in a new life, but the new birth concerns the spirit, the inner man. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6.) We "have purified our souls in obeying the truth." (1 Peter 1:22.)

Conversion, to be genuine, must include the whole man. While our behavior must manifest fruits of repentance, while we must live right and do right, we must first freely offer to the Lord our hearts and souls and minds. Jesus combined these kindred elements in teaching, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15.)

Ours is more than merely a regimented religion of doing; it is one of being and becoming. "These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone." (Matthew 23:23.)

The only way God has ever made a Christian? From the inside out.

EDITORIAL . . .

WHAT SAVES?

By Dalton Key

Imagine, for a moment, a man struggling to stay afloat as he is seen flailing against the strong under-currents of a roiling river. He desperately needs help. As he fights for his life, another man appears on the river's bank holding a life preserver connected to an ample length of rope. The man on the bank throws out the life preserver and shouts instructions about taking hold of the rope and hanging on. The man in the water does just that. He makes use of the preserver and is pulled safely to shore. He has been saved from a drowning death.

Now consider this question: what saved the man from drowning? Could you say he was saved by any one thing alone? In a sense, he was saved by the kindness of the man on the river bank. Yet had this man not demonstrated his kindness the victim would still have been lost. Did the instructions given save him? Yes, to the extent they were followed. What about the life preserver and the rope? Did they save the man? Yes, but not alone. And the drowning man must have required some measure of faith in the reliability of his savior or he we wouldn't have followed the man's instructions. He was thus saved by faith. The man on the bank pulled him in, so the act of pulling saved him. Further, it could be said that the man saved himself in that he did what he was told to do. In short, the drowning man's salvation was the result of a combination of many things, none of which ALONE saved him.

Man is lost and drowning, as it were, in a sea of sin. God, in His grace, has provided His own Son, that through Jesus we might be saved. Yet we must follow certain God-given instructions. Our salvation from sin, like the physical salvation of the man mentioned above, is the result of a great many things, none of which will save us ALONE and apart from the others.

Scripture attributes our salvation from sin to grace (Ephesians 2:5), mercy (Titus 3:5), Love (John 3:16), Jesus (Acts 4:12), blood (Revelation 1:5), the death of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3), the Holy Spirit (John 3:5), the Bible (James 1:21), preaching (1 Corinthians 1:21), our selves (Acts 2:40), faith (Romans 5:1), repentance (Acts 2:38), Confession (Romans 10:9,10), and baptism (1 Peter 3:21.) Does the Bible contradict itself in assigning too many different prerequisites to our salvation? No. Salvation is the result of the combination of all these spiritual ingredients working together on our behalf. To attribute salvation to one of these, and one ONLY, excluding the others, would not get the job done. Such is a violation of common sense as well as biblical interpretation.

May we ever believe, obey and preach "the whole council of God." (Acts 20:27.)



REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING

By Danny Tunnell

There are certain things we need to remember. We need to remember our Creator in the days of our youth. (Ecclesiastes 12:1.) "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we remember the name of the Lord our God." (Psalm 20:7.)

We are not only to remember the Lord, but also His works or deeds. (Psalm 77:11-12.) Those in Old Testament times were told to beware, lest they forgot the Lord who brought them from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (Deuteronomy 6:12.) "Remember His marvelous works that He has done." (Psalm 105:5.)

We need to remember the words of God and teach them diligently to our children. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7.) "I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word." (Psalm 119:15-16.) "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105.)

Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife." (Luke 17:32.) She looked longingly back toward Sodom and was turned into a pillar of salt. We need to remind ourselves of the consequences of sin.

We need to keep the gospel foremost in our memory. Paul declared the gospel, the means by which people are saved. He wanted his brethren to keep in memory what he had preached; how that Christ died for our sins, and that He was buried, and that He arose on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4, AV.)

We remember the Lord especially as we partake of the Lord's Supper. "The Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25.)

Paul remembered the things of the Lord, but there were other things about himself that he chose to forget. "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal

for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14.)

When Paul said this, he had to forget that he had established the greatest congregations that had ever existed. He had to forget that he had preached to more people and was responsible for more conversions to Christ than anyone else at the time. But he also had to forget that before his conversion, he stood while Stephen was stoned to death. He had to forget about being shipwrecked and beaten. He had to forget about being stoned and left for dead on the side of the road. Paul said (in so many words), "This one thing I do, forgetting everything that's in the past, the good and the bad, and I press toward the prize for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Like Paul, we must choose not to remember some things, especially things that are under the blood of Jesus because they really don't exist anymore.

We all have things to remember, and we all have things to forget. God will help us to distinguish between those things He wants us to remember, and those things we really need to just forget.

— Miami, OK

What Do You Enjoy?

By Joe Slater

"This is so much fun it must be sinful!"

Why do we even say things like that? I know, we're usually not totally serious when we say it; but somewhere along the line we've been led to believe that we ought to avoid enjoying anything.

Humans tend to be extremists. On one extreme, hedonists say pleasure is the ultimate good. This ancient philosophy was resurrected in the 1960s and remains popular today: "If it feels good, do it!" Paul warned Timothy of perilous times ahead in which people would be "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." (2 Timothy 3:4.) The Hebrews writer lauded the example of Moses, who chose "to suffer affliction with the people of God" rather than "enjoy the passing pleasures of sin." (11:25.)

Yes, sin may be enjoyable—but that doesn't mean everything enjoyable is sin! Snow is white, but not everything white is snow. Pleasure must never

become our god; but treating all enjoyment as sin is just as extreme as hedonism! Paul told Timothy that God "gives us all things richly to enjoy." (1 Timothy 6:17.) Does that sound like He is offended when we eat good-tasting food or wear warm clothing in the winter? Countless marriages have been devastated by the false notion that marital intimacy is, at best, a "necessary evil" to be tolerated but never enjoyed.

Some people think spirituality comes from eating tiny portions of tasteless food, wearing rags, sleeping on hard ground, going without bathing, etc. Paul wrote, "These things have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." (Colossians 2:23.)

Don't be an extremist! Enjoy life, but don't let pleasure become your god.

"Do not be deceived, my beloved

brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." (James 1:16,17.)

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."