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Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM

GEOFF LITKE

The almighty God created a beautiful world full of all the blessings man needed to not only live, but joyfully thrive (*King James Version*, Gen. 1:31). Soon thereafter, man sinned, bringing a curse on creation so that the world, rather than being in compliance to man, worked against man (Gen. 3:17; Heb. 2:8). The Lordship of Jesus Christ brought resolution to the hardship of this curse (Heb. 2:9). Even in the shadow of the curse, this world offers countless joys; some legitimate and some illegitimate.

The wise man, Solomon, set his heart to find true and abiding happiness. He experienced many things, recognizing them as joyful, yet found that each joy was fleeting and ultimately frustrating. He said:

And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun (Ecc. 2:10-11).

The frustrations of this world ought to cause honest souls to search for the peace, comfort, and joy only offered by Christ (Heb. 2:9). Too many Hebrews of the Old Testament gave in to unbelief by seeking peace, comfort, and joy in the moment, without patience, and consequently they failed to inherit the blessings God promised (Heb. 3:11).

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews recalled the previous generation’s rebellion as an admonition to the readers saying,

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come

short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb. 4:1-2).

The chapter continues to elaborate on the rest (sabbath) God offers as it relates to those in Christ, pointing out that God worked for six days and rested from all His labors on the seventh (Heb. 4:4). Hereby the writer defines the nature of the rest God promises. It will not be a temporary rest as simply taking off on Saturday; likewise it will not be a temporary rest fulfilled in the entrance to the physical promised land.

Supporting this argument, the Hebrews writer alludes to the ninety-fifth Psalm where David exhorted his own people (in Canaan) to enter into the rest, thus prophetically pointing to the final rest (Heb. 4:5, 8). The nature of the rest would be final and eternal, as the writer goes on to say:

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Heb. 4:9-11).

Christians should not expect rest and present peace on earth, but should labor to enter into the final rest where they shall experience the fullness of joy in Christ. Those who remain faithful may enter this rest with patience, not demanding the joy in the here-and-now, but through labor; **“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:12).**

Having contrasted the joy and comfort of the here-and-now with the joy and comfort of the then-and-there, the

(Continued on Page 4)

IN THIS ISSUE.....

THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM—GEOFF LITKE.....	1
EDITORIAL—DAVID P. BROWN.....	2
43RD ANNUAL BELLVIEW LECTURES.....	3

THE TIME HAS COME—AGAIN—JERRY C. BREWER.....	9
THE POWER OF ONE—FLAVIL NICHOLS.....	10
CHURCH DIRECTORY.....	12

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CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH is published bimonthly. P. O. Box 2357, Spring, Texas 77383-2357 Telephone: (281) 350-5516.

Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917-October 10, 2001

Editorial...

“WHOSOEVER LOVETH AND MAKETH A LIE”

(Rev. 22:15)

If I tell a lie thinking it to be the truth, the person believing it and me are deceived. Our thinking it was the truth did not change it into the truth. There are those who lie, intending it to deceive others who believe it to be the truth. In either of the previous cases, a lie was told and accepted as the truth. Of course, telling or accepting a lie, although thinking it to be the truth, does not absolve people from their errors. However, it does mean that they did not intentionally tell or believe a lie. That says much about the honesty of such people. For, having told or believed a lie, honest people, having learned better, will correct their mistakes. But, there are dishonest people who tell lies, knowing they are lies, with the full intention of deceiving others. These people are liars (1 Tim. 4:2; Rev. 21:27; 22:15).

Abraham did not lie about Sarah when twice he said she was his sister (Gen. 12; 20). However, in both cases Abraham did not tell the WHOLE truth about Sarah's relationship to him. Thus, by Abraham's failure to tell the whole truth to Pharaoh and Abimelech about Sarah's relationship to him, if God's had not directly intervened, both men would have committed adultery with Sarah. Today, in criminal cases, withholding necessary information (evidence) in a criminal case is illegal. In Abraham's case, withholding some of the truth led to the deception of each of the forenamed men as if Abraham had explicitly (in just so many words) lied to them.

In given circumstances and situations, with all other things being scripturally equal, it is not necessarily one's responsibility for what some people do with their thoughts about what they observe one doing or not doing in one's daily conduct. This is the reason the Bible warns us against engaging in “evil surmisings”—drawing conclusions not warranted by the evidence (1 Tim. 6:4). For example, without going into detail, remember that Israel was repulsed when they attacked the small city of Ai because of Achan's undiscovered sin committed during the fall of Jericho. Once the sin of Achan had been rectified, God directed Joshua to take the city of Ai in a planned ambush of the town's defenders (Joshua 8:2). Joshua 8:4-22 reveals exactly what happened in their second attack on Ai, resulting in the city's defeat.

Joshua was not obligated to tell Ai his plan of attack, but the town was obliged to be cautious. Ai made no provisions to protect against other contingencies Joshua might employ in his attack. It was Ai's own lack of walking circumspectly that defeated them. It is not the obligation of a quarterback in a football game to tell the opposition that in the next play he is going to fake a pass, then run the ball. As did the quarterback, so Joshua acted in taking the city of Ai, and he did it without lying.

—David P. Brown, Editor

43rd Annual Bellview Lectures

The Church

June 8 – 12, 2018

Friday, June 8

7:00 pm *The Church in the Eternal Purpose of God*—**Jerry Brewer**

8:00 pm *The Church Identified*—**Philip Smith**

Saturday, June 9

9:00 am *The Church Established*—**Doug Post**

10:00 am *The Church as Seen by the Prophets (1)*—**M. Hatcher**

11:00 am *The Church and Its Preaching*—**Bruce Stulting**

Lunch Break

1:00 pm *Preparatory Work by John and Jesus*—**H. Davidson**

2:00 pm *Resolving Conflicts in the Church*—**Gene Hill**

3:00 pm *Benard Kagaga's work*

Dinner Break

7:00 pm *The Church and Denominationalism*—**Wayne Blake**

8:00 pm *Christ and the Church*—**Danny Douglas**

Sunday, June 10

9:00 am *The Church and Its Worship*—**Doug Post**

10:00 am *The Church and Its Salvation*—**Ron Cosby**

Lunch and Dinner Break

1:00 pm *Three Divine Institutions*—**Danny Douglas**

2:00 pm *The All-Sufficiency of the Church*—**Philip Smith**

Monday, June 11

9:00 am *What's Right with the Church*—**Benard Kagaga**

10:00 am *The Church as Seen by the Prophets (2)*—**Michael Hatcher**

11:00 am *Organization in the Church*—**Jerry Brewer**

Lunch Break

1:00 pm *The Church Indestructible*—**Ron Cosby**

2:00 pm *The Fellowship of the Church*—**Bruce Stulting**

3:00 pm *Open Forum*

Dinner Break

7:00 pm *The Mission of the Church*—**Lee Moses**

8:00 pm *The Church Its Eternal Destiny*—**Harrell Davidson**

Tuesday, June 12

9:00 am *The Church and Morals*—**Wayne Blake**

10:00 am *The Church as Seen by the Prophets (3)*—**Michael Hatcher**

11:00 am *The Church Walking Before God*—**Gene Hill**

Lunch Break

1:00 pm *The Church and Self-Discipline*—**Jerry Brewer**

2:00 pm *The Church and Liberalism*—**Lee Moses**

3:00 pm *Open Forum*

Dinner Break

7:00 pm *Are We Going to Take the Backbone Out of the Church?*—

Bruce Stulting

8:00 pm *The Militant Church*—**Danny Douglas**

Open Forum Questions

If you have a question send it to: mhatcher@gmail.com

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Books

The lectureship book, *The Church*, may be purchased for \$5.00 (plus \$3.75 per book for postage). The book will contain 27 chapters and will be a *spiral-bound* book. The books will not be mailed until after the lectures.

Contending for the Faith—May/2018

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Meals

The ladies of the Bellview Church of Christ will provide a free lunch on Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday. For all other meals, a list of restaurants will be available at the registration tables.

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(Continued From Page 1)

Hebrews writer introduces the core argument against giving up in chapters six through ten. Those who have believed should not turn away from Christ and back to Judaism because of the greater blessings in Christ compared with the old covenant. After setting forth the superiority of Christ's priesthood, sacrifices, sanctuary, and covenant in general, the Book of Hebrews picks up the thought left off in chapter four with these words:

For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul (Heb. 10:34-39).

This brief reference to the previous material introduces the final plea for continuing in the faith through, the examples in chapter eleven, then the exhortation in chapter twelve.

Bible students young and old, beginners and experienced, all love the great "hall of fame" of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven. In this chapter, the Hebrews writer recalls individuals from the Old Testament showing how they conquered their particular struggles by faith. All of the faithful people in chapter eleven testify to the power of faith, encouraging the readers to endure to the end and receive their reward.

The Hebrews writer states:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds (Heb. 12:1-3).

In these verses, Christians are called to run the race set before them. In order to run that race successfully they must shed anything and everything that would hold them back, whether legitimate or illegitimate. They would also need patience not to substitute the eternal glory for present comfort. Also, their success depends directly on their constant consideration of Jesus' example, who did not trade his suffering for immediate and temporary joy.

THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM

The Hebrews writer engages in significant wordplay

throughout the book and extensively in the present section. Christians have a choice set before them, namely the "**race set before us**" (Heb. 12:1). Christ similarly had a choice set before Him, namely "**the joy set before him**" (Heb. 12:2). The author intended to demonstrate the correspondence between these two phrases. Christ made the proper choice and is the example for the reader to follow, correctly choosing to run the race rather than giving in for temporary joy and comfort. With these thoughts, the writer of Hebrews invites the reader to consider a different perspective on the hardships of a Christian life.

Suffering does not constitute evidence of the unfaithfulness of God or the failure of the Christian system, as some may suppose. Not only were the hardships normal, they could even be considered a reason to be thankful. If they regarded the difficulties as chastisement, then they could endure them as confirmation of the Father's love, the pathway to wisdom, and even a way to find happiness. The Proverbs writer said,

My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding (Pro. 3:11-13).

The "**race set before us**" is a present reality or a set of circumstances immediately before them. The joy set before Christ was His present circumstances at the point in time He chose the cross. In regard to this understanding, William Lane, author of *Word Biblical Commentary* on Hebrews states, "In both phrases προκειμενος (prokeimenēs) relates not to something future but to a present possibility (as in 6:18): the joy was within Jesus' grasp" (Lane, 413).

The key to understanding the joy set before Christ depends on the understanding of the word "**for**" in the context of verse two. Thankfully, the context serves up a simple statement to clarify the meaning of the word. The alternative to faithfully running with endurance is failing the grace of God (Heb. 12:15). Failing the grace of God would not identify one with Christ, nor with the faithful witnesses of chapter eleven, but with the likes of men such as Esau, of whom the writer states:

Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears (Heb. 12:16, 17).

The word translated "**for**" in the phrase "**for one morsel of meat**" is in fact the same word used in chapter twelve, relating to Christ's decision and the "**joy set before Him**" (Heb. 12:2). The historical basis for the Esau reference makes the meaning of the word "**for**" in verse sixteen quite

clear. Here it means “in exchange for,” drawing from its root sense of opposite. Topics previously discussed include choosing incorrectly in chapters three and four, the repeated admonition in chapter ten, and the exemplary individuals choosing hardship over personal pleasure or immediate gain in chapter eleven. After a review of the context, the meaning becomes quite clear; the Lord exchanged His own joy for suffering. Rather than taking immediate comforts or pleasures, He chose the race set before Him over the joy set before Him.

The English preposition “for” carries an ambiguity not seen in most of the Greek prepositions commonly translated “for.” In the texts at hand, the writer used the word ‘ἀντι’ (anti). Greek Scholar, Nigel Turner who continued the work of James Moulton’s grammar wrote a supplemental work titled *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* in which he argued the following concerning the phrase “for the joy set before him” with this understanding (Heb. 12:2, 16).

In its original and simplest sense this preposition is local, meaning “over against” or “opposite.” It has several derived meanings, however, especially substitution and exchange, and these are fairly exemplified in the New Testament, as follows: When Christ died on the cross his action was not a conscious purchase of personal joy, nor was it performed “for the sake of joy.” It was a substitutionary process, not only in the sense that he gave himself “instead of” others, but that he deliberately chose the way of suffering “instead of” the joy which might have been his. (Turner, pp. 172-173)

Likewise, Kenneth Wuest contrasted the traditional comments with an analysis in his classic work *Word Studies from the Greek New Testament* saying,

The words “who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross,” are usually interpreted to mean that the Lord Jesus endured the cross so He might obtain certain joy which was placed before Him as a reward for His sufferings. But this interpretation is based upon an erroneous use of the preposition “for.” The Greek preposition is anti (ἀντι), the predominant use of which in the first century was “instead of.” It is so used in Luke 11:11 where we have, “If he asked a fish, will he for (anti (ἀντι), instead of) a fish give him a serpent?” (Wuest, p. 215)

Finally, Marvin Vincent related similar information considering the force of Ἀντι (anti) in his work *Word Studies in the New Testament*,

Ἀντι in its usual sense, in exchange for. Προκειμένης lying before, present. The joy was the full, divine beatitude of his preincarnate life in the bosom of the Father; the glory which he had with God before the world was. In exchange for this he accepted the cross and the shame. The contrast is designed between the struggle which, for the present, is alone set before the readers (ver. 1), and the joy which was already present to Christ. The heroic character of his faith appears in his renouncing a joy already in possession in exchange for shame and death. The passage thus falls in with Philip. 2:6-8

(Vincent, v. 4, p. 538).

Notice that in each of these, the writer gives careful consideration to the root meaning of the preposition rather than treating it as a prospective “for” as many commentators do. Turner continues to examine a number of passages using ἀντι and to consider the similarities and dissimilarities with the usage in Hebrews. Vincent contemplates the force of the preposition as “in exchange for,” but considers this verse analogous to Paul’s statement on the Lord’s preincarnate glory:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: (Phi. 2:5-9).

Each of the previous referenced authors agree on the nature of the preposition, but the context points to Christ’s opportunity to avoid the suffering of the cross. In this way, Christ relates to the reader. The opportunity to avoid the suffering is the joy under consideration (Heb. 5:7-9). In considering the word translated “set before him,” relying heavily on the lexical notes, Lane comments, “Elsewhere in Hebrews προκειμένου (prokeimenēs) does not relate to something future but to a present possibility (6:18; 12:2). Accordingly, the expression προκειμένης αὐτῷ (prokeimenēs auto) implies ‘was within his grasp’” (Lane, p. 400). Lane elaborates on this distinction,

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In both phrases προκειμένου (prokeimenēs) relates not to something future but to a present possibility (as in 6:18): the joy was within Jesus' grasp. Understood in this way, the joy to which reference is made cannot be the eternal felicity that Jesus shared with the Father, of which he voluntarily divested himself in his incarnation ... It has reference to a precise historical circumstance in which Jesus was confronted with a supreme moral choice. He could embrace the joy that was available to him or a humiliating death upon a Roman cross (Lane, p. 413).

Note that believing Christ's enduring strength came from either His prospect of reunion with the Father or the salvation of man does no injustice to the Gospel plan of salvation, whether or not it is in view here. Likewise, recognizing that the Hebrews writer was not considering a prospective joy does not imply that it did not exist or did not ever serve a motivational purpose. However, as Turner remarks, "The interpretation, "for the sake of the joy," seems not to be possible unless one can conceive that Christ's motive in suffering was to enjoy what followed" (Turner, p. 172).

Finally, Lane succinctly highlights the main point of how Christ the Lord identifies with the struggling reader,

This interpretation is supported by the appellation "Jesus" (which demands a reference to an experience contingent upon his humanity), by the fact that "joy" is placed in opposition with the very particular experience of the cross, and by the prior treatment of the Passion. The clause should be considered as a comment on Heb. 5:7-9. (Lane, p.)

Lane's point here is that the writer intended a direct connection with the Lord's human experience by referring to Him as only Jesus.

THE WITNESSES

The climatic phrasing of Hebrews twelve draws directly from the previous chapter,

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us (Heb. 12:1).

The witnesses are pictured as examples of what faith can accomplish. The figure is not so much that of a cheering crowd in a sports arena as much as a trophy room in a sporting venue, perhaps displaying the retired jerseys and other such awards showing what others have accomplished. The situation the reader faced was like a contest and a struggle, many had run and endured (most of all Jesus), so they could as well. Some may think within themselves, "I stood to lose so much," "it was too lonely," or "it was too painful," but the very lives of those listed testify against such inadequate excuses.

Abraham's life and service testify of one who was able to endure hardship, leaving behind his home and choosing rather to sojourn in a strange land (Heb. 11:8-10). Abraham (along with the others listed) never experienced the

real tangible joy of the promises, but sought them by faith, **"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth"** (Heb. 12:13). Later, the Israelites as a nation possessed none of the spiritual foresight of their father Abraham. Thus, they lost that which they loved most, the land itself. This irony only illustrated the fact that the land was temporary. W. E. Vine comments on Hebrews 4:8,

the allotment of the land under Joshua was only temporary. Ezekiel 48:9-22, 35 testifies that the future rest in the earthly Canaan can be given to Israel only as a result of God's rest in Christ on the ground of the Cross (W. E. Vine, V. 3 p. 492).

Joseph also recognized that he would never personally experience the joy of the promise in this life, but chose to gladly serve God in Egypt. Though he enjoyed a measure of good, he suffered greatly and willingly. Joseph could have avoided suffering at several points along the way. Joseph could have chosen pleasure with Potipher's wife, but suffered her wrath instead. In his final instructions, he demonstrated his faith in the promises, **"By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones"** (Heb. 11:22).

Moses especially demonstrated the pattern of foregoing joy and choosing the hardship of service (c.f. Heb. 5:7-9). The Hebrews writer refers here to Moses,

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward (Heb. 11:25-26).

Moses turned away from a promising future being trained in the learning of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). Moses refused the wealth and prestige attendant with being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Heb. 11:24).

After rehearsing the terrible fates of many of those who chose suffering over cheap comforts, the Hebrews author said of all these, **"...having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect"** (Heb. 11:39-40).

LAYING ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT

Continuing with the sports metaphor, the writer calls upon those who intend to reach the finish line to cast off anything which would encumber them in their efforts, **"let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us"** (Heb. 12:1). Ancient athletes competed naked to avoid being slowed or tripped by the cumbersome attire of the day. This was their custom in the official games (Josephus, 12:239-

241; 15.270). This was wrong, and the source of great contention among the Jews living during the time, as Josephus recorded. Christians are called to be modest (1 Tim. 2:8-9).

Christians are expected to similarly divest themselves of anything legitimate or illegitimate that may hinder the spiritual race.

Jesus repeatedly used the same figure to emphasize the seriousness with which one runs the race. Consider the severity with which disciples were expected to agonize over salvation,

Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire (Mat. 18:8-9).

The Lord's instruction to be rid of anything which hinders includes things which may be right of themselves, but it most certainly targets sin as well. The apostle Paul said,

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof (Rom. 13:11-14).

The Lord even contemplated severing family relationships and friendships in the event they jeopardize one's soul (Mat. 10:34-35; Eph. 5:19). Regarding things which may or may not be sinful of themselves, Paul repeated the sporting metaphor to make the same point:

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully (2 Tim. 2:3-5).

In the book of Philippians, the apostle Paul addresses the ideas of false teachers who had made havoc among other churches, namely the Judaizing teachers. Paul challenges them to compare their credentials in Judaism to his own. There was no comparison, but Paul said concerning the GOOD things, **"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before"** (Phi. 3:13). In this same context, Paul also draws from the athletic theme to encourage others to follow his example saying, **"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"** (Phi. 3:14).

Through time, people have sought many different avenues to find peace and joy in this life. Some cannot lay aside their weights because they love the **"abundance of things"** (Luke 12:15). They have heaviness because they are pierced through with the sorrow thinking riches bring joy (1 Tim. 6:9-10; 17-18). Others have sought joy through human philosophies, including the philosophy of minimalism, which currently enjoys fad status. Writing a review of a book by Marie Kondo, a blogger named Nataly Kogan implemented Kondo's life philosophy for decluttering. Kogan condensed the idea of the book saying:

Does it bring you joy? If you answer yes, you keep the item. If you hesitate or say no, you donate it or throw it out. It's simple, it's brilliant, and it's something that's completely intuitive. You can spend a lot of time justifying how something might at some point be useful to you and therefore decide to keep it, but whether something brings you joy is an emotional question and one that can be answered almost instantly: If you feel joy or if you don't feel joy: there's no need to make it more complicated than that. (Kogan, 5).

While this method is simple, attractive, and makes perfect sense for how to organize your closet, it cannot provide the necessary direction on how to organize your life. Kondo prioritizes the joy in this life above material possessions, which is good, but fails to prioritize eternal joy over temporary. Many Christians still need to learn to ask the question, "does this help me finish the race?" Even if the item brings them joy, if the answer is "no" they must lay it aside, cut it out of their life, and move on with patience.

DESPISING THE SHAME

The Lord endured by despising the shame. His "despising the shame" was not so much active contempt as not considering it worthy to be taken into account. Consider Leon Morris' comments on this verse,

If one 'scorns' a thing, one normally has nothing to do with it, but 'scorning its shame' means rather that Jesus thought so little of the pain and shame involved that he did not bother to avoid it. He endured it' (Morris, p. 134).

Baur, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker classify the use of the word καταφρονέω ("kataphroneo" despising) under the second entry in their lexicon referencing places where the word means "care nothing for, disregard, unafraid" (Baur, p. 420). The point in Hebrews twelve and verse two, with reference to καταφρονέω ("kataphroneo"), is that Christ did not esteem the suffering highly enough to take it into account as a factor in His decision. This principle is shown here:

The Lord Himself challenged the disciples with this concept of values saying,

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall

gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul (Mat. 16:24-26)?

Here, the issue is one of value. While many devalue their souls while alive, when facing eternal damnation, the value is inestimable. Placing a proper value on this life and the next helps one to see the bargain of taking up one's cross. The cost is then negligible. Moses valued things correctly:

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible (Heb. 11:24-27).

Moses' calculated correctly when contemplating the value of suffering and the value of temporary and immediate pleasure. He esteemed the suffering, while despising the pleasure. On the other hand, Esau incorrectly valued things. The original Genesis account says plainly, "...thus Esau despised his birthright" (Gen. 25:34). Esau considered it worthless and had previously asked, "I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" (Gen. 25:32).

Esau's inability to appropriately calculate led him to value immediate gratification above eternal comfort. This attitude undoubtedly led to his profane and adulterous life, of which the Hebrews writer said:

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears (Heb. 12:15-17).

A lack of gratitude often lies beneath any improper value system. Paul's description of the Gentile world fit this pattern precisely, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:21). Paul warned Timothy of those who would be carried away shortly in the great apostasy as those who believed life was for pleasure:

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God (2 Tim. 3:2-4).

Esau's sensuality stemmed from an improper value system and a lack of gratitude. Esau would exchange a bowl of soup for his soul. He did not esteem the birthright highly enough to correctly factor it in to his deal with Jacob. The Hebrews considered changing Christ for the temporary comfort of living under Judaism. The apostle Paul steadfastly resisted any such shirking from the Gospel saying, "And I,

brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased" (Gal. 5:11).

CONCLUSION

The book of Hebrews provides tremendous encouragement to the Christian struggling with the world's opposition. In such times, one may easily become discouraged. Satan wants to wear down the mind as he did with Eve (2 Cor. 11:3). God provides the proper equipment to resist these attacks (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The apostle Paul told the Ephesian brethren to "Be strong", which they did by putting on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10). The good soldier may protect their mind with the "helmet of salvation," and Jesus, being salvation, is that very protection, "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Eph. 6:10; Heb. 12:3).

Without this constant consideration, those opposed by the world will weaken and fail the grace of God, following the example of Esau (Heb. 12:15-16). Instead, the faithful should follow the example of Christ and inherit the kingdom, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28, 29). This world may provide temporary joy, however "...here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13:14).

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"A certain amount of opposition is a great deal of help to a man; kites rise against, and not with, the wind."

THE TIME HAS COME—AGAIN

Jerry C. Brewer

It took approximately 50 years for the seeds of apostasy sown in the 19th century to come to fruition. What began with “progressivism” in the mid-19th century in the work and worship of the church—the formation of the American Christian Missionary Society and the introduction of mechanical instruments of music—became full-fledged division in 1906 when the Christian Church finally formed itself into a denomination. Throughout that half-century, brethren introduced liberal practices that were unauthorized in the church and were opposed by those who remained faithful to the New Testament pattern. Battles raged in the periodicals of that period, from pulpits, and on the polemic platform, but the “progressives” adamantly refused to return to the old paths. Fellowship was sundered and formal division ensued. The time for formal division has come again.

There are two Greek words that are translated “division” or “divisions” in the New Testament. The first is *schisma*, the word from which we get our English word, “schism,” and is defined as, “Not yet formal cleavages into two or more organizations, but partisan divisions that showed in the love-feasts and at the Lord’s Supper” (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 1 Cor. 11:18, eSword). Strong says this word means, “a split or gap (‘schism’), literally or figuratively: division, rent, schism” (eSword). The idea set forth by *schisma* is a rent or tear in a piece of fabric that is not yet separated into more than one piece. The second is *dichostasia*, meaning, “standings apart” (*Robertson’s Word Pictures*, Rom. 16:17, eSword). *Schisma* is the beginning of division when a rent is made in the whole, and *dichostasia* is the final result when the whole becomes two distinct parts.

Division (*schisma*) had its genesis in the minds of 19th century preachers and editors. In Earl Irvin West’s, *The Search For The Ancient Order*, in which he chronicled restoration movement history, West devoted an entire chapter to Isaac Errett, who was a leading light in that division. West wrote,

Historians among the Disciples of Christ invariably look upon Errett as the one who saved the restoration movement from becoming “a fissiparous sect of jangling legalists.” This group hails Errett as the prophet of spirituality and liberalism (p. 23).

Errett was not only an early proponent of the Missionary Society, but when he moved to Detroit to work with the new Jefferson and Beaubian congregation in 1862, he did so at the behest of two men, Richard Hawley and Colin Campbell, who West says, “were the chief men in the new congregation, and were liberal in spirit and outlook” (p. 27). Errett’s liberalism was manifested by the plaque he secured

to put over his office door in Detroit. “On it was engraved the words: ‘Rev. I. Errett’” (p. 28).

Errett was the founder and editor of *The Christian Standard* in 1866. J. S. Lamar, who authored Errett’s biography, explained the “need” for *The Christian Standard*.

There were several weeklies, also, among them the *Review* and *Gospel Advocate*, but these were not satisfactory. They were regarded as being narrow in their views and in many respects, hurtful rather than helpful to the great cause which they assumed to represent. I would say nothing here derogatory of the editors of these papers. They represented and fostered that unfortunate type of discipleship...a type with which the leading minds among the brotherhood could have no sympathy. We may credit these writers with sincerity and honesty, but we can not read many of their productions without feeling that we are breathing an unwholesome religious atmosphere. They seem to infuse an unlovely and earthborn spirit, which they clothe, nevertheless, in the garb of the divine letter, and enforce with cold, legalistic and crushing power. The great truth for whose defense the Disciples are set, demanded a wiser, sweeter, better advocacy—an advocacy that should exhibit the apostolic spirit as well as the apostolic letter [all emph. J. S. Lamar] (*Memoirs of Isaac Errett*, cited by West, pp. 29, 30).

Division (*schisma*) in the church a half-century ago began in the hearts of those who believed they were “new lights” to lead the way out of “legalism” and into a “wiser, sweeter...apostolic spirit.” That same liberal spirit has characterized multitudes in churches of Christ for the past 50 years, and has reached the point that another formal standing apart (*dichostasia*) is needed, and ought to be recognized. Paul wrote,

For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you (1 Cor. 11:18-19).

Paul used the word *schisma*, which is translated “divisions” in verse 18. He continued by saying that those divisions—rents, or tears in the body—would result in “heresies.”

That word is the Greek, *hairesis*. It is also translated “sect” (Acts 24:14) and is used only twice by Paul, in this passage and in Galatians 5:20. *Hairesis* is defined by Strong as, “properly a choice, that is, (specifically) a party or (abstractly) disunion” and Robertson says, “The schisms naturally become factions or parties.” Schisms produce sects, and the schism of the 19th century produced the sect of the

Christian Church.

Another sect is emerging from among us in this century that has been 50 years in coming. That sect is not yet fully grown, nor do most people recognize it. But it is a reality and is fueled by churches that consider themselves as “mainstream” and those of us who still hold to the ancient gospel as “legalists.” They are those who are unabashedly liberal, having long ago departed from the faith, as Max Lucado’s church in San Antonio, Richland Hills in Ft. Worth, and Quail Springs in Oklahoma City. They are those who call for “balanced preaching” like Forest Hill in Memphis. Their “leaders” call us “a toxic loyalty circle,” and “vile,” as did Keith Mosher at the Sunny Slope Church of Christ in Paducah, Kentucky in July, 2006.

There are thousands of other churches and individuals like these and many of them are in our own backyards. There is only one congregation in our area with which we can have fellowship, the church at Willow, OK, and that includes at least twelve churches in neighboring towns, and three in our own. All of these have sold out to the “sweet spirit” of J. S. Lamar, Isaac Errett, Barry Grider, Dave Miller, Keith Mosher, and unnumbered others who once stood upon the word of God. Like J. S. Lamar, the leaders of this emerging sect view *Defender*, edited by Michael Hatcher, and *Contending For The Faith*, edited by David P. Brown, in the same way Lamar did when he wrote, “We can not read many of their productions without feeling that we are breathing an unwholesome religious atmosphere.” To this emerging sect today, these papers and their editors, “...infuse an unlovely and earth-born spirit, which they clothe, nevertheless, in the garb of the divine letter, and enforce with cold, legalistic and crushing power.”

This sect has no tolerance for plain gospel preaching, nor civil discourse. They are intent on restructuring the church after their own likeness, and dragging along with them as many as they can down that broad way that leads to destruction. Those who still love and respect the authority of God’s word must mark them, disassociate ourselves from them, and let the world know that we have no fellowship with them. The Lord said heresies will come, and they have done so in our day. The time for recognizing division has come—again.

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THE POWER OF ONE

Flavil Nichols

During the War Between the States, a young woman learned the truth and obeyed the Gospel. Her sweetheart, J. H. Halbrook, was a Confederate soldier. He was captured by the Union army and kept prisoner in Michigan until the war was over. He was given a ticket to Nashville, Tennessee and \$2.50. From there, he returned to Centerville and found what was left of his home and family. He found his girlfriend and they were married. His wife studied the Bible with him, and he soon became a Christian. He thought the truth was so good and so simple that he began to teach and baptize many of his friends and neighbors. He began to preach, but he recognized his need for more training, so he came to the original Mars Hill Bible School, taught by T. B. Larimore. Upon completing his studies there, instead of going back to Tennessee, they moved farther south, coming into Walker, Marion, Fayette, and Lamar counties in Alabama. One of his many converts was Charley Alexander Wheeler. His wife taught him to read from the Bible. Along with

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his wife, C. A. Wheeler obeyed the Gospel and soon began preaching to others. He started more than 100 congregations and baptized more than 6,000 people.

But wait, the story is not ended! One of those 6,000 was my father, the late Gus Nichols! Twelve thousand were baptized under his preaching. Among those baptized by Gus Nichols, no one knows, nor can know, how many began to preach “**the glorious gospel of Christ**” (2 Cor. 4:3-4); but I personally know several. I, Flavil Nichols, am ONE whom he baptized and whom he encouraged to preach the truth. And under my preaching, about three thousand have been baptized. A few among them preached the Gospel, also!

Only eternity can reveal the total results of the conversion of that one girl nearly one hundred and fifty years ago. The results are not yet all in! But this shows that TWENTY-ONE THOUSAND people have become Christians through this single thread in the fabric of her influence. “**Go, and do likewise**” (Luke 10:37). YOU are important too! Dear reader, if you go to heaven, others probably will be saved by you! Each ONE is very important. “**How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace...**”

—Deceased

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