

StraitWay



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And So We Close

A little over five years ago my Father-in-Law, Glenn Melton, asked if I would help him with a monthly publication designed to help young men who were interested in spreading the Gospel. In the first issue He stated his reason and purpose for this paper:

Why publish THE STRAITWAY? (1) We have a desire to help others, to do good and no harm. (2) The writing of several men will give variety to the material which will be contained herein. Each one has his own subject area. He will write twelve articles to be published in 1999. In 2000, another group of men will write on another set of subject areas. We think this material will help every thoughtful reader. (3) Many young men have dedicated their lives to proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ. To encourage as many as we can in this noble work is our prime purpose. Young preachers should know there are older Christians who appreciate them and are concerned about them, not jealous of them. If the churches of our Lord are to chart a course within the "strait and narrow," they need young preachers who are willing to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Who are more interested in advancing the cause of Christ than anything else. (4) There is truth to be defended and error to be exposed.

Glenn Melton, Owner & Editor

For three years Glenn held to this course. There were bumps along the way, but with his determination to present these needed lessons, we pushed forward. During the spring and summer of our third year of publication, 2001, Glenn's health began to fail due to cancer. As fall of 2001 came I was given the reins of StraitWay because Glenn's health would not allow him to work as editor. In December of 2001 Glenn passed from this world into the hands of the righteous Judge. Since that time I have been trying to continue this work.

Glenn had told me that he wanted to at least publish StraitWay through 2003. He felt that there should be a closing point for an effort such as this. Glenn considered the idea of continuing past 2003, but as he passed things to me, there was a definite indication that he wished to end StraitWay at the close of 2003.

As I began taking over the duties of owner and editor, I began to realize how much of the work Glenn had taken care of himself. While I had taken part in the setup, printing and mailing almost since the beginning, Glenn had taken care of getting subjects and men to write the articles. He had made sure the articles got to me in a timely manner for preparing the paper. Much of the mental tasks he had taken care of with out me even knowing it needed to be done.

During the past five years we have also worked through mechanical failures and health problems among several who help with getting this paper out each month. There have been a few issues skipped or combined because of these difficulties, but we have tried to keep our goals in site through it all. I hope that the work of our writers has been of benefit to you.

As Glenn stated in the beginning, our desire has been to help others. If you have been helped with understanding the Will of the Lord, we have been successful in meeting our goal. For five years StraitWay has tried to teach the simple Truth of God's Word on issues that confront christians and the church. There is still much teaching that can be done in many areas, but we have completed our course with this particular work. Thank you for listening to our message.

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Hand Clapping in Worship

Corruption in worship is nothing new. During Old Testament times we read of Uzziah who met his undoing because of pride. *When he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the LORD, valiant men. They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the LORD God.* (2 Chron 26:16-18) In the next few verses we read of Uzziah's temper getting the best of him. God struck him with leprosy and he spent the rest of his life in disgrace. Uzziah sinned when he flagrantly disregarded God's prescribed law on how He was to be worshiped.

Just as in Old Testament times, God has laid out specifics on how He desires to be worshiped by Christians living under the law of Christ. However, the religious world has demonstrated a great desire to tinker around with the worship service. The motive is to make things *more relevant* for modern generations. Scriptural worship practices are now viewed as a mere "tradition" thus giving an opening for change. The worship service is changed into nothing more than a performance to stimulate emotions and to seek the observer's gratification through entertainment. Some are driven by a religion that is *better felt than told*.

One notable change that has come about is hand clapping during worship. Most often this occurs as applause following baptisms, sermons, and singing. Is this a modern form of saying "Amen" as some claim? Does God approve of applause in a worship service? One bible dictionary defines "Amen" as a word used "to affirm and confirm a statement." "It is often used to confirm the words of another and adds for the wish for success to another's vow or prediction." (New Unger's Bible Dictionary) We usually say "Amen" after a prayer. Others have been known to say it during the middle of a sermon – indicating their wholehearted agreement with the message preached. Note that the use of "Amen" in the bible focuses upon the message rather than the person presenting the message. Applause is most often directed toward the person. Hand clapping during worship takes the focus off the message and places it on the person! There is danger when moving the focus from the message to the messenger. Those who would approve of applause during worship must answer: Would persons applaud when the content is not appealing? Would they applaud when the speaker struggles to relate Biblical truth in the most elegant way? I like Bill Lockwood's comments where he writes, "People have no real reason for clapping in worship other than that they are being pushed around by cultural currents which turns worship into performance-oriented acting instead of bowing before God's throne." (*Is Applause Appropriate in Worship?*)

When getting down to the basics, this matter should be determined on the basis of biblical authority. Yes, there are a few Old Testament passages which mention clapping (Psa. 47:1-2; Psa. 98:4-9) but one can justify the practice from these passages as much as he can justify instrumental music in worship. For those who wish to justify the practice using these scriptures, they must also look to Job 27:23; 34:37; Lam. 2:15; Ezek. 25:6; and Nahum 3:19. Observe that hand clapping in all these references point to it being used to demonstrate hostility or contempt. Dave Miller rightly asks, "Will the advocates of hand clapping in the worship assembly urge this use of hand clapping, along with boos, hisses, and catcalls?" (*Piloting the Strait* p. 240) The New Testament is silent on the matter. There is no example, direct command, or inference found concerning applause. Therefore today's Christian should refrain from using it in the worship service. Remember, worship is all about God – and pleasing Him. *But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.* (John 4:23-24)

Passing The Sword

Second Timothy

This is the last article that I will be presenting to StraitWay. I want to thank brother Henderson for allowing me to write for his paper during the course of this year. I have enjoyed it and hope that I have been of some help to someone that has read my articles. I look forward to reading from StraitWay during the following year.

Chapter Three: In the first nine verses of this chapter Paul tells Timothy about the dangers of apostasy. One reason that Paul is writing is the perils that threaten the church. He sadly foresees the churches being invaded by godlessness and worldliness. The same thing applies, maybe even more so today.

Verses 10-17 tells of the defense against apostasy. Timothy is told to follow Paul's example. Persecution is sure to come when we resist the Devil (Matt. 5:10-12; Acts 14:22). The Bible is the one effective antidote against apostasy and corruption. Timothy presents himself as an excellent example for young people in every generation. Love the Lord and dedicate yourself to Him. This will help you to overcome all fears and handicaps that might come your way.

Verses 16 and 17 tell about the inspiration of the Bible, that it is a divine production, breathed out by God. The Holy Spirit guided the speaking and writing of the Word of God (Acts 2:4; 1 Cor. 2:9-13; 14:37). Thus Timothy was equipped with all that he needed to spread the Word of God. We too, that have a good working knowledge of the Word of God are well equipped for every good work.

These two verses of Scripture furnish Doctrine, Reproof, Correction and Instruction which is in righteousness.

Chapter Four: Verses 1-5 is the closing exhortation to Timothy. It is the final charge for Timothy to preach sound doctrine. Paul knew his life would soon end, and that he probably would not see Timothy again. He summarizes Timothy's work, and charges him to preach the Word at all times in spite of opposition. As in Timothy's case, so it is the work of every teacher to build his character by the Scriptures. The church flourishes on the pure Word of God; nothing else can take its place. Men do their work and pass on, but the Word abides forever. It is the responsibility of the faithful in every generation to teach God's Word faithfully, until the victory is won. No human being is wise enough, smart enough, impressive enough, or funny enough, to do otherwise and be right.

Verses 6-8: Paul's triumphant faith is here beautifully expressed in what has been called "His valedictory." The battle-scarred old warrior was looking back over the long, hard fight of many years of total commitment. He was to be executed without guilt on his part. Now he was forsaken by friends and was suffering alone. But there is no hint of regret that he had given his life to Christ without reservation (Phil. 1:21-23).

Verses 9-18: Some of Paul's friends had gone out on special missions: some had deserted him. Only Luke stayed with him; Paul desired to see Timothy and Mark once more. Note Paul's desire, even in his last hours, for reading material. No details are given about his final suffering and death. It seems that no one but the Lord was there to support him at his first trial. Was everything lost? Not for him, and not for us if we can see far enough ahead.

Verses 19-22: His concluding greetings and benediction. Things in this epistle which are said to belong to us in Him: 1:1 – The promise of Life. 1:9 – Salvation through God's purpose and grace. 1:13 – Faith and love. 2:1 – Strength through divine grace. 2:10 – Salvation. 3:12 – Persecution for godly living. 3:15 – Salvation through faith. 4:8 – The crown of righteousness.

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The Church That Jesus Built

What Jesus Built

In studying what Jesus promised and built, we learn that God's people composed the church. The people that He had so long sought through Old Testament times and arrangements were now built upon the foundation that He himself had laid. Different figures used in the New Testament teach us what Jesus built.

From the standpoint of their loyalty to God, His people were the family of God, made up of spiritual children (1 Tim. 3:15). From the viewpoint of their privileges and responsibilities under the reign of Christ, they are citizens in the spiritual kingdom (Col. 1:13). As people married to Christ and demonstrating their allegiance to Him, they are His bride (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-32). In their relation to Christ as master and teacher, those in the church are disciples and Christians (Acts 11:26). In their connection with each other, they sometimes are portrayed as members of a body headed by Christ (Eph. 1:23). While it is not the body of Ephesians 1:23, even in a local-church context the members are compared to a physical body (1 Cor. 12:12-27). As those empowered to serve and worship God for themselves, apart from human mediation, Christians are priests in the holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). The makeup of the Lord's church is easily learned by such a comparison with these figures, for they all convey helpful information about God's people, built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. In other words, we see in all such figures/illustrations the connection of the church to the very foundation laid by the Lord, for all of them depend on the acceptance of Jesus' divine messiahship. Only when people hear God's prophet, bow before the reigning king, and are cleansed by the high priest's atoning work can they become part of the church or enter any of the parallel relationships mentioned in this paragraph.

What Jesus did on Pentecost in beginning the church, He continues to do by the same means of gospel preaching and obedience on the part of individuals (1 Pet. 2:5). The work of redemption, finalized in Christ's work, must be applied to individuals through the work of preaching the gospel. As long as people are responding in faith to the gospel, living stones "are being built" into the spiritual house (NKJB rendering of Peter's verse). The spiritual house begun on that memorable Pentecost is an unfinished work, because the Lord's delay of His coming mean more souls can be saved (2 Pet. 3:15).

It reasonably follows the preceding line of thought that those built by Christ into His church would designated as His people. Whatever the Lord called them is what they ought to call themselves. Earlier parallel relationships teach us what the Lord sometimes called His people. No formal (proper) name is there found that must be always employed to the exclusion of the other names. Brethren insisting on one such name ought to face this reality. Brethren seeking to escape association with the teaching/practice mandated by Christ, by avoidance of some name found in the New Testament, ought also to face this reality.

Government of the Church

When Jesus spoke of the kingdom of heaven, He alluded to that which had brought Him to earth and which both He and His predecessor John had announced as being near. "Kingdom" often conveys its basic meaning of reign or dominion, but here Jesus most likely referred to the church as being interchangeable with the kingdom (an extended meaning referring to those over whom Jesus rules—that is, who have accepted His rule). Jesus began His reign upon His return to heaven and later began the church when Peter used the keys of the kingdom to open the church to human beings. The government of the Lord's church is that of a kingdom, because Christ is king over this spiritual realm.

Lee Woodward, a close friend and fellow-teacher, frequently told his new classes at the beginning of the school year that his classroom was not a democracy, but a dictatorship. He simply meant that he was the one in charge in the classroom, not that he ruled as a tyrant. All need to understand that Jesus is in charge in the church. The church is not governed by an oligarchy, a democracy, or an aristocracy. Neither the majority nor the minority rules the church; Jesus does! He is king, raised from the dead and exalted to His position by God the Father (Acts 13:32-39). Those in His church have willingly accepted His rule. For this reason no member of any congregation should act as if he rules the church. No one has the right to usurp the kingly role of Christ, who along enjoys the approval of heaven in His role.

“Home”

A Haven For Children

In many “so called” homes today children are being thrown away, literally through abortion and outright murder, and figuratively through abandonment and neglect of parental responsibilities. In previous articles we have discussed the various “roles” and responsibilities that are incumbent on the male and female (“*the man and his wife*” Gen 1:25) that forms the beginning of the home as God designed it Gen 2:23,24. Now we must take some time to discuss the children that result from the man and woman being joined together and becoming “one flesh” i.e. husband and wife - father and mother. David by inspiration said: “*Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*” Psalms 127:3. The word “heritage” is something given by someone else and in this case the “giver” is God. Yet children, in many instances today are treated like anything but a gift from God.

If fathers and mothers fulfill their responsibilities according to God’s will, home becomes a “haven for children”. Webster defines “haven” as: “*a place of safety or a place offering favorable opportunities or conditions.*” Home is the institution God designed to care for and train children. They are to be brought up “*in the training and admonition of the Lord.*” (Eph. 6:4 NKJV). Jesus grew and developed in four areas: wisdom, stature, favor with man and favor with God Lk. 2:52, that is, He grew mentally, physically, socially and spiritually. In regard to growth in these four areas, let me share with you some thoughts from John Clark’s booklet “STUDIES IN FAMILY LIFE”. “*Mental development can result in good education to be used in the service of God or can result in pride and arrogance that honors self and has no room for God. Physical development can result in good health, athletic ability, etc. And an understanding of our “maleness” or “femaleness” that will honor God; or it can result in an obsession with the body, physical attractiveness and misuse of the body in lust and licentiousness. Social development can develop in us an understanding and appreciation of people that will help us in reaching them and influencing them with the gospel or it can create in us a craze for popularity – a desire to go along with the crowd – that will influence us to sell our principles cheaply. Spiritual development creates a desire to please God and go to heaven. It develops young men and women for service to Christ. When this is neglected the religion of Jesus is meaningless.*” Home is the primary place where this training takes place. Yes, parents may utilize social institutions such as schools, athletic programs, medical facilities, etc. to help facilitate training and growth that must occur in the mental, physical and social development of a child. Parents may also use the teaching opportunities provided by a local congregation of the Lord’s people, the church, to help in the spiritual growth that must also occur. However, even though these may be used to help parents fulfill their responsibilities, remember “home” is the haven for children and not these various social institutions, nor even the church. When proper love, care, concern and training is exercised children will have fond memories of their “growing up years” and will be the kind of people that God would have them be.

Yes, young people home is a “haven”, a place of safety that offers favorable opportunities or conditions for your development. Yet, you are not without responsibility in this “haven”. Eph. 6:1, 2 says: “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)*”. So, children have the responsibility to obey and honor their parents. The very next verse (4) is the one that places the responsibility of training and development primarily on fathers and other passages show that mothers share in this responsibility. The phrase “*in the Lord*” means according to the will of the Lord. God’s will can never be set aside in favor of man’s will (Acts 5:29). However, godly parents will not knowingly require something of their children that is not according to God’s will.

In order for home to be a “haven” for children, parents must acknowledge and fulfill their God given responsibilities in teaching and training their children and children must recognize their responsibility to obey and honor their parents.

Like the Dew that Goes Away Early

We read of Hosea only in his book. His name means “deliverance” or “salvation.” Hosea served as one of the prophets to Israel in the 8th century BC. His was a time of great prosperity – under Jeroboam II (793-753 BC) Israel reached its greatest peak in worldly wealth, power, and position. Many Israelites grew accustomed to the *easy life* and were either unaware or uncaring about the moral and spiritual bankruptcy their nation experienced. Idol worship was common in the land – and those who served the Lord did so out of mere tradition. Their hearts were far from the Lord. It is in this environment that Hosea was directed to marry a wife *of harlotry*. (1:2) It is through Gomer’s disloyalty to Hosea that we get an intimate detail of the hurt God experienced because of Israel’s spiritual adultery.

In chapter 6 God uses Hosea to express His displeasure with Israel. *What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud and like the dew which goes away early.* (Hos. 6:4) Time and time again Israel repented, turned away from its idols, and served God only to fall away a generation or two later. Perhaps the greatest problem leading to their continual backsliding was the absence of a genuine relationship with God. *For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.* (Hos. 6:6) Hosea’s message is clear in stating that the patience of God had run its course. In what must have seemed like a message *out of touch* with his society – Hosea says *for they sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind.* (8:7) Imagine how this message must have sounded to a society of people at ease - living in luxurious homes with plenty of money to go around - trusting in the massive numbers of their army to protect them. *Though I wrote for him ten thousand precepts of My law, they are regarded as a strange thing.* (8:12) Hosea warned of how *compassion (would) be hidden from (God’s) sight.* (13:4) And, how quickly Israel did fall – within thirty years of Jeroboam II’s death – Assyria would take the northern ten tribes into captivity.

Nothing has changed. God desires a real, meaningful relationship with people today! He wants our undivided loyalty! He still requires us to *do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with (our) God.* (Micah 6:8). Jesus explained that we should love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind! (Mt. 22:36-37) Can we say with Paul, *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”* (Gal. 2:20)? How often is our loyalty “like the dew which goes away early?” True loyalty will require us to give our heart to Him! God wants us to love Him! It is only then that our actions will mean something to Him. Many never get anything out of their Christianity because of their unwillingness to have nothing more than a shallow, superficial relationship offering only the minimums. Some will realize only too late that one cannot go to heaven with only the least amount of service. This is the lesson the Israelites of Hosea’s day failed to learn.

There is little doubt that God desired a special relationship with Israel. God says through Hosea, *When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. It is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, and I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; and I bent down and fed them.* (Hosea 11:1, 3-4) Yet, Israel was bent on turning from God and it caused Him to say, *my heart is turned over within Me.* (11:8) Just as God desired a special relationship with Israel – he desires a relationship with mankind today. Through Jesus’ death it is possible for us to bridge the gap and serve God with confidence! This is why He has granted to us *everything pertaining to life and godliness.* This is why He has *granted to us His precious and magnificent promises.* He wants us to be *partakers of the divine nature* and *escape the corruption that is in the world by lust.* (2 Pet. 1:3-4) Everyone has an opportunity to take advantage of God’s free gift. Develop the kind of relationship God while you have opportunity. One day God’s patience will expire and all outside of Christ will be lost. *Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them, for the ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them.* (Hosea 14:9)

In the New Testament the kingship of Jesus is equated with His role as Lord (Acts 2:36) and head of the church (Eph. 5:23). In all three of these varied expressions—king, head, and Lord, the central idea is that of His authority. The idea of a king stresses His rule over His people. The image of a head emphasizes His control of the members of His body. The word “Lord” focuses on His position as master over His servants. One cannot be in the church apart from surrendering his own will to that of Christ. The same divine authority that conducts one into the church is also operative in the church for both individual and collective action. It is imperative that all belonging to Christ understand the authority of Christ over them in both connections. Whatever decisions one makes or a local church makes ought to be made in view of the teaching of Christ and His apostles. He is in charge! There is no room in the body of Christ for members who seek to control the head or other members, or for servants who seek to become masters, or for citizens who rise up in rebellion against their king to “boss” the other citizens or their king.

Inherent in Christ’s plan for His people in local churches is the role of a plurality of elders, but they must not act as lords over God’s heritage (1 Pet. 5:3). As examples and wise spiritual leaders, they “stand before” the sheep to show them the way and to teach them to follow. In their oversight there are judgment decisions that they must make, but even here they should consider the needs, wishes, and welfare of the church, not their own selfish desires. In this respect they submit first to Christ and then to their fellow-Christians. Elders are not a part of the government in the sense that Jesus is, for they share no legislative power with Him. They do, however, occupy a very important role in the functioning of a local church.

The Law of the Church

After indicating the kingdom aspect of the church, Jesus then spoke of the work of His apostles in binding and loosing. In this expression He referred to the giving of divine law for the welfare of His people. The apostles would serve in very significant positions in this matter, as the Lord showed in His picture of them on thrones during the time of regeneration (being born again) in Matthew 19:28. The authoritative quality of their teaching is here underscored, even as it is in a passage like Acts 2:42, where their teaching was the guide of the early Christians.

Jesus did not mean that they would initiate law, but announce what heaven had decreed. That such is His meaning can be seen in the language employed: “whatever you bind on earth shall be, having been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be, having been loosed in heaven” (Marshall’s interlinear translation of the Nestle text). Observe that their role as apostles in binding and loosing did not come first, but after heaven’s decree. If such were the case, then God’s eternal plan would be subject to apostolic interpretation, but the opposite is the case. Peter, the apostle here addressed, and the other ones, as seen in Matthew 18:18, shared in the work of binding and loosing. There was no primacy for Peter or any other apostle, in spite of Catholic doctrine to the contrary! The privilege in the work of revelation granted to Peter in Matthew 16 was likewise given to the rest two chapters later.

In a practical sense, what does this concept mean to the church today? It places all in the church under authority to Christ in relation to apostolic teaching. What they taught was theirs by divine inspiration, as part of the process of revelation. Jesus made arrangement for the coming of the Spirit of truth to guide them, as earlier seen in this study. When they thus spoke, they were presenting the words of Christ, whether He personally spoke them while on earth or not. Because of this understanding, we then would make no difference between the words of Christ in red letters in some New Testaments and those of Christ in black, given to the apostles for delivery to earth. In fact, the entire New Testament could easily be printed in red letters for this reason.

This concept also means that the law of Christ relative to all matters addressed in the New Testament must be our authoritative guide. The following aspects of Christ’s plan illustrate the application of that plan to the church today:

- 1. Law of Entrance:** The teaching of Jesus and His apostles relative to becoming Christians is not merely suggestive that we should think along these broad lines, but they constitute the way of passage into the kingdom of God. It is clearly the way of faith in Christ, repentance over sins,

Thank You

For the past five years StraitWay has tried to bring you helpful studies on topics which confront Christians today. There are issues confronting the church and its members which need to be discussed and studied, so that we know the truth. Glenn's vision for StraitWay has been to present articles on these issues and topics from learned brethren so that our younger men (and women) can better understand how to fight the errors that abound today. This effort could not have been successful without those learned brethren who were willing to write monthly about these issues.

While this years topics have suffered somewhat because of other obligations, we have had articles which will help us all to grow in the Lord. Kent Ward of Indiana presented us with articles on the work of deacons until his own work as a deacon would no longer allow him to write. Dickey Howard of Alabama has given us monthly articles looking at the work of an elder from an active elder. Jim Sasser also of Alabama has given us articles which covered the final instructions given to Timothy and Titus by Paul along with some of his own encouragement to the young men who must fill the places of those who have "finished the fight." Jim McDonald of Texas has given us articles to help us better understand work in countries outside the United States. Carl McMurray of Tennessee has provided some insight into training programs for young men wishing to preach the Gospel. Jerry Henderson also of Tennessee has given us lessons we need for a Godly home and family. Matt Allen has written articles on a variety of topics which are useful in our work as Christians.

We have also had several articles by Bobby Graham of Alabama. These have been timely articles dealing with things that will help us remain true to the Word of God. Over the last five years we have read articles from over fifty different men. The topics have been well covered and I thank each writer for taking time to help us in our study.

I especially want to thank Jimmy Crews for his support of StraitWay. Quite literally, we would not have been able to do it without him and his equipment. He has provided the means for printing StraitWay since its beginning. Pete Scalise did much the printing until his health began to limit his abilities. These two men and the other brethren in Colmesneil, TX played a large part in getting StraitWay published.

Glenn Melton's desire to help young men better understand this issues they will face as servants of Christ has been achieved. There is still much learning to do and, I am certain, much more teaching to be done, but StraitWay has run its course and it is now time to close. Thank you readers for spending some time with us in Bible Study. Be diligent in your service to God and Study Carefully.

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*Read the
Bible Daily!*

*Pray
Daily!*

Worship in spirit and in truth!

Overseeing the Flock

Part 12

(The elder and the tolerant generation)

Paul told the Ephesian elders, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28). In Acts 20:31, he said, “Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”

God’s elders are to warn both day and night. However, before one can warn another about danger, he must first recognize the danger himself. Elders are to keep themselves informed about what is going on in the congregation, the community and the country. I really believe most elders know what is going on, and many are warning the flock and the community. However, some, even though they know, have chosen to remain silent on the issues facing the church.

In the book “A Word Fitly Spoken” John D. Cox said, “We have heard much of late about “hard” and “soft” preaching. Most preachers have been placed in one class or the other, and some have been placed in both classes. This alertness with reference to hard and soft preaching is a good sign. It is born of a desire to have the old Jerusalem gospel proclaimed in its purity and simplicity: a desire to save the church from compromisers and from apologetic preaching. And I am persuaded that “soft-soapers” should be made to realize that such an attitude will not be tolerated by loyal brethren.”

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if more brethren, especially elders, would rise up and demand “hard” preaching, the old Jerusalem gospel. I am convinced that one reason more do not rise up in arms about “soft-soapers” is because they have become tolerant of the denominational world around us. Many, even elders, have become so wrapped up in more people, larger buildings, and being popular with everyone that they are “tolerating” things that just a few years back would have appalled them.

Many have become so tolerant of denominations that it is not uncommon to hear members of the church talk about the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. One man that attends at a building with the name church of Christ on the front told me, “I really think the Baptist believe in baptism for salvation. When I answered that they believe they are saved before baptism, he said, The Lord said, “He that believeth on me shall be saved”

Many do not want any preaching that would make their denominational friends feel uncomfortable, if they were to visit the assembly. Some say, “Let us find common ground and they will allow us to teach them. I believe what an older preacher once told me, he said, “There is no way we can sneak up on a person and get them saved.” Many have taken on this type thinking. In reality, love for them is really shown by telling them the truth to the saving of their soul.

If you doubt what I have written, just ask a few in the congregation, “Do you think your denominational friends will be saved?” “Do you believe the Holy Spirit is working today, and if so, how?” Do you think we should publicly point out the error of Calvinism and call names?” Do you believe there is only one church?”

Yes, elders are to oversee, feed, and warn the flock. Let there be no mistake, Hebrews 13:17 says we will give an account of how we watch for souls. Will there be blood on our hands? Yes! Unless we can say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” But how can this be if folks don’t even know we are in the battle?

“Home”

Home Needs Good “Parents”

You will remember in the creation story God told Adam and Eve to “...*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth...*” (Gen 1:28). So, from the very beginning, even before man sinned, God intended for one man and one woman to mate for life (husband and wife) and bear children. Merriam Webster’s online dictionary defines the word “parent” as: ***I a** : one that begets or brings forth offspring*. Therefore the man and woman who marry (mate) and bring forth children are parents. However, there is a world of difference between just being parents (bringing forth offspring) and being **GOOD** parents. The day I began to write this, I was in a waiting room and “Divorce Court” was on the television, which I do not watch, but others were watching, so I heard parts of the show. The judge was dealing with a man who had fathered forty children by apparently all different women and had never been married till he married this woman who was wanting a divorce. The judge was appalled that this man had fathered that many children and had basically taken no responsibility for any of them. Well, he is a parent and so are all the women who bore his children. From what he said, he thought of himself as a good father and these women as good mothers. Admittedly this is an extreme case. However, the sad thing is that the attitude he displayed is all too common in our society. Surely every responsible person would agree that he nor any of the women who bore his children are “good” parents.

Good parenting involves a father and mother being married and working together to fulfill the many and varied responsibilities to their children. Because they are immature and lacking in the skills and good judgment needed to provide for themselves, children must rely on adults for such and the adults God made responsible are their parents. Parents must begin at the birth of their children teaching them what they ought and ought not to do. No, don’t touch the stove its hot; no, you cannot play with a knife or play in the street, you’ll get hurt and on and on it goes. I caught a young neighbor boy one time starting a fire in our garage and he apparently had no idea of the significance of his actions, he just liked to start fires. And, of course, there are the positive aspects of feeding, dressing “potty training”, teaching to walk, talk, sending to school, and helping with homework etc, etc.

Being a “good” parent means you are responsible and that you must set priorities for yourself and your children. As a parent there are some things that just must come first in regard to the rearing of your children. To illustrate this I want to share with you some quotes from an advertising paper in Medora, N. D. Published by the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation in the Summer of 2003. The title of the article is “**Teddy Roosevelt’s Passion For Family Life Outranked Every Other**”. This article quotes President Roosevelt as saying “*The tasks connected with the home are the fundamental tasks of humanity.*” Then it continues with this quote: “*When home ties are loosened; when men and women cease to regard a worthy family life, with all its duties fully performed, and all its responsibilities lived up to, as the best life worth living, then evil days for the [nation] are at hand.*” To illustrate the importance of keeping your word and being careful of the promises you make to your children, note the following quote from the same article. “*One afternoon, President Roosevelt was meeting with a distinguished gentleman on the subject of Cuban reciprocity, when along came a knock on the door accompanied by a small voice announcing that it was after four o’clock. ‘By Jove,’ TR responded, ‘so it is! Why didn’t you call me sooner? One of you boys get my rifle.’ Apologizing to his visitor, the president excused himself. ‘We’ll finish this talk some other time,’ he said. ‘I promised the boys I’d go shooting with them at four o’clock, and I never keep the boys waiting.’*” President Roosevelt thought his promise to his children was more important than a meeting about international affairs.

Parents must understand that in all their dealings with their children or lack of dealings with them they are teaching them something, the question is: are they teaching them what they need to be taught? “Good” parenting is all about knowing when to say “NO” and “YES”, when to correct, when to discipline and what kind of correction and/or discipline to administer. To be “good” parents we must learn and apply God’s will to our own lives. Then we will be both honest and consistent in our dealings with our children. When we tell them no, we will mean no. When we tell them we are going to punish,

Overseeing The Flock Part Eleven (Listening to sermons we have heard before)

The late G.K. Wallace once said that preachers should repeat their sermons every two years. He went on to say, "If they are not worth repeating, then we need to study and get some that are worth repeating." I don't know if the time frame he gave is correct or not, but I do believe there is a great deal of worth in his statement.

"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons." (Deut. 4:9). Were God's people of old to teach the same old things, YES THEY WERE? Are we to teach the same old things today, YES WE ARE? Talking about the doctrine of Christ, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." (2nd John 9).

Hosea said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..." (Hosea 4:6). Many educators and others like to quote this verse as if it meant scientific or technical knowledge, but Hosea is talking about knowledge of God's law. A nation that changes their "worship" to please themselves will not be pleasing to God.

In the first chapter of Isaiah we can read of a people that changed how they served God. We can also read of just how sick God was of such a practice. In the first chapter of Romans we read of a people that decided not to retain God in their knowledge and they turned truth into a lie. God gave them up to uncleanness.

It is no secret that God has shown us the right way. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2nd Peter 1:3). But, what is happening to the knowledge of God in many congregations?

We hear complaints about too much teaching on Bible authority, the first principles, or the pattern of God's plan. We hear a strong cry for less and less negative preaching, "but give us only the positive." Sadly, many preachers are heeding their cry. I agree that we must preach the whole counsel of God and do it with love, but many of those asking for such are, in reality, asking for sermons that make them feel comfortable, and never feel a need to change anything in their life.

We must indoctrinate our young and old alike with a love for the truth, the plan of salvation, the work and worship of the church, and righteous living before a lost and dying world. To accomplish this we must repeat over and over the old old story that never changes. Peter says it best, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." (James 1:12).

Dear brother and sister in Christ, when you hear the truth taught over and over and over again, thank God that you have a man in the pulpit that is not ashamed of the gospel.

The reason we need to repeat the message is so our young will learn it, and those that know it already will not forget it, and because some didn't get it the first time around.

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The Church That Jesus Built

and baptism into Christ for the forgiveness of one's sins (Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:46-47; Acts 2:38). Only those who conform themselves to the will of the Father will thus enter the kingdom (Mt. 7:21). That this became divine law is seen in the uniform expectations of those who turned to Christ in the cases of conversion in the Book of Acts.

- 2. Law of Worship:** What Jesus taught concerning collective worship in John 4:24 was later expanded in the various statements of Acts and the epistles (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11; 14; Col. 3:16). Worship is not acceptable merely because of some attitude that the worshipper has; God has always prescribed acceptable worship.
- 3. Law of Organization:** The New Testament pictures local-church organization and nothing more (Phil. 1:2; Acts 20:28; Tit. 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). The current practice of joining local churches together to work in different fields is unknown in the New Testament. Local churches always operated under local elders to do their work.
- 4. Law of Mission (Work):** The mission of Christ to seek and save the lost became the passion of His people, as seen in the examples of congregations dispatching preachers to preach and supporting preachers at home and at a distance. Local churches also edified saints to spiritual maturity and sometimes assisted with emergency needs among the saints. Modern concern with health projects, educational ventures, recreational programs, and social-action efforts is totally alien to the portrait found in the Scriptures.
- 5. Law of Life:** Each Christian is individually related to Christ as his king and head. Matters of attitude, speech, and act come within this relationship. All that one does and is must conform to the example of Christ

The purpose of this brief presentation in this last section is not to provide exhaustive teaching/scriptures concerning these different matters of Christ's law, but to illustrate how His law applies in various areas. It is clear that the local church (points 2-4) and the individual Christian (points 1 and 5) must submit to the will of the king. All purchased by His blood belong to Him and should glorify Him through lives of obedient service. In this way the church built by Jesus Christ will serve as His spiritual body to represent Him to the world.

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Home Needs Good "Parents"

we will do exactly what we say we are going to do. Some seem to have the idea that being a "good" parent means giving our children anything they want, when they want it and letting them do anything they want, when they want to do it. But really that is being "bad" parents. Good parents sets limits.

You see, when children are little we make "judgments" for them all the time and sometime the only reason we can give is: "because I said so." Good parents must be "judgmental". That is what being a parent is all about, disciplining and training children Eph 6:4. This begins at birth and continues into the teenage years and sometimes even beyond. Yes, as children get older we must allow them to begin making some decisions for themselves, that is, using their own judgment, but under parental supervision. I told my children many times that the disciplinary measures I used (most times a leather belt applied properly) was to bring them to the point of using good judgment and disciplining themselves. This is the process of "growing up". Psalm 127:4 uses the figure of an "arrow" in reference to children. James Cope's "**Studies in Family Life**" has this comment on the use of that figure: "As a bowman straightens and polishes his arrow, gives it a sharp point, and wings it with feathers, so must parents train their children to hit the mark of duty dead center."

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