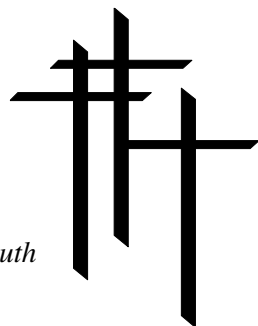


Timely Messenger



*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*

Volume 69 No. 3

Summer 2009

STAYING THE COURSE

by Charles W. Wages

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 15:57-58)

“The shortest distance between two points is a straight line.”

This expression, though not Scripture, tells us something about a truth we all need to consider. On the highway of life, though, there are many detours and distractions. However, this should not turn us away from the appointed work the

Lord has given us to do. Consider the apostle Paul when he was about to sail from Troas after God called him in a vision to go over to Macedonia. We are told,

“Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis.” (Acts 16:11)

Note they came “with a straight course” to Samothracia, then to Neapolis, then to Philippi. His mission resulted in Lydia, a “certain” woman whose heart was opened, receiving the message Paul was called to preach and teach. Paul never “strayed from the course,” but “stayed with the course.” This same statement is recorded in Acts 21:1,

“And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from

them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara."

Again we find Paul sailing "with a straight course."

Now, what does this say to us who have been saved by God's grace and called to work for the Lord? We must stay with and not stray from the "Word of Truth." Remember what 2 Timothy 2:15 teaches,

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

One of the major tragedies of our present age is that men and women are detouring and even departing from the truth of God's Word. There is a tendency to substitute tradition for Truth, a tendency to read, study, and quote books instead of the Book. In 2 Timothy 2:13 we are told that men's words will eat as a cancer because they have "erred" from the truth. This is serious and dangerous and leads to all kinds of spurious and false teachings that lead astray.

In 2 Timothy 3:7-8, we read of those who were "ever

learning and never able to come to the knowledge of truth." We wonder what these stupid people were learning! And then, sadly, they went so far as to "resist the truth." Often this is strong resistance and outright opposition to the truth. Finally in 2 Timothy 4:4, we read, "and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." What a downsizing! The results of not "staying the course" concerning the truth of God's Word were evident then and are surely evident today.

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive:" (Eph. 4:14)

"The truth often hurts, but it is the lie that leaves the scars."

We must "stay the course" concerning the "gospel of the grace of God," and the blessed hope it gives to those who have believed. A lot of false teaching goes under the heading of "the gospel." Most of it goes under the heading of "works."

Works to be saved, works to earn a place in heaven, works so your good ones outnumber your bad ones and maybe, just maybe, you will make it in the end. All of this nonsense leaves out the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ who died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; who was buried, and who rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3-4). That is the true gospel. Read Ephesians 2:8-10 and substantiate this great, grand, glorious, good news! Let's stay with God's grace when we speak of the gospel. The hope of the gospel is Christ Himself.

"To whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27)

What wonderful, practical, personal directives result in "staying the course." Going back to 1 Corinthians 15:58, we are to be steadfast—this means to stand firm. We don't see much of this in "religion" today. "Go with the flow" is more than a saying; it is often the rule. Entertainment instead of worship draws the crowds. "How to"

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10:00 AM	Sunday School
11:00 AM	Morning Worship
6:00 PM	Evening Worship

Mid-Week Services:

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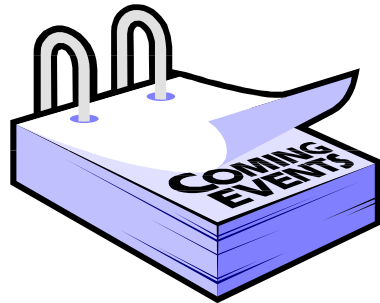
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books on every conceivable subject are the best sellers and often the source of conversation. Role models are those of the music, athletic, and media fields. They are often spoken of as “icons.” By standard dictionary definition, an icon is a religious image worshipped by most Eastern religions, an object of uninitiated devotion! Further, an “iconoclast” is one who attacks established beliefs! Yet, men and women are loosely called “icons.” All of this causes human beings to forget the Lord and that He alone is the Saviour of all mankind. The only One we should worship.

We are told to be “unmovable” or “immovable.” We shouldn’t be “tossed to and fro” by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14) but stand our ground on the truth of the Word, even if the “wind” is a hurricane. The last word to consider in a practical directive is “abounding.” It means “exceeding abundantly above” all the tribulation, tragedies, trials, and trepidations that beset us all. We are to “abound in hope” (Rom. 15:13); “abound in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58); “abound in faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, and

in love” (2 Cor. 8:7); and “abounding in thanksgiving” (Col. 2:7).

To conclude, when we “stay the course” we shall know that our labor is not in vain! What a promise, what encouragement, what a hope! Let’s “stay the course!”



WINTER YOUTH RETREAT

December 28-30, 2009

The Winter Youth Retreat is for young people, ages 13 through college age. It will be held again at Three Mountain Retreat in Clifton, Texas. More information will be available in our next issue (November).

Please note that this year’s retreat will run from Monday through Wednesday rather than our usual Thursday through Saturday format.

Make your plans to join us!

SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE

By Weldon Rightmer

“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.” (Heb. 10:1)

“Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.” (Col. 2:17)

“Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation (a making thoroughly right).” (Heb. 9:10)

In the matter of salvation it is very important that we arrive at proper conclusions. However, we feel that even here many men miss the mark. They try to impose upon us some of the things which belong back in the shadow days. One should never be satisfied with anything less than the real substance.

For instance, a wrong interpretation is placed upon Ephesians 5:26 and Titus 3:5. Those

who believe in baptismal regeneration make a big to do about the meaning of the word “washing” in these two passages. The word is “loutron,” meaning “laver” or “bath.” This immediately reminds us of the truth brought out in Exodus 30:17-21. It was necessary that the priest and his sons wash at this laver before entering the Tabernacle. Because of the connection between these words, many insist that sinners are saved by submitting to baptism in water. A careful reading of Hebrews 9:8-12 and 10:1 will show the folly of such a notion. The washing in Ephesians is accomplished by the Word. It takes place in the sphere of the Word, not in some baptistry. The washing in Titus could not be by water; for God says, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done.” The word “regeneration” means “recreation” or “rebirth.” This washing, or cleansing, takes place when we are created anew in Christ Jesus. We feel sorry for those who would rather have the shadow than the substance.

Another case is found in 1 Peter 3:21.

“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away

of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

This carries us back beyond the shadows of the law. But, in a measure, we see shadow and substance. The word “figure” means “antitype” in this particular passage. If the baptism mentioned here is the antitype, then Noah’s experience must have been the type. Noah certainly did not get wet. God shut Noah in the ark, and it was lifted up by the waters, above the judgment sent by Almighty God. The waters beat against the ark, but Noah and his family were safe within. This ark is a type of Christ. The flood waters that beat against our Lord at Calvary will not reach those who are in Him. (See Psalms 42:7). We believe that Peter was speaking of the baptism of suffering our Saviour experienced at Calvary. Read Luke 12:50. This is the baptism that saves.

Even in this dispensation, it is necessary that one be baptized in order to go to heaven. Let us say quickly that we do not have reference to water baptism. In times past there have been “divers baptisms.” These were merely shadows. There is

“one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5). We believe that a careful reading of Ephesians 1:13 and 4:3 indicates that this is the baptism accomplished by the Holy Spirit. When one accepts the Lord as Saviour the Spirit of God sets His seal upon the work of Christ. Also, the Lord says that He is talking about the “unity of the Spirit.” Why should we bring in a foreign element?

Listen to this verse,

“Buried with him in baptism, the baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” (Col. 2:12)

This is real baptism, administered by God Himself. As someone has wisely said, “We are the ones who have actually been baptized.” Those before us had only the shadows.

Is it necessary for one to be circumcised in order to go to heaven? It all depends on whether we are speaking of shadow or substance. Our readers will immediately say, “we are definitely not a circumcised people.” In a sense that is true. “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncir-

cumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands” (Eph. 2:11). Compare also Galatians 2:7. We are not the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands. To practice such circumcision for spiritual reasons is to no avail in the present dispensation. See Galatians 5:3-6. It was very important to Israel.

Does this verse contradict what we have just given?

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” (Phil. 3:3)

We are the ones who have real circumcision. Israel had merely a shadow.

“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” (Col. 2:11)

This circumcision cuts away the filth of the heart.

“And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the cove-

nant betwixt me and you” (Gen. 17:11).

Compare this with the 6th verse. “And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.” Each time a male child was circumcised, Israel was to be reminded that reproduction was by the power of God, and the seed to the glory of God. This shows the sacredness of the marriage vow.

Because of the circumcision of our Lord and His death on Calvary, we are to reckon our old man to be crucified with Him.

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed—that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (Rom. 6:6)

The body of the flesh is put off by the circumcision of Christ. Only by the power of God can one be born into the family of God. We should also remember that it is by His power that the individual can be fruitful. This is the most sacred relationship of all.

We do not shy away from the above Scriptures just be-

cause of the use of the words “baptism and circumcision.” We wouldn’t think of relegating to Israel the verses mentioned in Philippians and Colossians. Perhaps we are wrong in applying 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 strictly to the Jew. Let us look into this truth.

“For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Back in the shadow days the people were required to offer a Passover lamb. It is now in Christ (and because of what He has done) that God passes over our sins. In Him there is reality. Does God see you in Christ? Are you “accepted in the Beloved?” In our dear Lord there is everything the sinner will ever need.

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.” (Rom. 8:32)

OUR REASONABLE SERVICE

by Gregg Bing

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (Romans 12:1)

With these familiar words, the apostle Paul begins the portion of the letter to the Romans that deals with the daily life and service of a believer. Paul beseeches each of us as brethren, as fellow believers in Christ, to present our bodies as a sacrifice to God.

The word *beseech* literally means to “call to the side of” for the purpose of supporting, comforting, encouraging, or urging. Paul is urging and encouraging us, as believers, to “present” ourselves to God.

To “present” means “to place near or beside; to put at the disposal of; to make available for use.” The word is used in Matthew 26:53 when Peter tried to prevent Jesus’ arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, and Jesus asked him, “Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me

with more than twelve legions of angels?" This same word is used in Luke 2:22 when Jesus' parents brought Him to Jerusalem, as a baby, "to *present* Him to the Lord." In accordance with the law of the firstborn (Exo. 13:2,12), Jesus' parents consecrated Him and presented Him to the Lord. We are urged to do the same thing with our bodies: to "present" or "yield" them to the Lord as "members of righteousness to God" (Rom. 6:13), that they might be vessels "for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21).

Believers are to present their bodies a sacrifice to God. The word "sacrifice" is the same word that is used for the Old Testament sacrifices (Heb. 10:1), as well as for Christ's sacrifice to God for us (Eph. 5:2). Paul uses three adjectives to describe our sacrifice to God.

A Living Sacrifice

First, it is to be a living sacrifice. Old Testament sacrifices were slain and offered to the Lord, but ours is to be a living sacrifice. 2 Corinthians 5:15 states that "... those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."

A Holy Sacrifice

Second, our sacrifice is to be a holy sacrifice. The word *holy* means "separated or set apart." The Old Testament offerings consisted of a lamb or a ram which was without spot or blemish (Lev. 1:3). The Lord Jesus Himself was offered to God "as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19). A holy God requires a holy offering. As believers, we are sanctified or made holy by the blood of Christ. When we trust in Christ as our Savior, we are placed "in Christ." God sees us as He sees Christ: "holy and without blame before Him" (Eph. 1:4). This is what we are positionally in Christ, but as a living sacrifice, believers should also seek to live holy, separated lives for the Lord; lives which are set apart from the world (1 John 2:15-17) with its sinful thoughts, desires, words, and actions; lives which are clean and pure; lives which are consecrated to a holy God.

An Acceptable Sacrifice

Third, our sacrifice is to be an acceptable sacrifice. The word *acceptable* means "well pleasing;" that which brings delight or pleasure. The majority

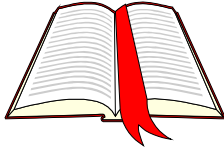
of people, including many believers, live to please themselves or to please other people, but Romans 12:1 declares that our sacrifice is to be well pleasing to God. Many of the Old Testament sacrifices were offerings made by fire. When these offerings were given and sacrificed in accordance with God's Word, the smell of the offering, as it was burnt, was "a sweet aroma to the Lord" (Lev. 1:13). This means it was well pleasing to Him. The Lord Jesus was called by God, "My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). When Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice to God in our behalf, it was a "sweet-smelling aroma" to God (Eph. 5:2). As a living sacrifice, we are to seek to please the Lord in all that we do, say, and think. The apostle Paul stated this was to be our aim in life, "to be well pleasing to Him" (2 Cor. 5:9).

Here is God's desire for His children—that we present our bodies as a sacrifice to Him, a sacrifice that is living, holy, and well pleasing to the Lord. Paul declares that this is our "reasonable service." The word *service*, as used in the New Testament, refers to service rendered unto God. When Jesus was tempted to bow down and

worship Satan, He answered, "It is written, You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve" (Matt. 4:10). The word *service* is used particularly of service rendered to God in the tabernacle (Heb. 9:1,6). It is closely associated with the idea of worship.

The word *reasonable* is the Greek word *logikos*, which is akin to the Greek word *logos*. It means "reasonable, logical, rational; that which is of the mind, thus it is sensible or intelligent." When we consider God's wonderful love for us and the indescribable gift He has given us in His Son (John 3:16, 1 John 4:10), what should our reasonable response be? When we consider that we have been bought with the precious blood of Christ and therefore we belong to God (1 Cor. 6:20), what should be our logical service? When we consider God's wonderful purpose for our lives, to bring glory and honor to Him and to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20), what is the sensible, intelligent thing for us to do? We are to worship the Lord and serve Him only; we are to sacrificially present ourselves to God, placing ourselves completely at His disposal to be used as He sees fit. This is our reasonable service.

BIBLE STUDY BOOKS



The following Bible study materials are available free of charge for your personal use or for use in teaching a Bible class.

by Charles Wages

- Written for Our Learning
- Stepping Stones to Truth
- Past Pentecost to Paul
- Points to Ponder
- The Ages
- Saved by Grace
- Ministry of the Church
- The Perfect Will of God
- Once in a Lifetime
- Fellowship in Christ
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