

“GIVE ME THAT OLD TIME RELIGION!”

By Joe Slater

I have no idea who wrote the original song by this title. It has many variations. I'm thinking of the one Buck Owens sang. One verse says, "Well it was good enough for Mother, it was good enough for Papa, it was good enough for Sister, and it's good enough for me."

The French skeptic Voltaire supposedly said, "If you wish to converse with me, define your terms." Voltaire was wrong about many things, but he got that one right. What is "that old time religion?" I need a definition before I'm willing to say, "It's good enough for me!"

We cannot tell what various singers meant when they sang about "old time religion" being "good enough" for them. In some renditions, "It was good for the Hebrew children" (coming out of Egypt in the Exodus) and "it was good enough for Daniel"

(in captivity in Babylon). But I seriously doubt any of the singers were offering animal sacrifices like the Hebrews did, or strictly observing dietary laws of Moses like Daniel.

Following the religion of one's parents and siblings may or may not be advisable. Again, the question boils down to this: "What is that old time religion?" If Mother, Father, and Sister all were following the religion that is revealed in the New Testament, then by all means, "It's good enough for me."

The sad fact is, however, that much of what passes today for "that old-time religion" is not nearly old enough! Many are following a Pope and a celibate priesthood; but all of that arose after the New Testament was completed and in defiance of it. It isn't nearly old enough! Others are sprinkling babies and calling

it "baptism." Nobody ever heard of such until long after New Testament days. Some may call it "old time religion," but it isn't old enough! Multitudes accompany spiritual songs with various instruments other than the one authorized in the New Testament (the heart, Ephesians 5:19). Not until centuries after the New Testament did that practice begin. Is it "old time religion?" Perhaps, but it's not old enough!

The religion of Christ, revealed in the pages of the New Testament, is not merely "good enough" for us; it is the very best. There is no improving upon it! All the additions and subtractions from it, and alterations of it, have caused only divisions and apostasy. Let us diligently practice what is genuinely "that old time religion!"

— Justin, TX

THE EXAMPLE OF DORCAS

By Hershel Dyer

The city of Joppa, now a section of Tel Aviv and called Jaffa, has been a seaport from ancient times. The prophet Jonah took passage on a boat from Joppa to go to Tarshish. It was here that the great Israelite liberator, Judas Maccabeus, set fire to a fleet of enemy ships in the 2nd century, B. C., avenging the deaths of some 200 Jews. As a port of incoming and outgoing merchandise, one can readily imagine the morally debauched persons who were attracted to it.

In this city, during the early days of the church, there lived a woman by the name of Dorcas. She was a disciple of Christ and is described as a woman "full of good works and charitable deeds which she did." (Acts 9:36.) Since clothing was made by hand in those days, she must have spent much time and labor in making garments for the poor.

Outside the circle of the church in Joppa and the widows with their children whom she clothed, the world might never have known about Dorcas. Her notoriety came after she had become sick and had died. Some of the brethren rushed away to the nearby city of Lydda and brought the apostle Peter back to Joppa. Her subsequent resurrection became widely known so that "many believed on the Lord." (Acts 9:42.)

Here was a woman who sought no fame or glory for herself. She just went about, day by day, rendering needed services for those who could not help themselves.

No doubt the tears of joy in the eyes of poor widows, the sweet smiles on the faces of their innocent children, were all the reward in this world that she desired. If there had been newspapers, we doubt that the

deeds of Dorcas would have been noticed.

This godly woman just brightened the little corner where she was and God did not forget what she did.

"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." (Hebrews 6:10.)

—Tulsa, OK

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:9, 10.)

Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

THE ESSENTIAL MESSAGE

By Danny Tunnell

The Bible from Genesis to Revelation has only one grand theme, and that is Jesus. The Old Testament says, "Someone is coming." The gospel accounts say, "That Someone is here." The epistles say, "This is what that Someone demands." And then there are a few verses of Scripture that say, "That Someone is coming again."

All spiritual blessings are in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Every blessing we receive is because of what Jesus did for us.

At the whipping post, where Jesus was scourged, "Pilate took Jesus, and scourged Him." (John 19:1.) We learn that by those stripes we are healed. (1 Peter 2:24.) Every blessing we receive is because of what Jesus endured for us. He went through the hell of the cross so we wouldn't need to go there. He endured the crown of thorns and the ridicule. He endured the agony and torture of the cross for us. He took what we deserve.

Paul accurately described his preaching this way: "And I brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:1-2.) That is the essential message. If we leave that message out, along with Christ's resurrection, then men and women cannot be saved. We must confess with our mouths the Lord Jesus, and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead. (Romans 10:9,10.)

Issac Watts (1674-1748) is credited with some 750 hymns. Many of his hymns are still in use today and have been translated into numerous languages. Perhaps one of his greatest hymns, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," best conveys the essential message.

— Miami, OK

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.
Forbid it Lord that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ, my God
All the vain things that charm me most
I sacrifice them to His blood
See from His head, His hands, His feet
Sorrow and love flow mingled down
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown
Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were a present far to small
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all

TAKE REFUGE IN THE LORD

By Danny Boggs

We're all worn out by the violence. One news account after another of senseless death and destruction hits us before we've worked our way through the last one. Our hearts break for the people experiencing it up close and personal. Our minds puzzle over the people who perpetrate it. Insecurity creeps in. Could someone run over us or our loved ones on purpose with a truck? Could our fun getaway be interrupted by gunfire? Could someone invade our peaceful place of worship with murderous intent?

If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? In Psalm 11 answers: "In the Lord I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, 'Flee like a bird to your mountain, for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart; if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?' The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes see, His eyelids test the children of man. The Lord tests the righteous, but His soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. Let Him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulphur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. For the Lord is righteous; He loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold His face."

David suffered the terror of madmen. He was no coward. Voices of despair urged him to run away, to flee like a bird to a mountain. But he would not shirk his responsibilities, nor would he forsake his trust in the Lord.

Our culture suffers the consequences of a sustained campaign against the value of human life. The glorification of self-absorption has distracted us from the real needs of others. Murder of the most helpless has been sanctioned in the highest reaches of human government. People have mindlessly and even eagerly been entertained by the bloodshed on the big screen and in the virtual world. It has come home to roost in our society and especially in the minds of deranged men. The one who has been a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44) seems to be having his way.

God is not pulling the strings. People are not puppets. To the core of His being He hates the wicked and the one who loves violence; He will make sure the havoc they wreak revisits them for eternity. Meanwhile, He can use the trials to fine-tune faith. God longs for the upright to behold His face; they will.

Where is God while the foundations are crumbling? The Lord is in His holy temple, on His throne in heaven. The end of the news report is not the end of the story. Take refuge in the Lord.

— Neosho, MO

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

By Bobby Key

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Miami, OK

Editorial . . .

OF DOGS AND MEN

By Dalton Key

One anonymous sage, worlds wiser than most of us, once opined, "Aim at heaven and you'll get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you'll get neither."

He couldn't have been any more on target!

Ask a sportsman. Ask an athlete. Ask the Apostle Paul. They'll all tell you the same thing: aim is everything. Note Paul's words to the brethren at Philippi: "Brothers, I do not consider myself to have laid hold, but I do one thing: forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are ahead, I press toward the goal, toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13,14.)

The apostle knew what he wanted, knew where he was headed, and took definite aim in that direction. A few verses later he wrote, "Our citizenship is in heaven." (Philippians 3:30.)

With this in mind, these further words from the inspired Paul seem especially worthy of our attention: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on the things on the earth." (Colossians 3:1,2.) "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6.) "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." (Galatians 6:7,8.) "While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:18.)

Paul's words reflect the instruction of our Lord, Who taught, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also . . . But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness . . ." (Matthew 6:19-21, 33.)

Most any dog will scour the ground looking for odd scraps and crusty crumbs. But we are not dogs. Those of us created in the very image of God have been made for more; we have been blessed with the capacity for looking up - to heaven - and laying our treasures up there.

But it all depends on our aim. What do you seek?



TWO HOUSEHOLDS AND ONE CHOICE

By Milton Smith

For all accountable adults, there exist two households upon earth. One belongs to Jesus Christ and the other belongs to Satan. Those who do the will of God belong to His household, but those who obey Satan belong to his. But who would dare "obey" Satan? In a very real way, those who refuse to obey God are obeying Satan. When a person knows what God expects of him but chooses rather to ignore such instructions, he is actually choosing to follow Jesus' adversary. The Bible often emphasizes this fact.

When Eve chose to rebel against God's clear instructions regarding the famous tree, whom did she choose to follow? When Judas made the decision to betray his Lord, who was behind that decision? John 13:27 tells us that Satan actually "entered" into Judas. But what does this mean? Obviously, Satan found a quick

entrance into this man's corrupt heart and took full advantage of it. When Ananias and his wife Sapphira chose to lie to the church, who do you suppose was behind this evil decision? Acts 5:3 tells us that Peter told Ananias that it was Satan who had "filled his heart to lie to the Holy Spirit." When Simon the sorcerer offered money to the apostles in an attempt to purchase the ability to give the Holy Spirit to others, Peter said to him: "Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money . . . your heart is not right in the sight of God, for I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." In other words, he was under the influence of the dark side. When Jesus said to Peter, "get behind me Satan," it seems obvious that He knew who was influencing Peter's words. (Matthew 16:23.)

It is easy for a person to know which household he belongs to simply by observing whom he chooses to follow. All faithful Christians are heirs with Christ. His riches become our riches and His joy becomes our joy. In the same manner, His character should become our character. But to follow Satan is to develop his characteristics. To secure eternal life we must remain faithful to the Lord. Those who reject eternal life are choosing to remain faithful to Satan. The promise of eternal hope belongs only to those who make the personal choice to remain faithful members of Jesus' household. To those who make this wise choice, the death of the physical body is merely the beginning of life eternal.

— Tulsa, OK

WORRYING AND PRECIOUS TIME

By Mark Lindley

Time is a precious blessing not to be wasted. With each tick of the clock the brief span of time we have in this world is passing. This is why Paul exhorts us to use our time wisely: "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:16.) We should "number our days," making the most of each moment, living life to the fullest. (Psalm 90:12.)

Perhaps nothing hinders a proper use of time more than the futile exercise of worry. To worry is to "afflict with mental distress or agitation: make anxious." (Webster's.) Worry goes far beyond reasonable concern. To worry is to be anxious or fretful.

Everyone, at some point, will have to deal with the temptation to worry. Many cares and concerns burden our minds. We may worry about our children, finances, health, marriage, and a thousand other things. But worrying wastes time and accomplishes nothing!

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave some powerful principles regarding worry. He asked, "Which

of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature." (Matthew 6:27.) The "cubit" of Scripture was roughly 22 inches, from the elbow to the end of the middle finger. Is it apparent that one cannot increase his or her height by worrying about it. God, by the process of biology, determines the "cubits" of each person's height. This is out of our control. In this same way, the vast majority of our worries are beyond our control. Worrying will never improve one's finances, health or marriage. Worry will never help your children make wise choices. In fact, worry will never do one thing positive for you. But it will waste your time!

Jesus teaches us to "take no thought" for our lives or for tomorrow. (Matthew 6:25,34.) Since God knows our needs, He will provide. He takes care of the birds and the lilies; surely He can and will take care of all who seek Him. (Matthew 6:26,28,30.) Rather than spending our time worrying, we should spend our time seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. (Matthew 6:33.)

If worry has become a problem in your life, break the cycle today. Realize that time is quickly passing. Begin looking to God. Seek Him through a study of His Word, the Bible. Put Him first in your life. Trust His promises, obey His will, and He will take care of you! He promised His people: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5.)

—Ripley, MS

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