

ISSUE

21.45

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

November 10,
2019

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Steve Dixon
Ryan Ferguson
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Justin Smiley
Kevin Wise
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



Reflections on an Opportunity

By Kyle Pope

In only a matter of hours now, I will participate with brother Doug Burleson, an associate professor at Freed-Hardeman University, in a public discussion in Dickson, Tennessee on the subject of Institutionalism, focusing on the issue of expediency. Olsen Park has been announcing this event now for several weeks and the elders recently made arrangements to stream the event at the building this Friday night for anyone who wishes to watch it live. While this has only been in the announcements for a short time, it is the culmination of efforts and planning that began over a year ago. I ask your indulgence as I offer a few reflections on this exciting teaching opportunity.

A Unique Opportunity

Since these issues first became divisive in the 1950s and 60s forums to openly discuss what the Bible teaches on these issues with both sides have virtually disappeared. At the onset of these controversies, congregations and publications openly discussed what the Bible taught on these questions and each side was allowed to make its case in accordance with each person's understanding of Scripture. Debates were held. Books were published and the issues were discussed.

As time went on, that came to an end. In 1954, at the suggestion of an elder who wrote a letter to the *Gospel Advocate* magazine, B.C. Goodpasture, the editor of the oldest running publication among

members of churches of Christ, issued a quarantine against any who wrote advocating a non-institutional position. From that time, until October of 2019, no articles were published that advocated this understanding of Scripture. At the same time, however, Goodpasture allowed a “confessional column,” in which he allowed preachers who once held a non-institutional position to renounce their former view and explain why they changed. In the years that followed, preachers were fired. Long-time friends were separated. Brethren were alienated and walls of division rose.

On a personal level, many families have experienced the tension and alienation these issues can produce as different family members hold one view and others hold a different view. Emotion, stress, and frustration have brought many to feel as if there could never be a time when these things could calmly be discussed and considered.

Certainly, the issues that led to this division are as important and serious as they were when this division first arose, however, we are living in a much different time. As many among mainstream churches have seen the rise of so-called “progressivism,” with some churches bringing in mechanical instruments of music and women in the pulpit, more conservative minded brethren who hold an institutional view of things have recognized that in some cases they have much more in common with those of us who hold a respect for the authority of Scripture than they do with those rapidly slipping toward “progressivism.” As a result, last month, for the first time since 1954, brother Greg Tidwell, the current editor of *Gospel Advocate* magazine, allowed the issues to be openly discussed in a six-part exchange between brother Burleson and myself. The articles were jointly published in *Truth Magazine* the same month.

I am honored and humbled to be able to be a part of this development. No, it will not change the world. I have no expectation that overnight all issues can be resolved. However, as in any conflict, nothing can ever be resolved when people don’t talk to one another. If this event, and the articles that preceded it, demonstrate that brethren who disagree with each another can lovingly speak to each other as gentlemen I will count it a success. As I meditate on this a few things are in the forefront of my mind—and I solicit your prayers on my behalf.



Pray that I say the right things in the right way. Paul taught, **“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one”** (Col. 4:6, NKJV). The Freed-Hardeman University facility in Dickson where this discussion will take place seats around 400 people. I doubt there will be that many people there, however, CEI Bookstore, Freed-Hardeman University (FHU), *Gospel Advocate*, and *Truth Magazine* have been advertising the event. I know a number of people on both sides of these issues who are planning to attend. In addition to this, as I mentioned, both CEI and FHU plan to live-stream it, allowing people all over the world potentially to watch it. This is a humbling proposition. That means that some people for the first time may hear these issues discussed. May God grant to me the clarity of mind, courage of convictions, and love of His word and His people to speak the things I need to say in the spirit of love and compassion that can be the most effective.

Pray That All Goes Well. Paul warned the Corinthians, in their discipline of an erring brother, to be cautious and careful, **“lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices”** (2 Cor. 2:11). In difficult situations, it is easy for small unexpected and unpredictable things to derail the potential good that could result. Satan loves it this way. He wants families to fall apart, marriages to fail, friends to become enemies, and brethren to be alienated from one another. We need to pray that God helps us to safeguard against such things. It could be a mis-spoken word. It could be a flare of emotion that is uncontrolled. It could be something that happens between those who attend the event. May God help us

to keep the focus on what Scripture says and not on the multitude of possible mishaps that Satan hopes may shatter any good that could come from this effort.

Pray for My Health and Safe Travels. Paul taught the Ephesians to be **“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel”** (Eph. 6:18-19). Wednesday night after services I will leave to drive fifteen hours to Nashville. Thursday afternoon and Friday morning I will meet with some brethren who work together to publish Bible class material. Then Friday afternoon I will drive to Dickson for the discussion. Lots of things could happen along the way. Accidents, breakdowns, or sickness could bring all of these plans to a



screeching halt! May God grant me sound health, a strong voice, safe travels, and an uneventful journey. Finally...

Pray That God May Be Glorified by This Effort. Peter wrote, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may

be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 4:11). I don't generally speak this personally in articles that I write, because I don't ever want it to be about me. Christ must be the focus of all our efforts. In this situation the same is true, even though I wanted to share with you what's on my mind in order to ask for your thoughts and prayers for this upcoming event. This is not about me. It is not about brother Burleson. It is about love for God. Jesus taught that we show our love for Him by our obedience to His commands (John 14:15). May all that transpires through our written efforts and this public discussion exalt and glorify the God who loves us and sent His Son to die for us. May we grow stronger in His word. May we show our love to Him more deeply by our consistent and complete obedience to His word. May all who are touched by the events of this week grow in these things to the glory of God.



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Welcome Visitors

**We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.**

● **Let us know if you have any questions.**