

works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Paul urged the Philip-
pians to be “**blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world**” (Phil. 2:15). I have preached for Olsen Park for fourteen years. We have had many Gospel Meetings and special studies of various kinds over the years. We have advertised in the paper, on the radio, over Facebook, and door-to-door. While all of these efforts bore fruit, I can honestly say we have never had an opportunity like the one that we have this com-

ing week. We have had people from India, Great Britain, and the Philippines contact us about this study expressing their plans to watch the livestream. Christians in the United States have called or sent messages about it from Alaska, California, North Carolina, Florida, Michigan, Tennessee, and many other places. Although undoubtedly our actual attendance at the building will not be what it would have been if the pandemic had not hit, still some people have planned their vacation around coming to the debate. Groups across the country are planning to watch. Christians in other places have advertised this study, and thousands have seen it announced on social media and hundreds received paper announcements. Olsen Park has never had an opportunity like this!

Certainly, we all wish that conditions were different. We pray that a cure will be found, and social unrest will come to an end. But let us recognize the unique and wonderful opportunity that lies before us in the week ahead and may God be glorified by the efforts we put forth.



Faithful Sayings Issue 22.29 July 19, 2020

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Welcome Visitors

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



ISSUE

22.29

July 19, 2020

Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM
10:00 AM
11:00 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

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

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

A Unique and Wonderful Opportunity

By Kyle Pope

When the calendar rolled over to January 1, 2020, who would have ever dreamed that before the first quarter came to an end, the world would turn upside down? Only days before this we took flights, made trips, ate at restaurants, and assembled in large crowds without a thought. Then all of a sudden Spring Break turned into the last day of school. Public school students became homeschoolers overnight. Employees faced furloughs. Public buildings and doctor's offices were closed. Churches had to cancel assemblies or creatively meet on the lawn or in parking lots. Preachers who had never even watched a livestream suddenly had to become cameramen, producers, directors, and online teachers offering the only voice many congregations would be able to hear for months. Items like toilet paper, that kids once tossed in the trees and rooves of the homes of their friends became scarce. Shelves were empty at the stores, families were urged to “shelter in place,” and life seemed to grind to a nerve-racking halt!

As if this wasn't stressful enough, just about the time it seemed that light was starting to shine at the end of the tunnel, social unrest, racial tensions, and national political chaos erupted! Riots sprang up everywhere. Fires were set only steps from the White House! Buildings, businesses, monuments, and established institutions started to be torn down. Anger was everywhere! One group hates another group! Division is all around us. Conflict arose in every relationship. Nothing is stable. There is no peace—and no end in sight!

So, in the midst of all of this Olsen Park Church of Christ in Amarillo Texas hosts a debate? What a strange convergence of circumstances! Bad timing? The wrong environment for this kind of thing? The elders had already made the tough decisions to cancel our Spring Gospel Meeting in May and our Summer Bible Study aimed at kids in June—should this also have been cancelled or rescheduled? As the time drew closer all indications seemed to suggest the worst was behind us. But by the time new problems arose again in the state, announcements had been sent out, reservations had been made, and health precautions that allowed us to assemble were already in place—so here we are, the debate starts Monday.

While some might see this as the worst possible time for a religious discussion between those holding dramatically different views on major Biblical doctrines, let me offer some reasons I believe we should choose to see this as a unique and wonderful opportunity.

An Opportunity to Show Love Even in Disagreement. There is no question that tensions are running high. Anxiety is the rule of the day. Disagreement in the world turns to hatred, violence, and alienation. But disciples of Christ are told, **“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”** (John 13:35, NKJV). Does that mean that Christians should avoid all disagreements? Paul commanded disciples **“not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers”** (2 Tim. 2:14), but charged elders **“by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict”** (Titus 1:9). Jude commanded Christians to **“contend earnestly for the faith”** (Jude 3) and John said we must **“not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God”** (1 John 4:1). These things cannot be done without honestly confronting religious disagreement, but that doesn’t mean we approach religious conflict with anger, hatred, and unkindness. Upholding the sound teaching of God’s word has far more lasting consequences than any social, political, or health issues, but what a powerful opportunity we have over the next few days to demonstrate to a world destroying itself how disciples of Jesus Christ can set a better example. We will disagree. We will be passionate about God’s word, but we will not allow that to make us lose sight of the love we have for one another. If I am wrong, my opponent is my friend if he can help me see the truth. If he is wrong, I want to speak to him in a way that lovingly moves him to change. Yet even if this change doesn’t happen, an opportunity stands before us to show the world an example of souls who disagree but love one another and love God’s word.

Four Nights to Shift Our Focus Away from Life’s Troubles. Paul urged the Colossians, **“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth”** (Col. 3:2). Some might say, “with all that’s going on in the world right now, this isn’t the time to be thinking about things like religious differences.” I suggest, what better time is there to turn our focus away from the overwhelming and insurmountable problems that surround us and think for a few minutes about things with eternal importance? For four evenings next week we don’t have to think about a virus (and if it will ever be cured). We don’t have to think about crime, injustice, po-

litical platforms, candidates, parties, riots, the economy, or any other material things that bombard us. For four nights, for two and a half hours each night—shorter than most ball games—we can focus only on “What does the Bible teach?” Paul said we should, **“Test all things; hold fast what is good”** (1 Thess. 5:21). For a few minutes, for four nights next week, we can turn our minds away from the chaos of our world and consider the case made from Scripture presented by both sides. We will grow from this! Our hearts need this diversion. This concerns things that will matter long after the turmoil of 2020 fades from our focus!

An Opportunity to Dig Deeper Than Usual. The Hebrew writer described different elements of Gospel teaching as **“milk”** versus **“solid food”** (Heb. 5:12). Peter described some of Paul’s teachings as **“hard to understand”** (2 Pet. 3:16). Balanced Gospel preaching must include both. Paul declared **“the whole counsel of God”** (Acts 20:27), but some things require extra work. This week we have an opportunity for a level of in-depth study that is unique. Some may not like getting this much into the details, but it’s good for us. We shouldn’t eat steak and nothing else, but neither should we drink milk and nothing else. We’ll return to a balanced diet when this is over, but for four nights let’s relish some choice cuts of high-quality spiritual “steak” (so to speak). Who wouldn’t enjoy a good Texas cook-out four nights during the week?

This Is Happening Because These Men Are Trying to Demonstrate Love for God and His Word. Why would anyone spend over a year, preparing answers for different Scriptural arguments, knowing full-well that his opponent will offer arguments that seek to contradict the very points he seeks to make? Popularity? Hardly! Debate preachers aren’t too fashionable these days. Money? Not in this debate. Pride? That is not what I have seen from these men in my experience. Paul said of himself:

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

The reason both of these men are doing this is because they are trying to demonstrate love for God and His word! Now obviously, as brother Reeves’s moderator he and I are in agreement, but even though I passionately disagree with brother Neubauer I honestly believe he is convinced of his views and sees this as an effort to show his love for God. We should respect that. When people are trying to show love for God, even when we must disagree, in a world that thrives on hatred and opposition to God we all must appreciate those striving to honor Him.

We Have Never Had a Chance Like This Before! Jesus said to His disciples, **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good**