



ISSUE

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Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

9:30 AM

10:30 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Patrick Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McNear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

Leaving Room for Change

By Kyle Pope

Visitors to modern day Turkey can observe an unusual sight. Many concrete homes that are scattered throughout the country have metal rebar (the ridged steel rods used to reinforce concrete structures) protruding from the top of the houses. This is not due to damage or accident, but it is a deliberate choice made when constructing a house in order to allow for expansion should the homeowner wish to add on in the future.

In writing to the divided church of Corinth in his first epistle, the apostle Paul went to great lengths to stress that the apostles and prophets of the first century were not masters to be honored, but **“servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God”** (1 Cor. 4:1, NKJV). As “stewards” God expected certain behavior on the part of these men. Paul taught, **“it is required in stewards that one be found faithful”** (1 Cor. 4:2). This faithfulness was not judged, defined, and determined by man. Paul explained, **“with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court”** adding, **“In fact, I do not even judge myself”** (1 Cor. 4:3). What a remarkable statement! As an apostle he would later declare in this very epistle, **“the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord”** (1 Cor. 14:37), yet that did not mean he could not stumble. Even as an apostle he had to constantly examine his own behavior by the standard of God’s word to make certain that he was indeed “faithful.” He continued, **“For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified**

by this; but He who judges me is the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:4).

There are few in Scripture who were as bold and confident as the apostle Paul. When Elymas the sorcerer withstood him, by the Holy Spirit he called him a **“son of the devil”** and **“enemy of all righteousness”** (Acts 13:10). When Ananias the high priest commanded men to strike him, he boldly told him, **“God will strike you, you whitewashed wall!”** (Acts 23:3). Paul even rebuked Peter, when he erred by withdrawing himself from social contact with Gentile Christians (see Gal. 2:11-21). Yet, coupled with this boldness was a humility that recognized even he could be wrong! Even though he could say late in his life **“I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day”** (Acts 23:1), Paul could look back and remember a time in his life when he had **“persecut-**

ed the church” (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13). So, he would acknowledge to the Corinthians although he knew nothing **“against”** himself it was God who was the judge of his behavior (1 Cor. 4:4).

We are not all as well-balanced as the apostle Paul. We often find it hard to be bold and stand strong for what we believe to be right while maintaining a humility that recognizes the possibility we could be wrong. We either present ourselves with arrogance, and over-confidence or become so timid that we are unwilling to stand up for anything. How can we avoid such extremes?—By always conducting ourselves in a way that leaves room for change on our part and on the part of those with whom we interact. We must do this...

1. When Reaching a Conviction. The Bereans are set forth in Scripture as such a wonderful example. They did not simply accept every doctrine that was set before them. Instead, they **“searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”** (Acts 17:11). This should be our attitude also! The apostle John commanded that we must not **“believe every spirit but test the spirits, whether they are of God”** (1 John 4:1). Only when we find that a doctrine or practice conforms to the teaching of Scripture should we accept it. So let’s say we have become convinced that we have *rightly divided* the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). What then? Does the searching stop? Paul taught that we should **“test all things; hold fast what is good”** (1 Thes. 5:21). We should never be so confident of our present condition that we are unwilling to continually test our convictions. Every Christian at one time was a soul lost in sin. Only by testing our lives by the pattern of Scripture can we make certain we are not deceiving ourselves about our present condition. We must also, however, leave room for change...



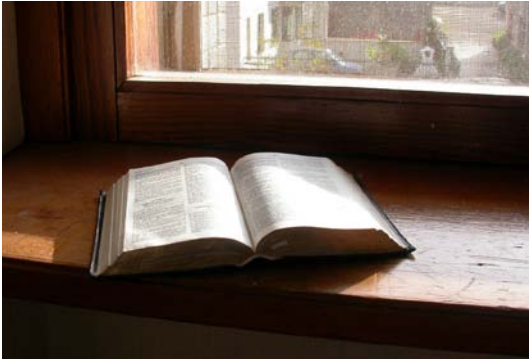
Olsen Park Church of Christ

2. When Arguing Our Case. What must be our attitude when we reach a conviction about something? Do we become so sure of our convictions that we act with arrogance? In arguing our case with others, do we refuse to consider even the slightest possibility we could be wrong? The Bible teaches that Christians should not act with doubt. In discussing the eating of meats, while Paul taught the Divine revelation on the matter, he ended his discussion to the Romans with the bold declaration, **“But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin”** (Rom. 14:23). If I leave room for change in arguing some conviction, or acknowledge that I could be wrong, does that reflect timidity or doubt? Not necessarily! It can reflect prudence.

Before the Lord spoke to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, Saul had obviously studied the validity of the claims made by Christians about Jesus. He was convinced in his conviction that Jesus was a fraud. He said to King Agrippa years later, that at that time, **“I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”** (Acts 26:9). What if Paul had been so convinced of his conviction, that even in the face of the miraculous blinding he received on the road, his pride prevented him from recognizing his error? The Holy Spirit teaches, **“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”** (Prov. 16:18). If I become so proud of my understanding of Scripture that I am unwilling to continually test it, what happens if further study of God’s word shows I was wrong? If I don’t leave myself room to change when arguing passionately for some conviction, my pride might actually prevent me from ever being willing to acknowledge that I was wrong. Thankfully, Saul of Tarsus left himself room to change in spite of the personal humiliation and shame this surely brought to him. Finally, we must also leave room for change...

3. When Rebuking Error. We sometimes speak of someone being “backed into a corner.” What we mean by this is that circumstances have forced a person into a

bad position with no good way out. When Paul addressed the disciplinary action the Corinthians had taken toward a brother in the church in Corinth he urged them after the man’s repentance, **“to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow”** (2 Cor. 2:7). Paul acknowledges here that even efforts to confront sin and error, if approached with the wrong attitude can result in consequences that are counter-productive. Because of this danger, it shouldn’t surprise us that when Paul commanded the Galatians to **“restore”** the brother or sister who **“is overtaken in any trespass”** he commanded that they do so **“with a spirit of gentleness”** (Gal. 6:1a). He isn’t talking about a timidity that ignores sin. He is warning about attitudes that might constitute sin or lead to further sin. They were commanded to approach this **“with a spirit of gentleness considering yourself lest you also be tempted”** (Gal. 6:1b). This *temptation* could involve temptation to engage in the sin being rebuked, temptation that might arise from a negative reaction on the part of



things about their motives or character that we are not in a position to know, we may well “back them into a corner.” If I am left with no honorable room to change without feeling abused or treated with disrespect, the very efforts to correct my wrong may actually provide a temptation to defend myself no matter what! In such a case, although I may actually be in the wrong the one who rebuked me left me no room to change and my pride led me to accept anything other than the truth brought to me in such a harsh way.

the one being rebuked, or even temptation to handle the encounter in a way that constitutes sin on the part of those brining the rebuke.

It is true that sin and error must be rejected for one to be right with God, but what if a brother or sister approaches me about my error or sin in such a way that my pride is aroused? That doesn't excuse my sin, but it may leave me with no good way to correct my error. When we rebuke those who are in error we want them to realize that they are wrong, but if we do this in a way that mocks them, belittles them, or assumes

This isn't a “magic formula.” Sometimes even those approached with great gentleness rebel against the word of God and continue in error. Sometimes, we fall so in love with ideas we imagine in our hearts, that even when the word of God shows such things to be false we continue to passionately embrace them. Yet, for the “**good and honest heart**” (Luke 8:15, LO) who leaves room for change in his own life and in the lives of those he encounters, like that rough rebar sticking out of the concrete walls of homes in Turkey, he allows himself room to grow and build his life continually on the sound teaching of God's word.



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