

Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

VOLUME XIV

APRIL 1994

NUMBER 9

SOME REFLECTIONS ON DOCTRINAL RESTRICTIONS ARE WE UNIQUE?

By

Jackie M. Stearsman

We are occasionally chastised for holding certain religious positions. Some would have us believe that we are the most "stubborn," "dogmatic," "legalistic," "sectarian," etc. etc. religious body the world has ever seen. To the uninformed this may appear to be true; to the informed it is easy to show that it is false.

Are We Unique?

What are the facts relative to holding a given set of religious beliefs or convictions? Because I understand that I am restricted in what to believe and what I am permitted to teach, does this make me different from all others? No. Many persons and groups hold exclusive religious teachings. Do you think that the Pope of the Roman Catholic Religion would permit me, as I am, to function as a

Roman Catholic Priest? Jehovah's Witness knock on our doors and are never alone. The one who stands in front seeks to control the teaching at the door. Do you think they would permit me to teach for them? The Mormon elders that knock on your door are regulated by a specific set of religious doctrines. If they were not different there would be no reason to try and find individuals to indoctrinate.

Most religious bodies have a Theological Seminary that prepares their priests and pastors. You will not be able to teach for these bodies without upholding a specific set of religious beliefs. We are not unique! Others preach and teach a restricted message.

Any religious body that does not regulate its

teaching is destined to extinction. Those that are committed to changing the Lord's people know if they are successful, they will have to change the teaching and doctrine. Before you can change the teaching of any person or group you must change their respect for what they hold as true and sacred.

The call that is often made for us to lay down religious positions in order to have fellowship with others in religious matters is designed to weaken people in their convictions. We must never permit mere human opinion to be the basis of our religious attitudes and actions. We must have our religious attitudes and actions firmly rooted in the Bible. It is sad but true that some people have greater commitment to man made

religious doctrine than they do to the Bible. This must never be so of us.

Those in man-made churches know that they have no exclusive right to their beliefs. Few if any would condemn you for not holding to their convictions. To them all religious movements are man-made. To many, one church is as good as another. They hold to these positions but will devote their lives to that which in their minds has no basis beyond man made teaching.

Too Many Problems?

We must not become weary in well doing. Problems among brethren are real and are sufficient excuse for the timid and weak to feign justification for leaving or becoming something different. When we look to other religious groups we can not claim exclusive rights on religious problems. Religious groups of all persuasions have problems. You can not cite a religious people who have not had differences. All groups that have been in existence for a period of time have had those who want to change some of their religious doctrines or positions. Problems become so pointed that separate bodies are formed and people go their different ways. How

do you think so many different religious bodies came into being?

To Whom We Appeal Is Revealing

When we appeal to the Bible and the Bible alone we will not be able to function as a Roman Catholic Priest. Why? When we appeal to the Bible as the sole source of our faith and actions we will not be equipped to teach Jehovah's Witness Doctrine or Mormon Doctrine.

When we limit our appeal to the Bible alone we will not be able to function in the Christian Church and in some churches of Christ. Those in these circles will fill their writings and teachings with appeals to the "Restoration Movement" persons or positions. If the specific position(s) they wish to occupy could be sustained by an appeal to the Bible they would do so. Since they can not they must come to us with a call for a new hermetic that is rooted in the Restoration Movement. We can prove most any religious position we desire from someone that has been in what men classify as a restoration movement.

That to which we make our appeal for justifying our religious position will reveal the

foundation of our faith. If it is not the Bible it is not sufficient.

Differing over religious positions is not an exclusive position of the people of God. The question is not that we differ, but upon what basis do we differ? To what do we appeal and to what do we hold that makes us differ from anyone or any group? The only basis for religious appeal and religious convictions is the Bible, the Word of God. Our determination is to make our appeal to the Bible in all matters of faith and doctrine. We have no private or novel religious position. We are determined to have all our thoughts and actions rooted in a "thus saith the Lord." We invite others to join us in this Bible centered emphasis.

Our basis for such a position is demanded by the Bible. We want to have the Apostles doctrine sanction our actions (Acts 2:42). We are determined to abide in the doctrine of Christ (II John 9-11). The

The Harvesters

Published Monthly by the Florida School of Preaching 1807 South Florida Avenue, Lakeland, Florida 33803 (813) 683-4043

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TRAINING PREACHERS SINCE 1969

Bible does not permit us to have fellowship with religious error (Eph. 5:11). The Bible expects us to identify any and all teaching that is contrary to the doctrine of Christ as taught in the Bible (Rom. 16:17). Christ expects us to be of the same mind and judgment and that there be no division among his followers (I Cor. 1:10). Paul said that we must acknowledge his writings as the commandment of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37-38).

Commitment to the principles in the above paragraph will make us differ with many in the religious world. We can not lay aside enough doctrine to have unity with all religious people. Who would respect us if we did? We differ with many in the religious world and we know why we differ. We differ with many in the religious world and the Bible demands that we differ with them. You differ with people religiously. Why? You no doubt agree with some people religiously. Why?

The Lord's people have always had problems. Any religious body has problems. All problems are not a sign of failure. When we permit problems to take us from the Lord and His Word then we must return to Him and His teaching. He

changes not. We must make adjustment in every attitude and action to bring it into subjection to His will. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5). "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise . . . For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (II Cor. 10:12, 18).



FLAVIL H. NICHOLS CHART LESSONS

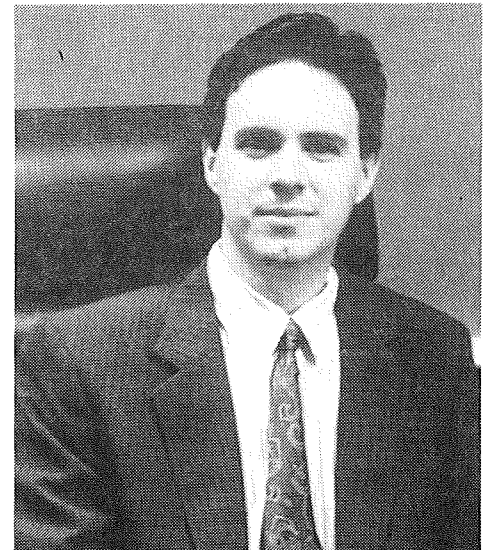
Brother Nichols will present a series of lessons to the students April 28 and 29, 1994. The series will begin on Thursday at 1:00 p.m. On Friday we will start at 10:30 a.m., break an hour for lunch, and continue until 2:30 p.m.

Anyone may attend these sessions, bring their camera and take pictures of the lessons. This should be of special interest to preachers and those who teach God's Word.

GRADUATION 1994

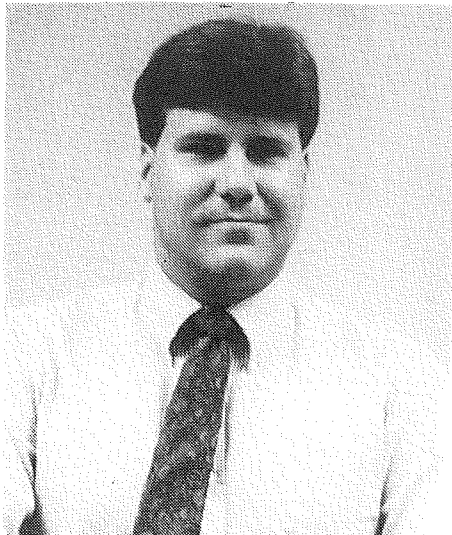
As the school year comes to a close in May there will be four men who are completing their class work and receiving their diplomas. These are William Howard, P.J. Hudson, James Johnson and Bobby Simmons.

Graduation services will be at the South Florida Avenue Church of Christ. This is where the school meets and services will follow the evening services May 8, 1994. We hope you can be with us.

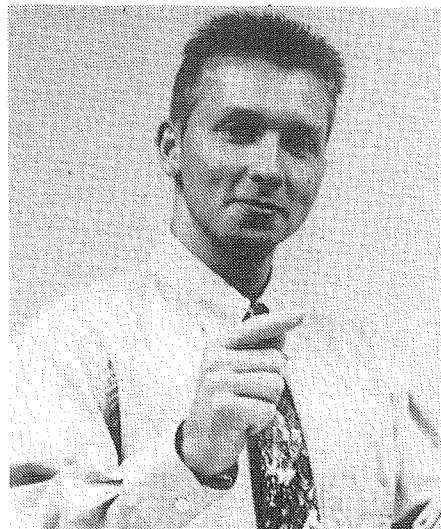


William Howard

William is thirty years of age. He grew up in Cullman, Alabama at Childhaven. He was married to Katrace Pettigrew last year. William and Katrace will be working with the Beville Road Church of Christ in Daytona Beach, Florida.



P.J. Hudson



James Johnson



Bobby Simmons

P.J. was born and grew up in New England. He and his family moved to Brandon, Florida, in 1984 where they attended the Bell Shoales Church of Christ. After High School he served in the army where he developed skills as a communications technician. He married Celeste Hughes, of Lakeland, Florida, last year. They are looking for full time work in a congregation.



James is single and came to the school as a new convert. He is twenty-one years of age. He was converted by a friend, David Dominessy who also attended the school and is now preaching for the Woodland Place Church of Christ in Ocala.



Bobby has been a member of the church for fourteen years. He has attended Florida School of Preaching part time for a number of years. Bobby has assisted a number of congregations in the West Central Florida area by preaching on a part time basis. He wants to preach the gospel full time.



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