

# The Harvester



## Preparing Souls

## To Serve The Lord



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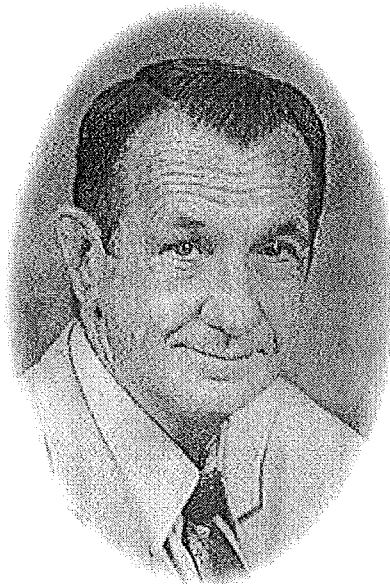
### Independently Dependent On The Gospel

By Brian R. Kenyon

“We need more independent thinkers!” is a statement often heard in the field of medicine, technology, and environmental science. What is usually meant by this statement is that we need more people whose conclusions are based more on a fresh, objective evaluation of the evidence, rather than on the “status quo,” the latest political bandwagon, and/or conformity to the opinions and projects of those whom they wish to please. In this sense, each generation of the Lord’s church needs independent thinkers! The independent thinkers referred to here are not those whose approach to study is a standardless, independent

independence. What we need are “thinkers” who study for themselves the “unsearchable riches of Christ” (cf. Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15), whose conclusions are not based upon the “status quo,” the latest bandwagon, or the desire to please others, but rather their conclusions are reached independently dependent on the Gospel!

#### “An After Glow of Smiles”



**Ron Jones**

April 3, 1938-March 31, 2008

On Friday, April 11, we took a “field trip” to memorialize our brother in Christ, Ron Jones. Ted Wheeler and Jackie Stearsman officiated the services. Ron was baptized into Christ while living in Venice, Florida, in 1980, the same year that Judy, his wife of over fifty years, was also baptized. Ron loved the Lord and stood for the Gospel. He was a great friend of the school. We honored Ron and Judy at our 1990 Booster Banquet. Not only do we remember Ron for his Christian example, we also remember him for his zeal for life. His first heart transplant was in 1993. Doctors told him then that he could expect about five years.

#### Consider the Apostle Paul

The churches of Galatia were in the process of abandoning the Gospel when Paul wrote his letter to them (Gal. 1:6-7). It turns out that there were false teachers (Judaizers, as they are sometimes called) who were binding the Law of Moses in addition to faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:10; 5:2 cf. Acts 15:1, 5). These Judaizers were teaching what amounted to a “different gospel” (Gal. 1:6, NKJ). Because the Gospel Paul preached did not agree with their “status quo,” bandwagon, or standard of acceptance, the Judaizers attempted to discredit his ministry. One of the chief ways they attempted to discredit Paul was to claim that

However, that heart functioned well until 2005, when he had a second heart transplant. In the secular world, Ron was an accomplished construction contractor, real estate broker, and land developer. Consistent determination and tremendous knowledge in many areas of life are what led to his success. Ted fittingly remarked that “Ron was a jack of all trades and master of most.” In addition to being tender and compassionate, Ron also had a keen sense of humor. Many of us will always remember his famous “dog mumps.” How many of us even encouraged him when we found unsuspecting people who had not yet heard of the dreaded “mumps” and introduced them to Ron? We will greatly miss our brother and friend in the Lord. Let us continue to pray for Judy and the family and cherish the memories that we have of this one of a kind brother in Christ. **-editor**

## Changes In The Board of Directors

**Scott Gerhardt** recently resigned from the Florida School of Preaching board of directors. He served as one of the elders with the Central church of Christ in Clearwater, and had served on the board since 2003. His work recently transferred him to Texas. We appreciate his service on the board.

## David Anderson, New Board Member



Brother Anderson serves as one of the elders for the South Florida Avenue church of Christ, Lakeland. In addition to his spiritual responsibilities, he has worked in law enforcement since 1977. Currently (since 1984) he works with the Lakeland Police Department. We look forward to working with him, anticipating his good insight and wisdom.

his Gospel (cf. Rom. 2:16) was man-made. Thus, in the early chapters of Galatians, Paul defends his ministry by showing that the Gospel he preached was not dependent on humans, not even the “pillar” apostles of Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9). Rather, what he preached was *independently dependent on the Gospel!* Let us note three truths involved with being independently dependent on the Gospel.

## Pleasing Men Must Not Be The Goal

After expressing his shock at the speed with which the Galatians were deserting of the Gospel, Paul writes, “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). Paul’s enemies no doubt accused him of pleasing others at the expense of truth (cf. Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 10:1-18), but Paul makes clear that he does not compromise the truth in order to seek approval from others. In fact, just before this verse, he pronounced a curse upon all who would seek to change the Gospel (Gal. 1:8-9)! Serving Christ and pleasing people at the expense of the Gospel

are completely incompatible. Being the “servant [bondservant, NKJ]” of Christ means willingness to give up everything for Him, including having the favor of men (cf. Jn. 12:42-43). The word “yet” in the phrase, “for if I yet pleased men,” means “still” (cf. “for if I still pleased men...,” NKJ). This indicates that when Paul, in his Saul of Tarsus days, was zealously upholding what he believed to be the Law of Moses to the point of persecuting Christians (Acts 7:58; 8:1-3 cf. Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:4-6), he was actually doing it to please men!

Are there individuals today who, like Saul of Tarsus, think they are doing God’s service by attacking faithful Christians and trying to undermine their Scriptural efforts? If so, could it be that they are only seeking to please men, whether those from whom they seek approval are in the minority or majority? Paul certainly had nothing against people being pleased with him as long as it was not because he compromised the Gospel—he in fact became “all things to all men,” so that he “might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:19-22). What Paul preached and practiced, however, was not dependent on pleasing men. Instead, he was independently dependent on the Gospel, seeking to please Jesus!

## Adhere To What Jesus Has Revealed

To further prove to his opponents that the Gospel he preached was independently dependent on the Gospel, Paul writes, “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. <sup>12</sup>For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11-12). In these verses, Paul denies three sources from which he received the Gospel. First, Paul did not learn it by human authority (“after man”). Jewish traditions, as the Judaizers taught, were handed down by men, but not the Gospel! Second, Paul did not learn the Gospel by human transmission. “Received” is from a word (*paralambano*) that was often used in first century secular literature to refer to the transmission of religious teaching. There is nothing inherently wrong with human transmission (cf. 2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6), but that is simply not the way Paul received the message he preached. Third, Paul did not learn the Gospel by human teaching. True, Ananias taught Paul what he must do to be saved (Acts 9:6-22; 22:16), but so far as the Gospel he preached, he received it directly from the Lord!

Paul goes on to show his movements to point out the impossibility of his receiving the Gospel from the other apostles (Gal. 1:13-17). In fact, it was not until three years after his conversion that he went to Jerusalem to meet with Peter, but only for the purpose of getting to know him, not to learn the Gospel. The word “see” in “after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter” means “to visit, to get to know,”

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as evidenced by other translations (NAS, ESV). "Then," says Paul, "fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also" (Gal. 2:1). Whether the fourteen years be measured from Paul's conversion (Gal. 1:13) or from his visit three years after his conversion (Gal. 1:18) matters little. The point is that Paul had been preaching the Gospel long before he met privately with "James, Cephas, and John," who were reputed to be "pillars" (Gal. 2:9).

Obviously, we do not receive the Gospel directly from Christ as did Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8-13). However, to be independently dependent on the Gospel, we must study, believe, and practice "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12), not the conclusions of other human beings. While it is true that others may conclude what the Bible teaches, it must be because the Bible teaches it, rather than because an esteemed preacher (past or present) believes it, that leads us to our conclusions. Several years ago on a missionary campaign, one worker carried a well known brotherhood *Questions and Answers* book almost everywhere he went. He knew the volume well, having it marked and highlighted in several places. When asked a question, he first checked in that book rather than The Book. This writer has no problems with the writings of brethren, but should we not first check to see what the "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21)?

## Be In Fellowship With Others Who Are Dependent On The Gospel

When Paul met with the apostles in Jerusalem, "they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter" (Gal. 2:7). It is not the case that there are two Gospels: one for the Jews and another for the Gentiles (cf. Gal. 3:28). There is only one Gospel (Gal. 1:6-7)! What Paul's ministry in the one Gospel was to the Gentiles, Peter's was to the Jews! Both Peter and Paul were empowered by the same mighty God (Gal. 2:8). The Jerusalem apostles recognized this, so they "gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision" (Gal. 2:9). The fact that the apostles would extend fellowship to Paul was a blow to the Judaizers' case. There would certainly be some cultural difference between the Jews and Gentiles (cf. 1 Cor. 9:20-21), but that should be no reason for Paul and Peter to break fellowship. The Gospel can be applied in both cultures, as it can in any culture today. In this particular case, "that we should remember the poor" was common to both Peter's and Paul's ministries (Gal. 2:10).

True fellowship can only be based on adherence to the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 1:3, 5-7), not adherence to the "status quo," politics, or that which seeks to please a majority or a minority of men. Think back to the American Restoration Movement. How many of these men, independent of each other and the denominations from which they were departing, arrived at the same conclusions based upon strict dependence on the "revelation of Jesus Christ"? The same can and should be done today. Are we only in fellowship with those who agree with our every opinion and/or project? We can be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10), even by holding different opinions, when we all agree with God's word that matters of judgment are matters judgment and matters of obligation are matters of obligation. Extending fellowship must not be dependent on any other standard, except adherence to the Gospel (Eph. 4:1-6)!

### Conclusion

We need more "independent thinkers" in the church today—brethren who are independently dependent on the Gospel! It is not enough to know what we believe and practice; we must know why! If the "why" we believe and practice something is merely because it meets the "status quo" or political agenda or standard of acceptance with those we wish to please, then that "why" is not good enough! Like Paul, let us allow the "revelation of Jesus Christ," which for us is found in the Bible, to determine our beliefs and practices (cf. Gal. 1:11-12). Like the Jerusalem apostles, let us extend fellowship to those who are faithfully laboring in the Gospel, even if the expedencies employed are as different as those involved with Peter's ministry to the Jews and Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. ☉

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**Special Contributions (matching funds, memorials, etc.):** Atlantic Christian Fund.  
\*Our final deposit for the month is made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month's financial statement.

# Consistency

By Gene Burgett

While on a recent car trip I heard a snippet on the news about a bill that is making its way through the Florida legislature. The bill calls for women who are about to have an abortion to have a sonogram of their unborn child. The stated purpose of the measure is to educate the mother as to the state of her child. It is ironic that the pro-abortion lobby is opposed to the bill because it is the political left that is often crowing about the need for the public to be educated.

Consistency seems to be something difficult to attain in just about all realms of life. This should not be difficult to understand since consistency is the mark of maturity and proficiency at virtually any undertaking. Many people occasionally throw a basketball into the basket, but it is the individual who does it consistently that teams seek. Consistency is how one proves that a high bowling scores was not just dumb luck.

The New Testament uses the word "walk" to refer to how one consistently behaves. The individual who consistently refuses to live within the will of God is said to "walk according to the flesh" (Rom. 8:4), "walk disorderly" (2 Thes. 3:11), and "walk in darkness" (1 Jn. 1:6). Those who consistently follow the will of God are described as those who "walk in the light" (1 Jn. 1:7), "walk according to his commandments" (2 Jn. 1:6), and "walk worthy of the Lord" (Col. 1:10). Our walk is the general way in which we conduct ourselves.

To be consistent does not mean to be perfect and flawless. The best basketball player does not make every shot, the best baseball player strikes out sometimes, and the greatest receiver does not catch every ball thrown his way. However, when players reach a certain level of consistency we are usually surprised when they fail. What people expect of us might be a good measure of our walk. Are people surprised when we "miss the mark" (which is the literal definition of the word "sin")? If so, then that is an indication we have been consistently walking with God in their eyes.

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