

A WARNING FROM THE PAST

Fighting for the Truth is almost a lost art. Men who are enjoying the benefits of the Gospel unmixed with human error are enjoying these benefits because our fathers fought for the Truth.

Every inch of ground from that mysterious way of being saved, which was better felt than told, to the plain conditions of pardon as taught in the New Testament, was fought out for us by our fathers.

If someone before us had not fought for the Truth, most of us might yet be in the fog of denominational teaching. This is not the time to temporize or make friends with error.

—F.B. Srygley
Deceased



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Let us pray for...

Rick & Sheila Beauchamp—his job hunt & mother, her recovery from surgery

Lavonne McClish—macular degeneration and other health problems

Janice Parks—her health and family burdens

Sandy Greene and Rick Heimberger—cancer

Faye Tarbet—recovery from major surgery

Records you helped make last week...

Bible Class	11
Sunday AM Worship	12
Sunday PM Worship	12
Wednesday PM Bible Class/Worship	13
Contribution	\$400.00
Contribution average (2009)	\$346.55

Sermon broadcasts...

Both sermons each Sunday are broadcast via Internet, available at our Website, www.northpointcoc.com. The Sunday morning sermon begins at approximately 10:47 a.m., and Sunday afternoon at approximately 1:15 p.m.

Bible class teacher for January

Jerry Smith

Chairman of Men's Meetings (January–March)

Dub McClish

Preacher, *The Lighthouse* editor

Dub McClish

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Sunday

Bible Class 9:30 AM
Worship 10:30 AM
Worship 1:00 PM

Wednesday

B.C./Worship 7:00 PM



The Northpoint Lighthouse

Volume 5, Number 52
December 27, 2009

DO NUMBERS EQUAL STRENGTH?

“Yes” and “No.” The Bible urges individual Christians to grow and mature in the faith and thereby to become “strong in the Lord” (Eph. 6:10–17, et al.). What God desires for His individual saints, He also desires for the local congregations to which His saints belong.

Most people can hardly conceive of success in any field (including religion) apart from large numbers of people and dollars. Church growth and strength are also commonly measured by these standards. Such thinking has infected the Lord's people to an alarming degree. These surface signs of “growth” and “strength” have become so important to some elderships and preachers that they have made these an end in themselves. Such ambitions have spawned the church growth “industry.” It is not difficult to find congregations bearing “Church of Christ” on their marquees that are attracting large numbers of people (and dollars). The Richland Hills Church of Christ is within 45 minutes' driving time from my home. It is acclaimed as the largest congregation wearing the name, *Church of Christ*. Gullible and naïve brethren exclaim over such churches: “Look how large and strong they are,” and/or “They must be doing something right.” But does *large* equal *strong*?

Who are these congregations attracting, and to what? Often they are attracting doctrinally soft, materialistic, worldly brethren from surrounding congregations (or even some from denominations) who want to live as they please during the week and on Sunday be made to feel “it is well with my soul.” Many (if not most) of these congregations are attracting folks in their second (or more) unscriptural marriage who would never tolerate being told that they are living in adultery. These congregations are employing popular, pleasing preachers with the bait of “fun and games” that appeal far more to the flesh than to the spirit. They often mistake a highly-structured program of socially-oriented activities (sometimes planned and promoted by a “minister of involvement”) for the practice of pure and simple Christianity. Some of them have become havens for those who have abandoned the Truth, but still want to pretend to have a “smidgen of religion.” (In the case of Richland Hills, in 2007 they began serving the Lord's supper on Saturday night and using instrumental music.)

Ironically, many brethren assume that large numerical growth is evidence of God's smile upon their efforts. It never seems to occur to them that the denomi-

national mega-churches are convinced of the same thing by the same evidences. Numbers can be a wonderful encouragement and even a power in the Lord's army, but only when they are truly devoted to Him, proved in only one way—loyalty to His Word. Gideon's army (Jud. 7) should remind us that spiritual power rests not with numbers, but with those who faithfully serve the Lord, even if they are few.

Let us continue to plant and water the seed of the kingdom lovingly, boldly, and faithfully—and let God give His increase (1 Cor. 3:6). Regardless of its numbers of men or of dollars, a religious cause is utterly powerless and is even the enemy of God if it does not do all things “in the name of the Lord” (Col. 3:17). These things being so, there is more spiritual power in only 20 saints who love the Lord and His Truth without compromise than in 2000 whose great concern is with popular fads and trends in morals and doctrine.

—Dub McClish
Denton, TX



KEEPING RANK

The army of God which assembled in Hebron to make David king over all Israel following the death of Saul had characteristics which are worthy of duplication by the Lord's people today. For example, there were fifty thousand men from the tribe of Zebulun who “could keep rank: they were not of double heart” (1 Chr. 12:33). In fact, every soldier was one who “could keep rank” and came to Hebron “with a perfect heart” (v. 38). To “keep rank” means that these men were disciplined through the practice of the rules and regulations of the army and were, therefore, able to function efficiently as soldiers in battle array. Because of this they could march and fight shoulder to shoulder with each other—they could “keep rank.” The references to the heart suggest that these men had a single loyalty to their king which allowed them to give their lives, if necessary, for the king's cause.

Today, the church is God's spiritual army following the directives of the “captain of their salvation” (Heb. 2:10) and fighting their “adversary the devil” (1 Pet. 5:8). The Lord's army has “put on the whole armour of God” (Eph. 6:11). This army requires soldiers who will “keep rank” and are “not of double heart.” There are rules and regulations for these soldiers (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Singular loyalty to Christ is a must (Mat. 6:24; 12:30), a loyalty which calls for faithfulness even “unto death” (Rev. 2:10).

Regrettably, there are many within the ranks of local congregations who are not willing to “keep rank” and do have a “double heart.” These people weaken the Lord's army, render it inefficient, and open it to defeat. Albert Barnes observed:

Many a church is like an army where half of the soldiers are out of the line; where there is entire insubordination in the ranks, and where not half of them could be depended on for efficient service in a campaign. Indeed, an army would accomplish little, if as large a proportion of it were irregu-

lar, idle, remiss, or pursuing their own aims to the neglect of the public interest, as there are members of the church who can never be depended on in accomplishing the great purpose for which it was organized (*Notes on the New Testament*, I The.—Phile. 58).

Certainly, this lack of commitment and the failure to responsibly do what God has authorized cause great harm to the effectiveness of God's army. God is not pleased with this situation. Every member of the Lord's army must have those characteristics which were found in David's army. Every member in this army is important (Eph. 4:16). Notice how these same qualities are taught in the New Testament as essential for each soldier of Christ.

1. Every member has to have singular loyalty to Christ, “not of double heart.” The soldier of Christ has singular vision (Mat. 6:22–23) as Paul affirmed “this one thing I do” (Phi. 3:13). To receive “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (v. 14) must be the chief goal of life. The soldier must “count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus” (v. 8), forsake all he has (Luke 14:33), die to himself (Gal. 2:20), and not allow affection for others to interfere with his commitment to the Lord (Mat. 10:37). Jesus summarized this commitment in Matthew 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

2. Every member has to follow the rules and regulations of the army—“keep rank.” Only by following the same standard is it possible for the soldiers to keep in order and act in perfect harmony and precision—to keep rank. That standard is the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Only by following the Bible, forsaking human opinions and traditions, God's people are able to “speak the same thing... perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). God has authorized certain works to be done (Eph. 2:10; 2 Tim. 3:17). Those who are not willing to do these things, or who persist in doing that which God has not authorized, are walking out of rank (i.e., out of step, disorderly, unruly).

God tells us that those who are disorderly (unruly) are to be warned (2 The. 5:14). Corinth illustrates clearly the need for those who walk “out of rank” to be warned and finally, if they do not repent, withdrawn from. Far from overlooking and allowing these sins to continue, Paul warned the unruly and urged them to “not to keep company” (1 Cor. 5:11) with those who do not repent. Whether idle or active disobedience, these people are not to be tolerated or overlooked but warned concerning the sinfulness of such behavior. If such behavior persists, the faithful are to withdraw from the disorderly (2 The. 3:6). Some are doing nothing for the cause of Christ. Some evidence their disorderliness by their complete disregard for the prohibitions of Scripture. All of these need to be warned about the consequence of their sins and, when necessary, withdrawn from.

It is time for every Christian to wake up to our God-given work (Rom. 13:11–12). Victory is promised to the loyal soldier who works faithfully until the end (2 Tim. 4:7–8). One day each person will give an account for the deeds he has done or failed to do (2 Cor. 5:10). Are you keeping rank and being loyal as a “good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3)?

—Lester Kamp
Denver, CO