

THE ENTRUSTED WORD

September 2004

A Journal from the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver

Volume 1 No. 1

IN THIS ISSUE...

- Trusting the Entrusted 1
Denny Petrillo, Ph.D.
- The Role of Men and Women 3
Wayne Burger
- Who Are Those Scythians? 4
Dave Chamberlin
- Biblical Church Growth 5
Warren Wilcox
- Marriage Is A Covenant 6
Bill Stewart
- What Has Happened
to God's Truth 7
Mike Price, Ph.D.
- Are Women's
Ministries Biblical 9
Pam Stewart
- What Is The Church
Coming To? 10
Bob Turner

Wayne Burger, Editor

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Print version - \$12.00 per year

Electronic version (PDF) - \$8.00 per year

All subscriptions are annual and run from January through December. Partial year is \$1.00 per month for print version and .75 per month for electronic version for the remainder of that year. Foreign subscriptions are electronic version only.

Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver
2707 S. Lamar Street, Denver, CO 80227

Phone: 303-986-5800 • Toll-free: 800-766-4641 • www.bvbid.org
entrustedword@bvbid.org

TRUSTING THE ENTRUSTED

By Denny Petrillo, Ph.D.

“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

As time goes on, the import of this verse increases. The winds of change have blown so hard of late that it is difficult to find those who are holding to the faith. The cry is great to renovate, update, revise, and modernize the entrusted word. We are being told that it is too old fashioned to appeal to our high-tech, sophisticated world. The old-time gospel just doesn't get them into the church building, so they say.

Somehow, Paul forgot to put a disclaimer in. It would have read: “PS. Timothy, this is true as long as people are willing to accept the message. What I mean by ‘faithful men’ are men who are willing to make whatever changes are necessary to craft a pleasing message for the masses.”

The Greek word used for “entrusted” is a word of utmost importance. To grasp the meaning of this word is to unlock the beauty (and significance) of 2 Timothy 2:2. The word is *parathou* (παράθου), a 2 person singular, 2 arisist middle imperative from *paratithemi* (παράτιθημι). I'll explain the significance of this information later.

A few verses earlier (1:13 NASV) Paul had used the same terminology: “Retain the standard of sound words which you heard from me....” A message has been given to Paul, who faithfully delivered that message to Timothy. Others, according to 2:2, heard Paul give this message to

Timothy. So Timothy has no excuse. You get the impression that the message was not to be tampered with – especially in light of Paul's other statements: (a) “retain the standard of sound words” (1:13); (b) “guard...the treasure which has been entrusted to you” (1:14); (c) “Be diligent to present yourself...a workman...accurately handling the word of truth” (2:15); (d) “all scripture is inspired of God and is profitable for teaching, reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (3:16-17); (e) “preach the word” (4:2).

The Importance of 2 Timothy 2:2

So, why is 2 Timothy 2:2 such an important verse? Because of the following:

First, there are those out there who are departing from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1-5). Their departure will be marked by a clear exodus from the sound doctrine (1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 4:2-5). Second, it is “the teaching” that saves men's souls (1 Timothy 4:16), and that teaching must not be tampered with (2 Timothy 1:13-14; 3:16, 17; 4:2). Third, it is our responsibility (as the church of Christ) to be the “pillar and support of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). It is illogical to think that God wants us to support and defend something that can change with the sifting sands of time. Exactly what is to be defended? What is to be supported? What is to be passed on to the next generation?

Solomon said centuries ago that “a generation goes and a generation

comes” (Ecclesiastes 1:4). With each new generation comes a renewed challenge to pass on the sound word to faithful men. It doesn’t take much of a student of history to see that the church has failed miserably in doing this very thing. And what about our generation? Are we putting the sound doctrine in the hands of men who are trustworthy? Somewhere we are going to have to entrust the Word. Generations which have preceded us have failed. Somebody (or several some bodies) dropped the proverbial ball. We’ve learned from scripture and from history that it only takes one generation to slip into apostasy (Judges 2:10). We must not, can not, be a generation of people who fail 2 Timothy 2:2. Recently someone was bemoaning the fact that so many of the great soldiers of truth have gone on to their reward. “Who is going to carry on the torch of truth now?” he cried. But that is the point, is it not? We are to carry the torch now, and we are to entrust it to faithful men for the future.

What is meant by “faithful men”?

The Word has to be entrusted, and it cannot be entrusted to just anybody. That would be too easy. We have to find faithful men. What does this mean? First, it should be pointed out that the word for “men” is anthropos. This is not a gender specific word. Therefore, we can find faithful women and entrust it to them as well. We learned from 1 Timothy 2:9-15 that a woman’s sphere of influence is not in teaching and preaching to the church, but she certainly yields great influence over her children. In Titus 2:3-5 older women are to teach younger women. They can be passing on the faithful word to faithful women. Second, the word “faithful” carries a specific connotation. It means someone who is honorable, trustworthy, reliable, honest, dependable, principled, steadfast, and responsible. If you had a precious and valuable clock, you wouldn’t give it to someone to transport who would throw it in the back of the truck. It would have to be someone (male or female)

who would carefully package the clock, acknowledging the value of the clock. He would have to be someone you could trust not to steal the clock, or deliver the clock to the wrong person. Equally the gospel is God’s precious gift to us, and it is stamped “handle with care.” We are not handling it with care when we fail to pass it on to faithful men. Third, the word “faithful” demands a continued allegiance to the message. The credibility of the Bible has been severely damaged by the twisting and distorting of her message by men who were once faithful proclaimers. God demands that His messengers be consistent both in their lives and in their message.

Entrust

This word, as mentioned earlier, is a second person singular verb. It is an action, in which one person is called upon to carry out that action. In this case the responsibility is placed squarely upon the shoulders of Timothy. He is God’s man in Ephesus, and he is leaving (2 Timothy 4:9-13). Who is going to carry on the work when he leaves? Or rather, who is going to faithfully carry on the work when he leaves? It can’t be given to just anyone, it has to be entrusted to a faithful one. This word (παρατίθημι) means “place beside, place before; to give over, entrust, commend; for safekeeping or transmission to others; entrust someone to the care or protection of someone.”¹ Paul had pleaded with Timothy, as he concluded his first epistle, to “guard what has been entrusted (παραθήκη) to you...” (1 Timothy 6:20). Earlier Paul had said “This command I entrust (παρατίθεμαι) to you...” (1:18). It is clear: this is Timothy’s responsibility. In addition, the word entrust is an aorist imperative. It is a command from one of the Lord’s apostles. It is not a “good idea,” or something that would be nice if, perhaps, Timothy could ever get around to doing it. It is a job of utmost importance. “Emphasis is thus placed on the element of responsibility for the authenticity and intactness of the entrusted deposit. The one to whom the good tradition is

entrusted bears special responsibility...”²

Conclusion

Nearly two thousand years of generations has vanished since Paul’s original commission was given to Timothy. As time has passed, some have shown themselves faithful, others have not. Now it is our turn. It is clear that God believes we can be trusted, for this is His divine plan with His precious Gospel. Our commission is twofold: (a) be faithful to the Word ourselves – cf. 1 Timothy 4:16; and (b) entrust this Word to those to who are faithful. May we rise to this challenge. The next generation is depending upon us.

Denny Petrillo is President of the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver. He also serves as a full time instructor, teaching the five Wisdom Literature books of the Old Testament, Matthew, John, Romans, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus and 1, 2, 3 John. He has a Bachelor’s Degree in Biblical Languages, a Master’s Degree in Old and New Testament and a Ph.D. in Religious Education. Denny can be reached at dpetrillo@bvbibid.org.

¹Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Translated and Revised by Arndt, Gingrich and Danker (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979), 622-23.

²Christian Maurer, “παρατίθημι.” In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 8:164. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1972.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

The Entrusted Word is a journal containing articles written exclusively by the faculty, staff and alumni of the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver. This monthly publication is available for just \$12.00 p/yr. for the print version or \$8.00 p/yr. for the electronic version (PDF).

To subscribe call
303-986-5800

THE ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN AS SEEN IN GENESIS - PART 1

by Wayne Burger

The beginning of an organization, home, church or any other functioning body, is significant. How and why it begins will determine the direction it goes and often, how far it will go. What is true of any organization is also true of the Bible. That is why the first chapters of the book of Genesis are so important. Those first few chapters give, not only information, but also principles and foundations that are found throughout the Bible. For example, those chapters tell us how the earth, all things in it, and humanity began. God wanted us to know that everything is here by the design of the Creator, not through the lottery of chance. God planned and developed creation and His creatures must follow His revealed will.

Adam and Eve's creation record is not in Genesis just to give us facts about their history, but to show that God had a pattern from the beginning. God recorded those events to give the rest of humanity insights into the role He expects all men and women to fulfill. It is this subject that will be discussed below. These truths are unique and powerfully demonstrate God's plan for men and women. Not only that, but they become the standard to which other inspired writers refer as they reveal God's role for men and women.

Both Created in God's Image

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26-27 NASU). God had Moses emphasize this again when he gives the lineage of Adam. "In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of

God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created" (Genesis 5:1-2).

First, the reader notes that men and women are created in the image of God. That is not said of any other living creature. Evolution has man coming from monkeys and made only in the image of other animals. The Bible teaches that man comes from God and is made in His image. This is the difference between humanity and the animal world. We are made in God's image and they are not. This is why it is right to kill an animal and wrong to kill a human. Since each is made in God's image, both are on an equal plane when it comes to value. Males are not worth any more than female. Neither are females worth any more than males. One is not made any more in the image of God than is the other. But, it does show that God is superior to humanity.

Second, both were given authority over the earth and the things living in it. This is the first hint that there is going to be a chain of authority. This authority is seen in that God is superior to humanity and then humanity has authority over the earth and the things in the earth.

Male and Female Created

God did not make humanity sexless. God had the ability, and in fact made some animals sexless and yet with the ability to reproduce. He could have done the same with humanity, but He didn't. Neither did God make them of the same sex. The fact that God made humanity into two different sexes – male and female – indicates that He has in mind different roles for each to fulfill. Although each is given a different role, it has nothing to do with the worth or value of each sex. It is just that God expects men to do some things and women to do other things.

Significant Events in Creation

While Genesis one gives the overview of creation, Genesis two gives the details. Many of those details give interesting insights as to what God expects from men and women. Each of those events points to the different roles that God expects males and females to fulfill.

Man Made First

God could have made both Adam and Eve at the same time, but God chose to make man first. By making Adam first, God put man into a leadership position. This is the argument that the Holy Spirit revealed to Paul when giving instruction about leadership in the church. Notice God's revelation about male leadership in spiritual activities. "A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve" (I Timothy 2:11-13). Paul was giving God's instructions about role responsibilities for Timothy to teach to the church in Ephesus (I Timothy 1:3). But, the truth and principle was not just for that culture or for that local congregation, but rather universal in application. Paul showed that his instruction was not based on some local custom by going all the way back to creation for the reason. Thus, from the beginning, God has wanted men to take the lead in spiritual matters.

Wayne Burger has a BA in Bible and is a full time instructor at BVBID teaching Acts, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Personal Evangelism, Church History, Restoration Movement, and Denominational Doctrines as well as Survey of New Testament Epistles in the Women's Program. He also directs the school campaigns. Wayne can be reached at wburger@bvbid.org.

WHO ARE THOSE SCYTHIANS OF COLOSSIANS 3:11

by Dave Chamberlin

“Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.” (Colossians 3: 9-11 NASV)

It would seem, from the context of this passage, that Paul is making the distinction between various groupings of people by noting that the most important grouping is one that involves a removal of the “old self” (that which would keep one separated from God) and a putting on of “the new self” which would make one acceptable to God no matter one’s background. The background that is indicated, by Paul, is found in Colossians 3: 11 where he notes “Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman.” Why does he indicate barbarian and Scythian along with the easily understood contrasts of the rest?

It may well be that he is considering those who would be prejudiced toward the racial-religious (no Greek and Jew), a social strata (no slave and freeman) and different cultures (no barbarian, no Scythian). This passage is not the only one in which the inspired writer Paul uses groupings like this. See Romans 1: 14 and Galatians 3: 28.

We can easily understand his use of barbarian because it is found elsewhere in Scripture. Paul uses the term in Romans 1: 14; 1 Corinthians 14:11 and in our study section of Colossians 3: 11. Luke is the other writer (a cosmopolitan individual like Paul) who uses the word in Acts 28: 2, 4 (“natives” in the NASV) to relate the account of Paul shipwrecked on the island of Malta. The English word “barbarian” is derived from the Greek word “barbaros”

that had to do with “the sound that foreigners make” and later brought into the Latin “barbaria” by the Romans. As a side note the Romans would never have considered the Greek to be a barbarian, however the Greeks believed all but Greeks were barbarians and that would include the Romans.

All of this says nothing about the use of the name Scythian and why it would be used in this particular context. Perhaps a short study of this people will provide some answer as to its use by Paul in his letter to the church at Colossae. Needless to say, the Scythian people would make an impact on the ancient world—one that would bring trepidation in the hearts of those living in Palestine in the first century AD.

From the time the horse was domesticated (c.3200 BC) and the first semi-nomadic horse breeding tribes inhabited Black Sea (Pontic) steppes, there was the potential for developing the horse and rider as extremely effective weapons of war. The horse, in its original form, was about 4.5 feet tall at the shoulder and was a primary food source among ancient peoples. It is believed that this ancient horse was

also found on the North American continent but was eaten into extinction. It is interesting to note that in November of 1995 a herd of horses was discovered in an isolated valley of Tibet matching the size of the early horse.

In the early 7th century BC the Cimmerian (a people of the Crimea who are eventually pushed out of their region by the migrating Scythians. The Cimmerian people become the Celtic (Gauls) tribes that inhabit most of Europe in Roman times) and Scythian conquest of Urartu (a three hundred year old kingdom made up of Hurrian and Hittite peoples) takes place. It is also at this time that Scythian activity in the Middle East is recorded in the Assyrian texts. It was at this time that the Scythians moved against Assyria but little is recorded of their success since the Scythians were illiterate and the Assyrian records were highly selective in their recording of success and defeat. The Assyrian king Esarhaddon finally won peace with the Scythians through rich gifts and the marriage of his daughter to the Scythian king Partatua.

The Scythians virtually exploded upon the scene of ancient warfare



in their use of a number of weapons that had been improved. The horse was now, through careful inbreeding, large enough to be ridden into battle by an armored warrior. The bridle was in use by this time but the stirrup and saddle were not yet known. The Scythian warrior rode into battle on a saddlecloth, relying on grip, balance and leather trousers. Armed with a composite re-curve bow (a vast improvement over earlier bows) and anything between 30 and 150 arrows the armored Scythian rider was formidable to say the least. The rate of shooting, for a warrior of this time, was between ten and twelve arrows a minute and with a full complement of arrows (30- 150) could expend them in three to fifteen minutes.

The armor worn by this ancient warrior was light and made up of small metal plates that overlapped one another and were sewn onto a leather corselet. Each scale was set in such a way that it covered one third or one half of the next scale sideways, and the row of plates overlapped the one below

it, protecting the stitching where it was exposed in holes through the metal. A spear or arrow would have to penetrate up to three or four basic thicknesses at most points on the surface. This “fish-scale” type of body armor served the Scythian well since lightweight and mobility were necessary when fighting (drawing a bow and loosing arrows) while mounted on a horse.

The Scythian was one to be feared by those who met them in battle. They were famous for their ferocity in cutting off the heads of their slain enemies and making leather bound drinking cups from their skulls. Herodotus wrote (in *The History of Herodotus*) concerning this very custom of “head hunting.”

“The Scythian soldier scrapes the scalp clean of flesh and softening it by rubbing between the hands, uses it thenceforth as a napkin. The Scyth is proud of these scalps and hangs them from his bridle rein; the greater the number of such napkins that a man can show, the more highly is he esteemed among them. Many make themselves cloaks by sewing a quantity of these

scalps together. Such as the Scythian customs with respect to scalps.”

When Paul writes to the church at Colossae he provides the reader with a contrast in culture when he indicates that even one as disgusting as the Scythian has hope. This very renewal joins diverse cultures into one where there is no distinction. This very transformation into the image of God recognizes no racial-religious, cultural, or social boundaries—even the despicable Scythian has a place before God.

Dave Chamberlin is presently Dean Of Students at BVBID and teaches all Old Testament classes except Pentateuch and Wisdom Literature. He also teaches The Godhead, Missions and the book of Revelation. In the Monday evening program, designed for the student wives, he teaches The Godhead and Old Testament Survey. Dave has been teaching at Bear Valley since 1977, holds a Bachelors of Science and is presently finishing a Masters in Biblical Studies. Dave has done local work in Minot, North Dakota (two years) and foreign mission work in Tauranga, New Zealand for six years. He can be e-mailed at dchamberlin@bvbid.org.

BIBLICAL CHURCH GROWTH - PART ONE

by Warren Wilcox

In some circles “church growth” has come to be ridiculed, not because actual growth is not desired, but because some have abused it by allowing the ends to justify the means. This has caused the recent consideration of church growth to be a topic which seems to be contrary to Biblical teaching. However, this is not a necessary conclusion.

Everyone recognizes that real church growth only comes through conversion. There are many books which discuss quite adequately how to convert the lost. However, in order for there to be a conversion there must first be prospects. Many churches are not growing because there is no plan to produce “prospects” for conversion. This material is designed to suggest specific ideas as to why a congregation may not be growing and suggest ways

to develop a valid purpose for each member to fill a productive roll in discovering prospects which in turn will result in a vital, growing church.

Three areas of church growth will be considered, all of which are very much in harmony with Biblical teaching and principles. The first will be “Why Study Church Growth,” the second will be “The Bible Says Grow,” and the last will be “Sound Principles of Church Growth.”

Why Study Church Growth?

Many churches today are not converting even one soul a year. Statistically, in the twenty-seven years from 1970 to 1997 there were 270,000 conversions. That is 10,000 conversions per year. At first that sounds as if the church was doing its job. However,

when it is noted that there were 10,000 congregations involved in that study, it means that (again, statistically) each congregation converted only one per year. When it is realized that some congregations converted scores of people, that shows that others did not even convert one.

Therefore something must be done that will produce a greater harvest of souls. A study of church growth will help a congregation become more soul conscious. As members evaluate their past, as they see that workable ideas will produce more prospects for conversions, as they learn what each part of the body can do, and as they learn how to be purposively engaged in productive activities that later result in conversion, they gain a new spirit and confidence in working toward growth.

Overcoming Obstacles To Church Growth

There are many obstacles to overcome before real growth can occur. When the church has reversed priorities, it will never recognize the value of a soul. Tens of thousands of dollars are spent on buildings, paved parking lots and creature comforts without a voice raised against it. Many congregations borrow money it takes decades to pay back for these physical needs. However, to suggest that each year a congregation spend (or borrow) ten thousand dollars for reaching the lost in that community will often be frowned upon and rejected. Reversed priorities!

A growing problem in some churches is the liberal theology tolerated or encouraged. Even if more bodies crowd an auditorium, if the teaching they hear will not result in salvation, what good has been done? The sound gospel must be preached for THE church to grow. Closely related to this is the fact that many Christians do not have much Bible knowledge at all. Therefore to them anyone trusted enough to be allowed to stand up in front and present a lesson must surely be giving accurate teaching or, they think, the leaders would not permit it to go on. Therefore they accept whatever

comes from the pulpit or classroom as “truth.” They would not be able to “refute the gainsayer” or answer questions some will bring up about “the hope that lies within them” (Titus 1:9; 1 Peter 3:15 NASV).

Another problem to overcome for some churches is being self-centered—not the individuals in the church, but when the whole church emphasizes “our needs” to the exclusion of reaching out to the lost. Often, churches have many programs for their own edification, even good ones such as family classes, anger management, etc., but they neglect any serious attempt to develop programs which are designed to contact, include or involve non-members. Many programs for the congregation would be very beneficial for outsiders—if they were but invited.

This is also closely connected to another problem—that of the “country club” feeling. This expression means that while the church says it is eager to grow, it actually is totally satisfied with the group that it now has, and truly wants no more—especially if it means members doing more work for the Lord than is presently being done. Therefore since it is satisfied with the status quo, it will not grow. Add to this the normal resistance to “change” and it is easy to see why many churches are not growing.

Leaders must likewise consider problems which may be prevalent among themselves such as lack of stewardship and shepherding (especially of the members’ time and talents), being unnecessarily afraid of debt for growth, and failure to understand what “LOST” really means.

Perhaps the most obvious problem leaders have is a lack of creating a “church growth attitude” within the congregation. Churches that have the above problems rarely desire growth enough to make the necessary planning and sacrifices to do so. This is an attitude that can only be developed by talking, planning, preparing for, teaching, and in every way promoting this very important attitude. The whole congregation must be encouraged to “THINK GROWTH.” The next articles will suggest ways this can be done.

Warren Wilcox has been an instructor with the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver since 1966. Has served as Academic Dean (1979-83, 1989-98), Director (1983-89), and presently as Administrative Dean and instructor (1998—). B.A. in Bible and M.A. in Bible from Abilene Christian University plus certification for public school teaching. Other work in English at West Texas State University, and graduate work in speech at the University of Colorado. Warren can be reached at wwilcox@bvbibid.org.

MARRIAGE IS A COVENANT

by Bill Stewart

Throughout Bible history there have been all kinds of covenants. People entered into covenants with people, and God entered into covenants with men. Few were formed in exactly the same way, although there are certain patterns that all covenants have in common, including marriage covenants. We will look at the different kinds of covenants and the responsibilities of those in the covenants. This will help us see how important covenants are. This will help to reinforce the importance of the marriage covenant.

The first covenant we will consider

is the parity covenant. *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* defines the parity covenant as “a two-sided covenant between human parties, both of which voluntarily accept the terms of the agreement” (186). Following are examples of parity treaties from Scripture:

1. Friendship – 1 Samuel 18:3-4: (NASV) “Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him, and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.”

2. Marriage – Malachi 2:14: “Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”

3. Political alliance – Joshua 9:15: “Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them.”

A universal covenant existed from the beginning of creation until the cross of Jesus. All people on the earth were

under a universal covenant during the patriarchal period. The Jews were placed under a Mosaic covenant at Mount Sinai. The Gentiles were still under the universal covenant that God gave at creation until Jesus gave them a new covenant at Calvary. Both the Mosaic and the universal covenants were replaced by the covenant with Jesus, which is a much better covenant (Hebrews 8:6). The Gentile or the Jew can still appeal to either covenant if they desire. It will be of no benefit to them, but they can still try to live by either if they wish. Such was the case of the Galatian brethren in 3:11-15 and 4:1-4. They were in the process of leaving their covenant with Christ and going back under the law of works or Mosaic covenant. Paul calls them foolish for doing that.

There is also a self-assumed or unilateral covenant. In this agreement, a person imposes obligations on himself. The other person, who is the recipient, is not under any binding agreement, but receives the blessing without doing a thing. Each of us who is married entered into this kind of covenant with his/her mate. Maybe it was an unspoken, unwritten kind of covenant called "responsibility." Such is the case with God and the world. In Matthew 5:45 Jesus says that God has made a covenant with Himself to send rain on the good and the bad alike. No matter what kind of person you are, you will still receive the blessings of the earth: rain, sunshine, food, etc. The same can be said of the Son of God dying on the cross for all humanity. Not everyone will make a covenant with God, but the blessings are still there. This kind of love is called agape or unconditional.

Whether we return God's love or not, we still receive it. Our marriage covenants must be the same. If we love our mates at all times, even when they aren't lovable, it will cause them to love us in the same way.

The suzerainty covenant is one-sided. The superior party imposes obligations on the lesser. God's covenant is like a suzerainty covenant. One cannot bargain or negotiate this kind of covenant. It originates with the superior party. The inferior party can accept it or reject it, but he cannot negotiate or alter it in any way.

The Bible states that marriage is a covenant: "Wisdom will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God" (Proverbs 2:16,17 NIV). God calls the marriage vows a contract made by the wife. The same holds true for the husband: "The LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant" (Malachi 2:14 NIV).

The marriage covenant is like the parity covenant because both parties voluntarily accept the terms of the agreement. The marriage covenant relates to the universal covenant because God's laws are universal. They are for all people whether or not the people are familiar with the laws. The marriage covenant is like the self-assumed or unilateral covenant because one is to fulfill his/her obligation in marriage regardless of the circumstances and regardless of

how his/her mate reacts. Perhaps the suzerainty covenant is of most importance in comparison. The marriage covenant is like this one because it is important for us to understand that we cannot negotiate with God. We must accept or reject His commands, but we cannot change them.

God not only expects us to keep the covenant of marriage, He demands it! "But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.' For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Genesis 2:20-24). "Jesus replied, 'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery'" (Matthew 19:8,9). God's words in Malachi 2:15 are, "I hate divorce."

Bill Stewart is an instructor and Director of Development and Recruiting at BVBID. He is a graduate of the White's Ferry Road School of Biblical Studies and holds a Bachelor and Master's Degree in Bible from the BVBID. He is the author of a book Building Bridges in Marriage Communication and has developed a marriage seminar on this subject. He can be reached at bstewart@bubid.org.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO GOD'S TRUTH?

by Mike Price, Ph.D.

In our day and time the "The Truth of God" is so far from what is being preached that many are under the assumption or impression that we can't really know "The Truth of God." Of course we should not be surprised,

considering the relativistic pluralism that has found its way into the Church. Many feel they are fortunate if they can figure out even some of God's truth. It is hard to believe that Christians could be happy with only bits and pieces

of the truth concerning the will of God. Personally, I don't think we are so much happy as we are sometimes blinded by the preaching of our day and lulled into a sense of false security based on feelings that have now become

facts instead of as security based on Biblical truth. We live in a time where our feelings become the authority and standard whereby we shed light on and judge the scripture under the auspices of our preferences, sentiments and felt feelings. In doing so we become the authority, using our feelings that come from our cultural practices as the standard, ignoring or downgrading God and his word to a secondary status of consideration. Jesus made it clear that our feelings are to be held under and judged by the authority and in light of the word of God. He said to the Devil, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4 NASV). When Jesus was preaching the "Sermon On The Mount," he said,

²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. ²⁴Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: ²⁵and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. ²⁶And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: ²⁷and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof. ²⁸And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching: ²⁹for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.³¹

Some will give the impression of preaching the truth of God while in reality they are only giving lip service. You see it sounds good to say or imply that you are preaching the truth of God, when in actuality the preferences and sentiments of men and the truth of God are being synthesized instead of presented as the antithesis of each other.

There is confusion over what is truth in our day and time and it has found its way into the church. Why? It has to do with our culture and how Christians have integrated the lifestyle of our society into the lifestyle of the church. How would I describe our culture without being overly simplistic, by saying, "we are fallen and sinful"? Even though in the final conclusion, this is the case!

I would express it in terms of my thesis statement that precedes seven hours of lectures in a graduate course I teach at Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver.

Thesis Statement - The United States of America is an existential, humanistic, pragmatic, relativistic and pluralistic society with elements of hedonistic lifestyle, resulting from a homogenous philosophical approach to life, that is creating momentum for moving America closer to a simplistic monolithic consensus of thought, melting into a finality of self-expressionism being transmitted by cultural war through the medium of modernism and postmodernism in terms of pluralistic relativism, in which this cacophony of thought is being conducted as a symphony by the virtuoso of secularism in all disciplines, overflowing and being woven into the fabric of the Christian's life-style while showing elements of Nihilism in practice.²

You might say, "there is in your thesis statement what seems to be a contradiction of terms in reference to a cacophony of thought and a symphony of unity of thought found in secularism." Let's understand that secularism is concerned with the here and now, allowing it to become the

over arching theme or glue, which binds all philosophies together (except that taught by Jesus), because as secularism is, so are the others in that they do not consider the long term nor the transcendent. Plus, the embracing of relative pluralism as the justification of modernism and it's conclusion, postmodernism, is contrary to logic. It contradicts itself. Relative pluralism says that there are no absolutes save one and that is, that there are no absolutes. Without absolutes you cannot have final truth, complete truth or as Francis Schaffer puts it, "true, truth." That is why any secular philosophy of men stands as the antithesis to Jesus.

"Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; ³² and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free....⁶ Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me. ⁷ If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. ⁸ Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. ⁹ Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father? ¹⁰ Believeest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. (John 8:32; 14:6-11).

Secular man is left with having to be relativistic and pluralistic in thought, because he is finite and not infinite. Denying himself access truth, by rejecting historical objective divine revelation from the only absolute God. That is why scripture, "...inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. ¹⁷ That the

man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.” (II Timothy 3:16-17).

As a culture in general, our experiences have produced feelings that we begin to rely on as truth; and these feelings are so powerful, they become our practiced lifestyle and result in our automatically measuring all things by ourselves. In other words, what works for you-whether or not it works for anyone else-is truth because it worked for you. We are willing then to let any and all hold the results of their experiences as truth and tolerate them. In turn, we expect them to tolerate us, therefore avoiding conflict and confrontation, while all the time walking blindly past the reality of our dichotomous lives.

Creating an extremely diverse society with many cultural flavors of ideology and lifestyle. As a consequence, we are overwhelmed and really confused as a whole on how to define ourselves as a society and as God’s Church, the result being that many individuals live confused about their own assumptions, groping in the darkness, blind to the realities of the results of their accepted lifestyles.

We live for today believing tomorrow might not come and we certainly don’t want to put off our desires today in meeting our needs tomorrow, missing out on today. So, we move to a consensus of reasoning that leads to a life of self-focusing and self-expressionism: Doing our own thing defined by our preferences and

sentiments, ignoring the contradictions, while living a dichotomy as we walk around in a fog of confusion.

“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” Judges 21:25 (KJV)

Mike Price teaches Biblical Counseling in the BVVID Master’s program. He is a graduate of the White’s Ferry Road School of Preaching in West Monroe, Louisiana. He has attended Gateway School of Biblical Studies, Delta College, Louisiana State University, American Bible College and School of Religion, Magnolia Bible College, and Kennedy Western University. He has an AA degree in Bible, BA in Sacred Literature, MA in Science, Behavioral Science, and a Ph. D. in Philosophy - Psychology. He was a missionary for two years in Hong Kong, China and has been on 35 foreign campaigns.

ARE WOMEN’S MINISTRIES BIBLICAL?

by Pam Stewart

In past years the one-thing women in churches of Christ knew for sure was that we were not to teach or have authority over men in the church. Five times in two short verses the apostle Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us: (1) “women are to remain silent in the churches,” (2) “they are not allowed to speak,” (3) “they must be in submission,” (4) “they should ask their husbands at home,” (5) “it is a disgrace for a woman to speak in the church” (1 Corinthians 14:34-35 NASU). Again Paul states: “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man” (1 Timothy 2:11). It was clear that God expected men to lead the church. Past that we were not sure. We were comfortable in the church kitchen because no one challenged that position. We were also comfortable teaching children under twelve. Usually when you heard of a sermon that was going to be preached on the subject of women in the church it was on the subject of what women are not to do in the church. Then came the “me” generation and the authority of Scripture saying what it means and meaning what it says was

challenged. This prompted women to branch out and take on more roles. Many times women just go with what they want and do not consult the Scriptures. Sometimes it is based on what an individual church allows. This produces many problems and much fragmentation. As in all areas of life, women’s work in the church should be based on Scripture. It really does not matter what we think; it matters what the Bible says.

In some ways the “me” generation is good for women in the church because it causes us to take a closer look at the roles of women as defined by God in the Scriptures. We have begun to work in ways that we have biblical authority to do so, yet being mindful of areas of work that are not authorized for us. God has authorized important work for women just as he has for men. We do not have less work or less important work, but in some cases we have different work.

In recent years women’s work in the church has become known as “women’s ministries.” Although we do not find the term “women’s ministries” in the Bible, we do find the term as applied to a Christian’s ministry, both men and

women (11 Corinthians 6:3; 9:12). We can also look at the definition to see if it is a biblical concept. One of the meanings of ministry in W.E. Vines’ *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* is “the work of the gospel in general or the general ministry of a servant of the Lord” (74). Therefore, when we speak of “women’s ministries” in the church we are speaking of women’s service or work in the church.

The Bible provides many examples of women and their works in the early church. Because they are sometimes mentioned briefly, we give them little thought. If we take a closer look, we find great examples of the important works women were doing in the church. Women need to be as educated about the works they are instructed to do as about what they are told not to do.

First, women who are married and have children must make their families their primary ministry. God did not intend for us to neglect our families to go out and work for Him. When we are caring for our families, we are working for Him. God gave women the responsibility to manage the home. In 1 Timothy 5:14 we are taught, “So I

counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander.”

Although our family should be our primary ministry, we should not use them as an excuse to be uninvolved in other ministries. Some ministries can be done from our homes, and many can involve our children.

Teaching is a much-needed ministry for women. In Titus 2:3,4 Paul tells Timothy that the older women should teach the younger women. When I look at his list that we are to teach, I am a bit overwhelmed by our responsibility. We are to teach what is good. We are to teach women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, busy at home, kind, and subject to their husbands.

We are to teach the gospel. God made that clear when He gave women the honor of being the first to announce that Jesus had risen from the dead. Remember that Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of James, had the privilege of first proclaiming the risen Lord (Mark 16:1).

The ministry of hospitality is another wonderful ministry for women. We have Bible examples of women in this ministry who opened their homes for the church to meet there: Mary, the mother of John; Priscilla and Nympha (Acts 12:12; Romans 16:3-5; Colossians 4:15). 1 Peter 4:9 encourages us to “offer

hospitality without grumbling,” and Romans 12:13 teaches us to “practice hospitality.”

In the hospitality ministry, as in all other ministries, we should have an evangelistic mindset. When we invite our neighbors over, we enjoy being together socially. But we should take it one step farther. We should be looking for an open door to share the Good News. When we invite visitors from church services into our homes, it is for an eternal purpose as well as a social one.

Another ministry for which women have a natural instinct is the benevolent ministry. Tabitha is an example of a woman who worked in this ministry. She was always doing good and helping the poor, making robes and other clothing for those in need (Acts 9:36-42).

Some women are involved in benevolent work in the church’s food pantry or clothing room. As they take care of a person’s physical needs, they are in a great position to teach them spiritually as well.

Perhaps your ministry is in missions. Priscilla, wife of Aquila, traveled with her husband and Paul on one of the missionary journeys. They were mentioned in several cities including Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. However, a woman can be involved in missions even if she does not travel to the mission site. Much work is needed in the supporting congregation. She can be the person to promote the mission

effort through articles written for the bulletin, newsletters, bulletin boards, Sunday school awareness, banners, and the preparation and sending of supplies to the missionaries.

A missions’ ministry might involve sending and grading correspondence courses – or financially supporting missionaries. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna were women in the Bible who financially supported Jesus and His disciples (Luke 8:1-3).

There are many other areas of women’s ministries which space will not allow us to discuss. Some of them include: encouragement, organization, literary, bookkeeping, and special events. There is much for women to do.

From the Scriptures given, it is clear that women’s ministries are biblical. Women, as well as men, have a responsibility to be effective and productive in the Lord’s church.

Pamela Stewart is Dean of Women at BVBID and teaches “Women’s Ministries” classes. She is a graduate of the women’s program for preachers’ wives from the White’s Ferry Road School of Biblical Studies and has earned the Bachelor of Biblical Studies degree from Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver. She is often a guest speaker for ladies’ days, retreats, and seminars. She is a staff writer for the Rocky Mountain Christian Newspaper and has often written for Christian Women Magazine and Christian Family Magazine. She is the author of a book entitled Evangelistic Women. Pam can be e-mailed at pstewart@bubid.org.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH COMING TO?

by Bob Turner

Recently, a question was presented to me by an elderly woman who has been a member of the Lord’s church most of her adult life. She has witnessed and talked about many changes over the years and she asked, “do you think in 10 years there will even be the church of Christ?” My heart raced at the thought of such a question and my mind was troubled at the thought of such a possibility.

Jesus asked a very pointed

question in Luke 18:8 (NASV), “... when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” This question is strong and has application which appears to be more relevant with each passing day. When word about so-called “change agents” arises within the church the question Jesus poses must be considered. As a result of mass media, nearly everyone is aware of the problems facing the church by those who want to change the name,

the worship and God’s plan of salvation. What is the church coming to? How can such things be true? Will Jesus find faith on the earth when He returns? Here are a few things to keep in mind.

First, the church is not exempt from the error of false teachers. “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought

them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned," 2 Peter 2:1-2. Peter's warning is clear and, sadly, characteristic of the 21st century. Paul's admonition to "preach the word" precedes such applicable prophecy as he writes, "for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths," 2 Timothy 4:3-4. Paul warned the elders at Ephesus that false, destructive and perverse individuals would arise from among themselves, "to draw away the disciples after them," Acts 20:28-30. It is not surprising to see this unfold as it was foretold.

Second, the church needs to be established in the basics, or perhaps, "re-established." If there is any hope of putting a stop to many of the trends away from sound Biblical teaching, there must be a return to the basics. As athletes train they are constantly reminded of the need to work on the basics. This is true for the church today as well. One of the fundamental pleas of the reformation or restoration period was to "let the Bible speak where the Bible speaks and let the Bible be silent where the Bible is silent." Where the Bible speaks does not seem to be as much of a problem as where it does not. The area of Biblical silence is just one of the reasons at the root of departure from the faith, promoting the belief that silence is equivalent to permissiveness in all areas. In the November 2003 *Gospel Advocate* an article was featured regarding the subject of hermeneutics with this statement, "...silence is sometimes (but not always) permissive. It is permissive when the command is generic such as where the Scriptures tell us to assemble (Hebrews 10:25) but are silent about where we are to assemble. Silence is prohibitive where the command is specific such as in the Lord's Supper where "bread" and the "fruit of the vine" are specified,

thus prohibiting steak and potatoes, although they are not prohibited by name," (Earl Edwards, "Hermeneutics" *Gospel Advocate*, vol. CXLV, no.11, pg. 27-28). Many of the problems of "change" could be resolved if a return to the practice of getting back to the basics and correct hermeneutical principles were applied.

Third, the church needs to be better equipped in the word. How many times has the example of Jesus in Matthew 4 been preached? Jesus was able to overcome temptation and send Satan fleeing by the power and proper use of God's word. The only way error can be defeated is if the truth is lifted up. In Paul's letter to Timothy, one of the crucial areas he addresses concerns the need for the church to be the pillar and support of the truth, 1 Timothy 3:15. However, truth cannot be defended if truth is not known and error cannot be eradicated if truth is not upheld! Statistically, it has been said that less than 2% of all religious people are daily Bible readers. If this is true, then where does that leave the church? These kinds of statistics, even if they are close in nature, help explain some of the problems the church faces in the 21st century. Therefore, in order to overcome any error which exists, the church must be better equipped in the word of God. God once stated that His people were destroyed for a lack of knowledge, Hosea 4:6. The church today is not above facing the same outcome if we do not gain or re-gain that knowledge.

Fourth, the church needs elders who are equally yoked with preachers of sound doctrine and unequally yoked with those of a different doctrine. For too long there has been a stereotypical mindset which places elders against preachers and preachers against elders. I remember in school at Bear Valley the question was asked concerning what to do in a situation where a preacher started serving under elders who were not qualified. I have not forgotten the response, "work to qualify them." The job of a preacher is not to tear a

congregation apart, but rather to serve as a catalyst in helping each person fulfill their God given abilities and responsibilities in faithful service, including elders. Paul told Timothy to "preach the word" because of the time coming when some would not endure it, but he also wrote, "but you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry," 2 Timothy 4:5. Somehow, we must remember that we are on the same side, or at least should be, and working for the same goal. A key principle in the success of the church is for preachers and elders to fulfill their God given responsibilities, which involves, "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain," Titus 1:9-11. Elders must be able to uphold the truth and make sure it is defended from the pulpit. It is a great responsibility which must be fulfilled if there is going to be an end to the teaching of things which should not be taught.

One of the most encouraging aspects of ministry is to hear of elders standing up for and behind their minister when sound doctrine is preached, especially when challenged by those advocating a different doctrine. But it is equally encouraging to hear of preachers who, in submission to, are supportive of those men who stand accountable to God for their oversight.

Obviously, the Bible is clear concerning division within the church and a divisive spirit. Division has never been God's design, nor should it ever be the direction God's people seek. However, we must consider how dangerous it is, for the sake of unity, to compromise truth by allowing error to continue. There may be times when division needs to exist in order

for truth to be evident. Light and darkness should have no fellowship, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. As the church must be separate from the practice of worldliness and the concept of denominationalism, so it is with truth and the error of compromising doctrine within the church! May the church always realize, now more than ever, the need not to allow the influence of the world, nor denominationalism redirect the purpose of upholding truth. May the church always know where the lines

have been drawn by God and be willing to stay within those guidelines.

Many areas of difficulties have and will continue to arise among God's people. Hopefully, our prayer will be to work in the direction of developing and maintaining the unity Jesus prayed for, John 17:20-21, the early church practiced, Acts 2:42-47, and the apostles pleaded for, 1 Corinthians 1:10. When we truly put into perspective what Christ has done for us and who we really are then maybe we can gain

the strength to follow the heart of our Savior, eliminating the foolish and arrogant pride which can destroy what He died to achieve.

Bob Turner has preached for the church in Greenbrier, Arkansas since October 1997. Before that time he worked four and a half years in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, Canada. He graduated from Bear Valley Bible Institute in 1993 with a BA degree in Bible. He and his wife Cheryl have three children. Bob can be reached at gchofch@cyberback.com.

THE ENTRUSTED WORD INTRODUCTORY ISSUE

visit us on the web at www.bvbid.org



BEAR VALLEY
BIBLE INSTITUTE OF DENVER
2707 South Lamar Street, Denver, Colorado 80227

