

Plain Path

Weekly newsletter of the Fry Road church of Christ

Sunday, December 28, 2014

Volume 19, Number 52

“Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path... Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart” (Psalm 27:11-14)

PAUL’S LIFE DECLARES ...

by Bob Pulliam

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

(II Timothy 4:6ff)

THE LIFE OF PAUL is truly a testament to how deeply a man can believe something. Last week we saw how his conversion was completely out of character with who he had previously been. His conversion speaks volumes regarding the truth of Christ's resurrection and validity of the church. But we must not miss the powerful testimony of Paul's life.

His life not only tells a story about the truth of Christ's resurrection, but reaches all the way to the core conviction that there is a

God, and He has spoken to mortals. Last week we discussed the possibility that there were less than noble motives for Paul's conversion. We briefly answered those proposals, but will see a great deal more of that fallacy as we examine his life. You see, evil motives in a change, such as Paul made, would eventually be seen in the life and commitment of the individual. As we look at Paul, we should examine the sincerity that may, or may not be there. This sincerity (or lack of it) can be witnessed in a willingness to

wholeheartedly give of self to the cause undertaken. How does the apostle Paul fare in such an examination?

Initial Adjustments?

There were adjustments to be made when Paul was first converted. In his case, acceptance was not readily achieved among Christians. The disciples were afraid of him (Acts 9:26), and we can certainly understand their doubts about him (Acts 9:13f). His former colleagues tried to kill him (Acts 9:23f). No one knew better than Paul how vicious and determined the council and High Priest were regarding this new religion (Acts 6:11-15; Acts 9:1f). To accuse Paul of delusions of changing that toxic atmosphere is to accuse him of stupidity. He was, to some extent, isolated at this time (Gal 1:17).

All this brings the accusation that Paul craved attention into serious doubt. He was no longer the
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center of attention, and was no longer climbing any ladder of success. He couldn't have helped but know what was lying ahead of him if he converted. And if Paul had harbored evil motives (for turning to Christianity), the first three years after his conversion would have shaken those loose. Paul would have renounced his newfound faith, and gone back to the Judaism that had been such a success to him.

Desire to Unify?

Perhaps Paul's motives weren't "evil", just ulterior. Perhaps Paul thought he could unify his nation. A nation that seemed to be in the process of extensive

fragmentation. Surely he saw the possibilities in a new religion that threatened the unity of his nation! Could it be that Paul converted in an effort to bring the two sides together?

First, let's talk about the prospect of unifying. Would Paul really have seen the possibilities of a new religion doing this? That is truly absurd. Consider the course Paul was taking before his conversion. Wasn't he doing that very thing! Not by compromise, but by enforcing the laws of the nation. To him, Christians were blasphemers who deserved to die. Stop this "Christian superstition" and you will stop the nation from unraveling.

Second, let's talk about the kind of unification this theory presents. If Paul did convert to unify, we would find him seeking compromise to bring the two sides together. In cases where this kind of unity is sought, one can always find efforts to compromise. The individual tries to play mediator between two sides. Paul, however, never gave ground to the Jews (Gal 2: 1-5), but remained firm in his proclamation of the risen Christ. He did not seek the unification of Jew and Christian. He sought the conversion of Jew to Christ! And yet this was *not* his mission! The apostle Paul was not an apostle to the Jews. He was an apostle to the Gentiles. If Paul had been seeking peace among his brethren, he would have remained at Jerusalem. He would have proclaimed himself an apostle to the Jews. To speak of being sent to the Gentiles caused Jews to riot (Acts 22:21ff). And He did not remain in Jerusalem. He traveled all over the Roman empire, preaching Christ

risen to the gentiles. This leaves us without doubt that Paul did not convert for the purpose of bringing together a divided nation.

Sacrifices?

Here is the point that should cause everyone to sit up and take notice. A man harboring evil motives in his change will not make meaningful sacrifices. Superficial sacrifices may be found in abundance; but true sacrifices of faith will be lacking. It isn't difficult to preach error if you believe it will bring you great gain. But to endure being beaten and stoned (and more — II Corinthians 11:23-28), and never become rich or powerful is a testament to something far greater at work. That far greater power is *truth*. Conscientious people will die for what they believe in. They may not always die for the truth, because they are sometimes convinced of error. But Paul is a unique case we shouldn't discard as deluded. Remember what he proclaimed. He wasn't "discipled" to the Lord by the preaching of others. Paul actually saw Jesus on the road to Damascus. He was actually blind for three days. He was healed of that blindness by one of Jesus' prophets. This isn't someone who read something and became convinced that it sounded good. Paul had actually seen and experienced something that he then proclaimed. Why be beaten for that if it didn't really happen? Why be stoned for that if it didn't really happen? Why toil relentlessly in the face of dangers and rejection when you know that you didn't really see what you tell people you saw? The answer is simple. It did really happen. Paul

(Declares, *continued on pg 3...*)

THIS WEEK'S DAILY BIBLE READINGS

NEW TESTAMENT READING

REVELATION 18 - 22

December 28 - 30

OLD TESTAMENT READING

PSALMS 97 - 109

December 31 - January 3

I TIMOTHY 4:13

FAMILY NEWS & NOTES

*News and Notes of Interest
to Fry Road Members*

Because of the large number of visitors to our services, we would ask those wishing to identify with the congregation to do so by expressing this interest directly to the elders.

Upcoming Meetings & Events:

Gospel Meeting (Dee Bowman)
January 11 - 14, 2015

V.B.S.
June 21 - 25, 2015

Gospel Meeting (Jim Deason)
September 13 - 16, 2015

Gospel Meeting (Carl McMurray)
April 12 - 15, 2015

Annual Singing
September 12, 2015

Sick and Shut-Ins

Sections have been removed to preserve members' privacy

Updates for friends and family members should be given to Bob regularly to keep necessary items up-to-date, and included in Plain Path. Without updates, items on the list are purged periodically.

Sermons:

Next Sunday:

Were You There?

Tonight:

The Beginning and the End

Order of Services:

Announcements and Reading
Singing & Prayer
Sermon
Invitation & Song
Lord's Supper
Song & Contribution
Closing Song

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saw Jesus and was blind for three days. He knew he couldn't be wrong because he was a witness to what was true!

Conclusion...

When we examine the life of the apostle Paul, we find a man whose conversion makes sense — only when it is explained by the truth of God's word. The only reason for a man to endure what Paul endured, and to give up what Paul gave up, is that he truly did see Jesus on the road to Damascus.

He was not deluded. His conscience did not backfire on him for killing Christians. He was called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, by Jesus Himself. With this he was granted the signs (miracles) of an apostle that validated his story of Jesus' resurrection, his own encounter with Jesus, and the truth which God revealed in him. To examine the conversion of Paul with honesty is to conclude that Jesus truly was raised from the dead, and appeared to him. The life of Paul truly does declare something very significant that we should study carefully.



Note to Teachers

CLASS MATERIAL for the first quarter should already be in the hands of students in the upper grades. Please make sure students are ready for next quarter's study.

END-OF-CLASS BELLS have changed. The first bell rings at ten after, and the second at a quarter after. Classes upstairs should quietly come downstairs when the first bell rings, and downstairs classes will dismiss on the second bell.

FOR THE RECORD

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

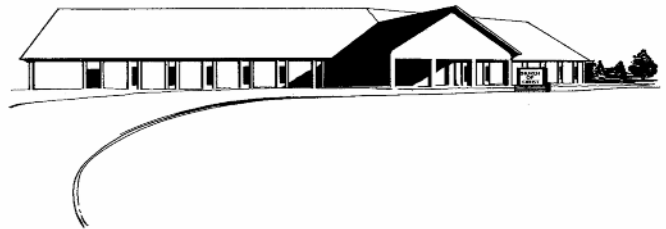
MONTHLY ASSIGNMENTS

Sections have been removed to preserve members' privacy

IN KEEPING WITH OUR LONG STANDING AGREEMENT, THOSE SERVING PUBLICLY ARE REMINDED TO PLEASE DRESS IN A MANNER RESPECTFUL OF THE GOD WHOM WE SERVE.

ELDERS:

Ruben Amador
Matthew Heaton
Donnie Mangrum
Steven Martin
Steve Voss



DEACONS:

John Coleman	Ken Dunsmore
David Ellison	Ray Farrell
Aubrey Garner	Steve Geraci
Steve LaGrasta	John Light
Mike McMurray	Jason Mock
David Stevenson	Glenn Tomblin

TIMES OF SERVICES

Sunday Bible Classes	9:30 AM
Sunday Morning Assembly	10:30 AM
Sunday Evening Assembly	6:00 PM
Wednesday Bible Classes	7:30 PM

EVANGELIST & EDITOR:

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