

“The Good Ole Days” (Eccl. 7:10)

David Halbrook

Do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?" For you do not inquire wisely concerning this... In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider (Eccl. 7:10, 14). Each year will have its “ups and downs”—2014 did and 2015 will. When we compare the past to the present and complain about “how bad things have gotten and how good it used to be,” what does that accomplish?

When days are good, be joyful. Seasons of laughter and peace ought to remind us that every good gift is from God (Eccl. 3:4, 8; James 1:17). If you are not a Christian, your good days will end at death. Learn the fear of the Lord and find *the fullness of joy* He offers (Psalms 16:11; 115:11).

When days are bad (adversity), Solomon says to *consider*. Don’t complain but learn from the problem, notice that sin is often the source of problems, and seek the solution Jesus offers in the gospel (Acts 2:37-38). He will not make all problems disappear, but without sin (drunkenness, revenge, or lying) causing constant chaos, your list of problems will quickly shrink! By faith, repent and be baptized. Thus saved by Christ, begin the newness of life available only in Him.

Editor’s Note: Again, the new year provides an opportunity to teach our community to *gain a heart of wisdom*, available in the book of Ecclesiastes. Use our article in *Arkansas Weekly* to help someone realize that sin is the largest problem they have.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, and new Christians among us.

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Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

church of Christ--Quail Valley

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Not Surprising

Jim Neff

Highland COC Puts New Twist in Sunday Services, KTAB TV, Aug. 24, 2014, Abilene, Texas; By Kimberly Sears 08/24/2014 10:59 PM

“The Highland Church of Christ is breaking out of the mold by adding a second Sunday service with live instruments instead of an a Capella choir. The Highland Church of Christ has a new twist to Sunday services. Instead of just a cappella singing, the church has decided to make their 11 o’ clock service have live instruments, which is a major change to the way service is conducted within Churches of Christ. Highland Church of Christ in Abilene is one of the few churches in the nation that has made this change.

Worship Minister at Highland, Brandon Thomas, said they wanted to reach people in deeper ways. He has also seen a jump in people using instruments to worship and Thomas wanted to bring that diversity to the church. The church has only had two services use the instruments so far, but Thomas said it’s going well.

Thomas said that even the older people have enjoyed the live instruments. He said that they are singing more than they did before and really getting into the music. The people that perform the music are all from the church and now they are able to showcase their talents to the rest of their church community.” Copyright 2014 Nexstar Broadcasting, Inc. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed. Link to Related Video: <http://www.clipsyndicate.com/video/play/5295996> (TRANSCRIPT OF TV REPORT BY MARK MAYBERRY. NOTE: Article reprinted under “Fair Use Doctrine” for educational purposes only)

The above report is not surprising as a bit of history will reveal. For those too young to remember, the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas was the “sponsoring church” that managed the nationally syndicated Herald of Truth radio and television program. Churches all over the United States were urged to contribute funds to it as part of their evangelistic work, a work of the “Churches of Christ.”

Some preachers, in the 1950s and 60s, publicly criticized the Herald of Truth as an organization that infringed on the autonomy of local congregations by uniting many congregations into a single work. Uniting several congregations gave one congregation the ability to do greater things than it could by itself. However that created a denomination where each church is a part, or denomination, of the whole. A similar issue had occurred in the 1800s called the “American Christian Missionary Society” that gave rise to the Christian Church.

The Herald of Truth was only one of the institutions that eventually, by the mid-1960s, resulted in a split among Christians into those who supported institutions and those who did not, often called “antis.” Opposing preachers were isolated and discredited. As a teen I attended debates on the subject. Churches often split over the issue and there were a lot of hard feelings between brethren, even to the point of brethren coming to blows.

The issue boiled down to the way in which we establish authority for our actions. Churches of Christ once claimed, “... We speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent.” That changed. Institution supporters began to argue that their practices were not specifically prohibited by the New Testament. Finally, the concept of scriptural authority was abandoned altogether.

God told the elders in 1 Peter 5:2 that they were to *...shepherd the flock of God which is among you....* The authority of local church leaders is limited to those among them. God does not assign responsibilities to a local church that are beyond its means.

Proponents claim “...God did not say we can’t use instruments.” New Testament music worship was psalms, or singing (Ac 16:25; 1Co 14:26; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Jas 5:13). Once God establishes a practice, others are excluded. The Hebrew writer argued similarly in Hebrews 7:11-14. Moses spoke nothing about a priest arising out of a tribe other than Levi, therefore under the Law of Moses, only a Levite could be a priest. For Jesus to be a priest the law must change. That exclusionary principle holds true with music worship and whatever we do.

Institutional churches eschewed instrumental music because of tradition rather than scriptural authority. The Highland “worship minister” says “...a capella was our heritage.” New generations disregard the tradition. Given the attitude of the Highland church’s leaders toward scriptural authority, and that of similar churches like the Oak Hills church in San Antonio, it is no surprise that instrumental music would ultimately be accepted. Without a regard for scriptural authority churches are limited only by their leaders’ imagination. Soon those “Churches of Christ” will be

indistinguishable from, and accepted by, all other denominations. If it is not our authority, why bother with the Bible?

Some Updates on “gifts and fruit” (Phili. 4:17)

We purchased \$500 worth of Bibles to be distributed among brethren in the Philippines, some of whom may never have owned a Bible or may have had their only Bible destroyed by recent typhoons. Ron Halbroom was our messenger. He reports (from his trip during December 2014): “My flights from Auckland, N.Z. to Sydney, Australia and on to Manila went very well on Wednesday. After a long day’s travel, no one had to rock me to sleep! Today, Thursday the 18th, was set aside to finalize the order for hundreds of Bibles. I had emailed my order in advance to Vicky Franco at the Philippine Bible Society. Atoy Franco took me to the P.B.S. so that Vicky and I could finalize various details to purchase and ship 2,447 Bibles in various dialects, costing nearly \$20,000. This is by far the largest order I have ever made. This was made possible by many donations large and small. God knows and will reward every donor. On behalf of hundreds of Filipinos who will rejoice when they receive their Bibles, THANK YOU, dear brethren!!!”

We sent \$500 to Benedict Calderon, as a one-time help. He primarily speaks Spanish (which explains the broken English in his reply, below) and is helping to spread the gospel among Spanish-speaking people in Conway. We hope to get to know him better in the future. He sent this message to us “Hello brothers, I am the minister of the church of Christ-speaking city conway, and is an honor for me to write these letters giving thanks to God and to each of you for the interest they took to help me \$\$\$ I follow pray that may God by getting my full-time support. brothers thanks, I keep in touch God bless you, Evangelista Benedict calderon”

Pray for Steve Wallace whom we are helping to send to India January 9-24 (Our December 7, 2014 bulletin had a note of his appreciation for our help in this trip).

Think of these brethren as you go to work and later give a portion of your wages on the Lord’s Day. Philippians 4:17-19: *Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*