

## *What Is The Gospel?*

*David Halbrook*

In 1 Corinthians 15:1 Paul reminds the Corinthians that he preached the gospel to them. In verse 3 he says that he first preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Some people believe that is the entire gospel, but that is only the first part. Paul also said that *they have not all obeyed the gospel* (Rom. 10:16) and that man can be *partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel* (Eph. 3:6). So the gospel includes teachings we must obey and promises we must believe and is not limited to the facts of Jesus' life.

March 2-5 (*Sunday-Wednesday*) we invite you to come learn about these various aspects of the gospel with us. Come learn of the life, teachings, and promises of Jesus Christ. That is the gospel, God's good news for Batesville and all the world. Here is a schedule of our plans for the week:

*Receiving the Word with All Readiness*- Sunday, 10AM

*Lay Aside Every Weight*- Sunday, 10:45AM & 5PM (a two-part lesson)

*Moses & the Rock of Stumbling*- Monday, 7PM

*Calling on the Name of the Lord*- Tuesday, 7PM

*Live Like You Were Dying*- Wednesday, 7PM

Editor's Note: Our article in *Arkansas Weekly* (Tuesday) should be easier to find this week because we bought more space than usual. Please make the most of the money and effort being spent in this gospel meeting. Being present is only the beginning.

*Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.*

Please check the meal list for this week, being *hospitable to one another without grumbling* (1 Peter 4:9). There are other duties waiting for willing hands on the board in the back.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Samuel Southall, and others with ongoing trials, our brethren who are travelling, and new Christians among us.

*We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & 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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## *What Constitutes A STRONG Church?*

*Stan Cox*

A look at the New Testament reveals that even early in the history of the Lord's church, some congregations were not as strong as the Lord desired. While Paul's epistle to the church in Philippi indicated that congregation to be strong and faithful, his first letter to the Corinthians revealed a congregation inundated with spiritual problems, division and worldliness. A quick reading of our Lord's letters to the seven churches of Asia (in Revelation 2 and 3) shows criticism and a call to repent for all of them, save Smyrna (2:8-11) and Philadelphia (3:7-13). Note the Lord's praise for the church in Philadelphia. "*Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown*" (10-11).

Paul's exhortation to the Philadelphians to "*Hold fast*" points out the importance of knowing what constitutes a faithful and strong local congregation, and diligently applying those principles. Consider the following (with thanks to Mark Copeland's sermon, "*The Measure of a Strong Church*"):

**A strong church functions like a body.** The human body is a marvel, when it is functioning properly. I recently watched a video of an 6'5" athlete weighing 287 pounds, jumping flatfooted onto a platform 55" above the ground. To accomplish the feat took preparation, training and a proper diet. His body was tuned in such a way as to allow for maximum effort, and his body produced.

The apostle Paul used the image of a body in referring to the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). His words have powerful implications for each local congregation. He wrote that each Christian had a different function and responsibility (as the different members of a physical body). He indicated that members were to be sympathetic (as

are members of a physical body). “*And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it*” (26). In another place (Ephesians 4:11-16), He emphasized that if every member does his or her share, the body will “*grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ*” (15). This is referred to as “*growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love*” (16).

**A strong church loves like a family.** Most people grow up in circumstances where they are loved by their own. We recognize the importance of family, and are saddened at the plight of the neglected and abused. In 1 Timothy 3:15 the church is referred to as “*the house of God.*” Paul gave instructions for Christians to treat an older man as a “*father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity*” (1 Timothy 5:1-2). Paul clearly indicated that love should be characteristic of the relationship sustained between Christians, “*But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another*” (1 Thessalonians 4:9).

As sad as it is when physical families are estranged and unloving — strife, antagonism and indifference among the people of God is equally disappointing to God, and destructive to the congregation itself.

**A strong church praises like a temple.** Both the tabernacle and the temple were erected to supply a place where the Jews could gather to worship God. When the Samaritan woman asked Jesus where to worship God, he indicated that the correct place (under the Old Covenant) was in Jerusalem (cf. John 4:22). Then he said to her, “*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him*” (23). In the new covenant, the place of worship is not important (21). A congregation of Christians can — at anytime and in any location — worship God acceptably, so long as it is done “*in spirit and truth.*”

It is for this reason that Paul exhorts us to “*present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is [our] reasonable service*” (Romans 12:1).

**A strong church submits like a kingdom.** Though absolute power among men is seldom seen in our time, and almost universally rejected as a viable form of government, at one time it was common. As a king had absolute power in his domain, the welfare of the people was dependent upon whether he ruled wisely and benevolently.

Fortunately, in the Lord’s church/kingdom our ruler is Jesus Christ. He is king, and has absolute authority (cf. Matthew 28:18). A church can’t be rightly defined as “strong” unless it submits to those parameters which Jesus Christ determined to

constitute strength. No other standard matters. Consider the church in Sardis, of which Jesus said, “*I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead*” (Revelation 3:1). He called upon them to “*hold fast and repent*” (3).

**Conclusion:** It has been said that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Going back to the analogy where the church is described as the body of Christ, the growth of the body comes when “*every part does its share*” (Ephesians 4:16). Every member (individual) in a local congregation is necessary for its edification and growth (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:21-25).

For our congregation to grow, each of us must heed the admonitions of this article. Individually we must work (using our God given talents), love each other, worship God in spirit and in truth, and it all ways submit to His will in our lives. If we do it singly, then collectively we will be the strong, vibrant church that the Holy Spirit calls our congregation to be.

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### *Taking Chances*

*Greg King*

We have all been encouraged not to take a chance on trying to beat a train across its tracks, because you are sure to lose. We have all been encouraged from a young age to look both ways before you cross a street, lest a moving vehicle should run you down. We are continually instructed by loved ones and family members to take no chances, so that we may be safe from harm.

What kind of chances are you taking? Are you among the many that are taking a chance on something far more valuable than human life? Are you taking a chance that you might be saved without obeying the commands found in the Bible? The chances are against you! (Matthew 7:21).

Are you putting off being a Christian, taking a chance that nothing will happen to you before you decide to become one? For you well know, “that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night.” (2Peter 3:10)

Are you a lukewarm Christian, taking a chance on “getting by” on God’s mercy because you have obeyed the fundamental principles of the Gospel? That is a big wager! (1Corinthians 10:12)

**Don’t take foolish chances!!**