ON THE HOME FRONT

Gary Colley

We appreciate the many kind comments we receive concerning our bulletin from Getwell. It is evident that it is being read, not only by our local people but also by those in different states. It is always good to know that good people are helped by the things we write. We believe it needful to help all we can, in every way we can, and at all times that we have the opportunity.

People often are confused about the “spirits in prison” spoken of by the apostle Peter (I Pet. 1:19). Some have said that Christ went to hell to preach to these souls and to give them a second chance. Others have believed that they were in the prison house of torment, or Hades (Tartarus), the awaiting place of the wicked until the resurrection and Judgement Day (Lk. 16:19-31). If so, why single out only those who were “disobedient in the days of Noah?” Since God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), would He not seek to release others also if this were the case! No! Jesus did not go to Hell, nor did He go to Hades, which is shown if we read further. These were rather the captives of sin who were living in the prison of sin in Noah’s day! When was this preaching done? “... when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing (I Pet. 3:20). Noah did this preaching for 120 years (II Pet. 2:5), before the flood, not after, while these people were still alive, not after they were dead, which would have been too late. Only those who entered the ark were saved from the flood. Likewise, today, only those who enter into Christ or His church will be saved eternally (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23). Please do not wait too long to obey the Gospel (I Pet. 3:21; Mk. 16:15-16).
When Christ Will Come Again?

Nothing appeals to saint or sinner more than the second coming of Christ! That Jesus will come again is a major basic teaching of the New Testament. The promise was given on Pentecost, “Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner” (Acts 1:11). Though for the faithful Christian it will be a time of joy, it will be for the “wicked and slothful” a time of “darkness . . . weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 25:30). God sent His only begotten Son into the world the first time to offer salvation through His church by the cross (Jn. 3:16-17; Matt.16:18; Acts 2:41, 47). But the second time Jesus comes will be to condemn the sinful and unrighteous world (II Thess. 1:7-9). Salvation is still being offered to those who will hear the Gospel, believe it, turn from their sins in repentance, confess with their mouth their faith in Christ, be baptized for the remission of sins, and live faithfully to the end of time (Acts 2:38; Rev. 2:10). We all have an intense interest in the next coming of the Lord and the Judgement Day, whether some acknowledge it or not! It is sad that some false teachers have played on the emotions and expectations of lost man in predicting dates for the Lord’s second coming. “Premillennialism” and its followers have made millions of dollars off of the superstitions of men! One verse of Bible study could set these free from error and false teachers, if they would just study (Jn. 8:31-32). What is that verse? “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father only” (Matt. 24:35). What do we know about the second coming of Jesus?

1. It will be unexpected, without warning or signs (I Thess. 5:2).
2. “Every eye shall see him” (Rev. 1:7).
3. It will not be a “quiet” coming, but very noisy (I Thess. 4:16).
4. All graves will be opened (Jn. 5:28-29).
6. The righteous will be taken to Heaven and the wicked condemned to Hell (Matt. 25:46).
7. This old earth will “be burned up” (II Pet. 3:10).

With these clear teachings in mind, will you prepare and be ready for His second coming?
We know we all have a responsibility to be soul seekers, or soul winners, to teach the gospel to others. The other day I heard a speaker point out that some of us are better at being gardeners of the Word. The seed, the gospel, may be planted by others, but it is our responsibility to cultivate the seed. We are reminded of this fact in I Corinthians 3:6 where the apostle Paul states, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”

Apart from being commanded to teach and preach the gospel, we are commanded in I Peter 3:15 to be an apologist, which is one who argues in defense of a person or cause. Peter reminds us, “But to sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

Many of us do not know how to bring up the gospel in conversation, how to bridge from Bible content to conversation. Like Paul stated in Romans, I do not believe any of us are ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but we do not know how to open or conduct a religious conversation.

First, let us look at Colossians 4:5 & 6 that gives some very good counsel in dealing with those who are without. “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” There are three phrases to remember from this passage: (1) Walk in wisdom, (2) speak always with grace, (3) seasoned with salt. In other words be smart, be nice, be prepared. Most people we engage in religious conversation already have some type of religious prejudice and background. It will help us to know what they believe and where they are coming from. We have to be patient in teaching others; we rarely go from the initial conversation straight to the baptistery pool. Using a baseball analogy, when we do not hit a home run every time we come to bat (teach), we choose to sit on the bench and not get in the game. Remember, the fields are white already to harvest (John 4:35).

Keep in mind what John 4:37 says: some of us are sowers, and some are reapers.

The speaker I heard recently borrowed a tactic from our Lord for teaching by asking questions, except he called it the “Colombo” method. Those of us of a certain age remember Lt. Colombo, who solved murder cases by asking questions and with these questions gathered facts about his adversary. This is a method we would do well to imitate. Gather information about the other person’s belief and faith. Thus, we practice what Paul admonished us in Colossians 4:6, our speech seasoned with salt. By using this method, the Christian goes on the offensive with carefully thought out answers given. The result is he gathers facts about what the person believes.

You ask the person a question, listen to your answer, and respond with the question what do you mean by that? Keep in mind that every time you ask a question, it gives the other person a chance to talk; thus, we learn about them, and a door opens for the truth to come in. When a person outside Christ answers your question, since they do not have the truth, you will catch them being inconsistent, illogical, or relying on emotion. Secondly, when you ask a person, they have the burden of proof, an example being an atheist who makes the claim that God does not exist, and then he has to supply the burden of proof that God does not exist. Remember Lt. Colombo and his tactic of asking questions to gather facts. More importantly, remember our Lord, who asked the appropriate questions to lead people to the truth.

—Ron Wallace