

Good News

From Getwell

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SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY ACTIVITY

SUNDAY

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
 Worship.....10:20 a.m.
 Worship.....5:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

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ON THE HOME FRONT

"Gathered to His People"

By: Russell H McCullough

In Genesis 49 we read that when Israel had completed his blessing of his sons, "...he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people." This is a reference to the hope of the resurrection. Israel's hope was set in that resurrection. Paul tells us "... that for the Hope of Israel I am bound by this chain." [Acts 28:20]. This past week, our dear bro. David R. Pharr was indeed "gathered to his people."

Bro. Pharr was first and foremost, a man who "loved God with all his heart, mind and soul, and loved his neighbor as himself." He loved Christ and His church. He loved Christians and he loved the lost. He was from a very young age a truth seeker. Raised a Methodist, he was taught the gospel as a teenager. Ultimately, nearly the entire Pharr family came to know Christ as well, including his late brother, Claude Pharr, who like David, was a well-known gospel preacher in Virginia and the Carolina's. Having come out of sectarianism, he knew more than most men, of the terror of falsehood. As a young man he sought the truth, as an old man he was a mighty proclaimer of it.

Many men prepare themselves for the proclamation of the gospel. Few continue that preparation "after school." David Pharr continued to learn and study until he lapsed into unconsciousness just a few days ago. He honed his skill, literally, until he fell asleep for the last time the other day. I am told that after his terminal diagnosis at the end of March, he was determined to finish one last book. Whether he did or not, I do not know.

Our brother was a leader among leaders. He mentored, he taught, he administered, he preached, he eldered, he comforted, all his adult life. Mostly though, he sought the lost with every fiber of his being. He was a man of many passions, not the least of which was the pursuit of mentoring men into the ministry. He would seek us out. He would encourage us to take the risk. He would devote time, attention, and prayer to all men he met who aspired to the podium of truth. I know this, I was one upon which his love, care, and concern fell upon often.

Some men lead. Some men evangelize. Some men preach. Some men teach. Some men mentor. Some men encourage. Some men disciple. Few do all. Bro. David R. Pharr is one of the few. Yes, "is" lies in the present tense. Our brother lives now "beyond the Jordan" and has been "gathered to his people." Until we meet again my friend...farewell!

RON'S REMINDERS



This is the last article David Pharr wrote. We will be running this week and continuing it next week.

The Development of the Papacy David R. Pharr The Spiritual Sword, April 2023, Vol. 54 #3

The term "papacy" refers to the office of the pope of the Roman Catholic Church. The term "pope" (from Greek, pappas, meaning father) refers to the bishop of Rome. The Roman episcopacy/ diocese is the "mother church." The pope is superior over all other bishops and therefore head of the church. The term "pontiff," meaning "high priest," is frequently applied to the pope. The headquarters of Roman Catholicism is called the "Holy See." The term is from a Latin word meaning "seat," or "throne." A related term is "cathedra," referring to an official chair for a bishop. Statements issued by popes which supposedly are divine and absolute are "ex cathedra," i.e., from his chair (throne). The papal headquarters is Vatican City, a small principality situated within Rome, Italy. It is a politically independent sovereign state, recognized as such by other nations. From there the pope rules over a vast ecclesiastical empire involving the souls of millions and trillions of earthly wealth.

In that Catholicism holds that there is no salvation outside its dominion, it is important to ask what is the origin of the papacy. Catholic claims are that Christ's authority was transferred to the apostle Peter and that Peter became the first bishop of Rome. Rome being the capital of the empire, it came to be expected that the church there and its hierarchy should be both the model and overseer of the whole church. Though Peter never held or claimed any such position, the tradition invented was/is that upon his death

this primacy of the bishop of Rome passed to his successor and all subsequently named to that position. Thus, the pope is the "Vicar [in place of] Christ." The jurisdiction resides in the office, regardless of the character, knowledge, or ability of the man.

In Actuality

Nothing in Scripture supports the claim that Peter was given special authority above the other apostles. Christ's words about binding and loosing (Matt. 16:18f) were also applied to others (Matt. 18:18; cf. John 20:19ff). The "rock" upon which the church is built is Christ himself (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11). Peter's own writing makes it clear that Christ is the rock/ stone which is the foundation of the church (1 Pet. 2:6ff; cf. Isa. 28:16). When Peter wrote to elders/bishops, he included himself as no more than one of the same (1 Pet. 5:1).

There is no evidence that Peter was ever a bishop in Rome, nor even that he ever went to Rome. Absence of his name in Paul's Roman letter strongly suggests Peter was not there. So also is the case with Paul's epistles from Rome. Catholic and Protestant historians disagree on the implications of the scant non-biblical evidence that Peter might sometime have been there, but non-Catholic scholars are certain there is no evidence supporting the idea of his being there as the first bishop (McClintock & Strong, VII, 627).

In New Testament usage, a bishop is no more than one of a plurality of qualified leaders in an autonomous local church. The term is used interchangeably with "elder" and "pastor" (shepherd). The only "chief shepherd" is Christ (1 Pet. 5:4). The idea of a chief bishop (archbishop) is unscriptural. New Testament church polity was very simple (Phil. 1:1). The same organizational simplicity is found in churches of Christ today. Popes may head the Roman church, but only Christ is the head of his church (Eph. 5:23; et al). The papacy may claim authority in worldly religion, but only Jesus has all authority "in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18).

Early Developments

Paul forewarned elders: "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). Not long after the end of the apostolic age a practice developed in which elderships began to be led by a single elder to whom was appropriated the title "the bishop" (as distinguished from the other elders/bishops). The issue was whether congregations were governed by a plurality of presbyters or by a single monarchical bishop (Newman, 266). Ignatius (2nd century) held strongly to the idea that congregations should have a monarchical bishop, but did not specifically apply this to Rome (Cairns, 79).

By the late second century the idea was advanced that such bishops were successors of the apostles. In time such newly licensed bishops in larger cities began to dominate churches in their surrounding territory. As would be expected, controversies and competition developed among these archbishops. By 190 Victor of Rome was claiming to be "universal bishop" but was ignored by others (Mattox, 110). The theory generally held was that bishops were "equal to each other in rank, power and function,"

but in time the Roman bishop was considered "first among equals" (Cairns, 169). The church at Rome had a reputation for orthodoxy. As Peter was supposed to have been the first bishop of Rome, his successors were to be accorded special honor. Cyprian (195-268) did much to advance the idea, claiming that the Roman Church was the "chair of Peter" and that it is "the root and mother of the Catholic Church." (M. & S., 628).

Though opposition would continue, Rome's primacy became more settled with the passing centuries. Leo I (sometimes Leo the Great) became Bishop of Rome in 460 and held the office for two decades. He did more than any of his predecessors to establish papal power. Some historians consider him the first pope "in the real sense of the word" (M. & S., 629). It would be over a century before would arise another of like prominence. Gregory I, also known as "the Great," ruled from 590 to 604. "At the close of his reign the theory of the primacy of Peter and the Roman bishop as his successor and universal head of the church was definitely established" (Mattox, 140). Though Gregory disclaimed the title "pope," he "exercised all the power and prerogatives of the later popes" (Cairns, 182). "Later successors built upon the foundation that he had laid, resulting in the sacramental hierarchal system of the institutionalized church of the Middle Ages" (Ibid 184). Boniface III (A.D. 607) is often cited as the first pope because of a decree made by Emperor Phocas that the title of "universal bishop" should be given only to the Pope of Rome (M. & S., 849). This was five centuries removed from the time of the apostles, and removed yet farther from apostolic teaching.

(Continues in next weeks bulletin)