

Gospel Power



"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation..." (Romans 1:16)

The Gospel Power is published in interest of New Testament Christianity and to enhance the work of the Anderson church.

**Anderson
church of Christ**
5900 Highway 207
Anderson, Alabama

Visit Us On The Web

Anderson-church.org

Men Privileged To Serve:

Sunday, March 2nd

Bible Classes

Song Leader

..... Jerry Dickey

Bible Reading (Psalm 79)

..... Phil Pressnell

Prayer

..... Mark McIntyre

Morning Worship

Song Leader

..... Jerry Dickey

Prayer

..... Brian Word

Lord's Supper/Collection

Presiding Michael Clemmons

..... Ray Tucker

..... Daniel Clemmons

..... Jerry Best

Closing Prayer

..... Scottie Goode

Evening Worship

Song Leader

..... Daniel Clemmons

Bible Reading (Psalm 80)

..... Claus Martel

Prayer

..... Ronnie Phillips

Lord's Supper

..... Michael Clemmons

Closing Prayer

..... Jimmy Glass

Volume X

March 2, 2003

No. 9

"Their Heart Was Hardened"

Hal Hammons

Throughout Scripture, the word "heart" is used in reference to that part of a man that either accepts or rejects God. The Jews at Pentecost were "pierced to the heart" (Acts 2:37); Jesus exhorted His listeners to be "pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8); Paul said of the Gentiles at large that "their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21). Most famous of all, of course, is the heart of Pharaoh, which the text says was hardened by God (Exodus 4:21) and also by Pharaoh himself (Exodus 8:14). Is this a contradiction in the Scriptures? No, it simply illustrates the working of God's message in the hearts of men. Identical ovens heated to identical temperatures in identical circumstances will harden clay and melt beeswax. We wouldn't send such ovens back to be repaired; we would accept the results as a consequence of the nature of the two elements being heated. The gospel working in the hearts of man should be viewed in the same way. It softens some while hardening others. There is no question that God "hardens" the hearts of many, but blaming Him for that makes as much sense as blaming the oven for baking the clay instead of melting it.

The real issue at hand is not the nature of the gospel, but rather the nature of the heart. The material available for spiritual construction is described in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. The builder (i.e., preacher) works as diligently as he knows how with the material at hand. Sometimes outstanding temples to the Lord are built; that is because of the high quality of the souls in that proximity. As Paul said, the preacher deserves little credit for this -- "God was causing the growth" (verse 7). Other preachers might preach in territory with few if any souls interested in the gospel; the churches that result from such work are compared to "wood, hay, straw" in verse 12.

The fires of trial will reveal the church for what it is in due course of time.

The same principle works in the lives of individuals. We either are or are not receptive to the gospel. That tendency can change, but it tends to remain the same and in fact becomes increasingly the same way. Many in the world are sent “a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false” (2 Thessalonians 2:11), not because God wants them to be lost but because they themselves have set their hearts to be lost, and every stimulus put in their path is going to tend to push them further in that direction.

Generally we think of hardening in the way described above – bad people becoming worse. However, in our text we find Jesus’ closest disciples being hardened (verse 52). Had they ceased believing in the Lord? Of course not. This just tells us that their hearts had not become as softened to the truth as they should have. We are reminded of the words of the father of the demon-possessed boy in Mark 9:24 – “I believe; help my unbelief.” No matter how long we have followed the Lord, we can still lose our faith at critical times in our life. This happened more than once to the disciples; usually it was because they got the Lord’s plans confused with their own. Many aspects of Jesus’ ministry (including His total command of the elements, as was demonstrated when He walked on the water) were still foreign to the apostles. We should be warned: If it can happen to the closest of Jesus’ confederates, it certainly can happen to us.

The story of the walking on the water is prefaced by the feeding of the 5,000, which we will not detail here. We remember the basics of the story; certainly you would think it must have made a tremendous impact on the disciples. But we see in the storm on the lake that they had not been softened to Jesus’ teaching as completely as should have been the case.

They should have learned, for instance, that Jesus cares about His followers. He cared enough about total strangers to provide food for them

that very day. Does it make sense that He would abandon His closest friends to a watery grave? If not, we should be comforted that He will not forget about us in our hour of trial, either. He has a vital interest in our welfare, and we can count on Him acting on that interest.

They should have learned that Jesus can do much with little. All it took was a handful of food to feed thousands of people. Should it not have been enough for them, in their hour of weakness, to see the Lord walking on the water, completely unphased by the adverse conditions? Verse 48 says “He intended to pass by them”; evidently Jesus thought He had given them all the encouragement they needed simply by being seen. Unfortunately, as is often the case when faith fails, the occasion was used by the disciples to make their mental state worse -- they thought He was a ghost (verse 49). And are we better? Do we demand that the Lord minister to us in the way we choose, rather than accepting what encouragement He offers through the agency of His word and our brethren?

Also we see the lesson that nature’s laws mean nothing to Jesus. We can twist the laws of physics and common sense alike to our hearts’ content and never come up with a rational explanation for the miraculous meal the disciples served that day. They should have known that the way Jesus flaunted nature’s basic rules of order was a reflection of His Divine nature, and that He could do similarly inexplicable things at His discretion. We should not think that Jesus will break the rules for us in the way that He did then, but we should be able to put our full confidence in the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, with the full knowledge that He is fully capable of carrying our soul safely through this life and on into the next.

And yet we see the disciples astonished at Jesus’ power. Why? Because “their heart was hardened”. They had chosen, consciously or unconsciously, to ignore the lessons Jesus had taught them. But if we make the decision to soften our hearts to receive Jesus’ message, noth-

ing will astonish us. We will see Him forgive the unforgivable, give spiritual life to the spiritually dead, bring joy to the cynic, turn pessimists into optimists, and grant hope to the hopeless – and all the time simply smile and say, “That’s our Savior!”

~via *The Good News*, Tulsa, Oklahoma.



Everyone Counts!

Greg Gwin

Our country accomplished some incredible things during the hard trials of World War II. The feats of brave men and women who faced the enemy of the battlefields inspire our awe. But there is also amazing historical data that documents the amount of war materials and supplies that were produced in relatively short periods of time right here on the home-front. With limited resources that sometimes required rationing, and without the advantages of the technology we now enjoy, the nations “war machine” turned out essential equipment at a staggering pace. How was this done?

The key to this effort was a campaign to convince every single worker of his or her importance to the ultimate goal of defeating the enemy and winning the war. The leaders of our country successfully persuaded everyone to work hard, make sacrifices and contribute what they could to this end. The results were amazing. Against huge odds, the victory was won.

We are in another sort of war. There are no tanks, planes, bombs, or missiles. We do not need workers preparing bullets or medical supplies. There’s no need for rationing of gasoline or other necessary products. Instead, we are in a spiritual war (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). We battle against a very real and powerful enemy (1 Peter 5:8).

To win this war, we definitely need every Christian fully engaged. Everyone counts! We cannot afford to have some of our vital workers slacking off in their duties. We must all “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3). Diligent effort, significant sacrifice and determined commitment to the cause are essential. Every Christian serves in a critical capacity (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Some might suggest that the odds against us are overwhelming. But in truth, with God on our side, the enemy is doomed! As Elisha told his fearful servant: “Fear not for they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings 6:16).

~via *College View Columns*, Florence, Alabama

News and Notes

THE SICK: *Jamie Mosley’s father, Andy McConnell* is now at home after having angioplasty done and a stint inserted on Wednesday in Huntsville... *Onzell Tucker* continues at home recovering from her surgery... *Amber Hammond* was sick last weekend, but is now doing better ... *Faye Hammond* continues at home and is going for rehabilitation during the week... *Scottie Goode’s father, Hubert Goode*, had the growth in his throat trimmed again this week and will return again in three weeks ... *Lisa Word’s father, Austin Dillinger*, is now home from the Rehab... *Willie Ridgeway* was sick and not able to be with us Sunday at our services this past week... *Jean Ray* was able to be at bible study Wednesday night after being sick on Sunday... *Janice Glass’ grandmother, Emma Ray*, continues at home ... *Eddie Hammond’s cousin, Ricky Davis*, has cancer and is being treated... *Marla Clemmons’ grandmother*,

Mildred Blackburn, Continues at home... Remember *Mattie Blanche Word* continues at home...*Marcia Cooper's and Brian Word's uncle, Paul McCafferty* who is at the SunBridge Nursing Home in Lawrenceburg ...*Mary Best's nephew, Shannon Johnson*, who is at home ... *Tisha Thomas' grandmother, Nellie Hunter*, who is in the Meadow Brook Nursing Home in Pulaski...*Freda McConnell's father, Alton Wray*, who is at home.

COMMUNICATION GROUPS: Tonight will be the time for Communication group one to meet after our evening service. If you are in group one, plan to meet this evening.

CONSTRUCTION: This past week the construction on the new auditorium began. Let's remind our children to not be around the work area during the construction period.

OUT OF TOWN: *The Bests: Jerry and Mary* are out of town this weekend ... *The McConnells: James and Freda* are out of town in Florida ... *Claus Martel* will be out of town this week with his work in Florida.

GOSPEL MEETING: The *River Bend church* in near Oakland in Lauderdale county is beginning a meeting today and it will continue through Friday with services at 7:00 p.m. *Edward Bragwell of Russellville* will be the speaker...The *Parkway church* in Lawrence county is beginning a meeting today and it will continue through Wednesday with services at 7:00 p.m. *Norm Webb, Sr. of Athens* will be the speaker.

THE RECORD: *Averages for February 2003*

Sunday:

Bible Classes 82
 Morning Worship 97
 Evening Worship 74

Wednesday:

Bible Classes 69

Remember Our Bible Class Periods

Sunday at 9:45 a.m.
 Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.

Schedule of Services

Sunday

Bible Classes 9:45 a.m.
 Morning Worship 10:45 a.m.
 Evening Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Classes 7:00 p.m.

Elders

Michael Clemmons (256) 247-0836
 Scottie Goode (931) 565-3391

Deacons

Phil Pressnell (256) 232-8509
 Rocky Rose (256) 247-0011
 Larry White (256) 247-0988

Evangelist & Editor

David A. Cox (256) 247-1049
 Office-(256) 247-5539
 E-mail address: daco@hiwaay.net

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 P.O. Box 66
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