

To God's Servants

Written by Lee Hanks

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By Elder Lee Hanks

The Advocate & Messenger

I have felt sad many times this year, hearing of the passing of so many of God's precious servants. so few are coming on to supply the vacancy. Are we praying the Lord of the harvest to send more laborers into the vineyard? The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few.

Do we appreciate the gifts that God has given us? The true minister occupies the highest position of anyone on earth. He is God's ambassador. He is sent, not to make sheep, but to feed the sheep and the lambs and gather them into the fold and nurse and care for them most tenderly. Not a command to feed goats to make sheep of them, not a command to regenerate a single alien sinner and make a child of God out of him. He should preach the gospel unto God's living children. It is declaring what has already been accomplished.

'Love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God.'" This is gospel teaching. Birth of the spirit precedes love to God and His children. No one ever loved his natural parents to cause him to be born naturally-natural birth precedes natural love, hence spiritual birth precedes spiritual love. The dead sinner is exhorted by the world to believe in Christ in order to be a child of God or to have eternal life. The gospel says, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and everyone that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him.' 1 John 5:1. The true spiritual believer is already born of the spirit and has everlasting life. Joh 5:24. Belief is a fruit of the spiritual birth, or evidence of divine life in the soul, and not the cause. Isaiah said, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.' Isa 40:1. This is declaring the gospel in prophecy. something that he Lord had already done for them. Nothing for them to do to make them God's children, they were already His children.

The law-worshipper would tell the poor in spirit, the mourner, the hungering souls that they must perform a round of conditions to be blessed or to be God's children. The gospel teaches that they are already blessed and are God's living children. The gospel belongs to gospel subjects. 'Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that thought this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.' Ac 13:38-39. This is gospel teaching. The unbeliever is in a pitiful state before he believes, too late to believe in order to be justified. 'Whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.' Ac 13:26. Not sent to dead sinners. The one who fears God is a living child of God. A true gospel preacher is a great blessing to God's little children. Gospel understanding, turns from the darkness of ignorance of the truth to know it and appreciate it. It shows where the true church is, and where there is a

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sweet home and resting place for the poor, hungering, thirsting souls.

The gospel teaching saves the living from disobedience, faults and bewitching doctrines and commandments of men. How important for the gospel preacher to take heed unto himself and the doctrine, and continue in them, in doing this he saves himself and them that hear him. The character of a preacher is as tender and as easily soiled as that of a chaste young maiden. If she ever makes a mistake and loses her character, she can never regain it. A chaste maiden is a blessing to a community. She wields such an influence for good. And adulterous woman is one of the great causes of corrupting the morale of a community. A true Godly ministry wields the greatest influence for good among God's children. He should preach as he goes. He should be an example to the flock of God, realizing that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. There is a great responsibility resting upon a preacher. His life should be blameless, to have a good report of them that are without. He must be the husband of one wife only. If he has a wife, he should love her, cherish and care for her, forsaking all others. Nothing will destroy the usefulness of a minister as quickly as being too intimate with women. Fornication is a sin against God and against the whole church. Paul said, 'Deliver such one over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.' The minister is represented as the eye. 'If the right eye offend thee, (the church), pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of the members should perish, and not that whole body be cast into hell.' (Mt 5:29). The church is not a reformatory. For grave public sins against the church, exclusion is the only remedy. He should remain out until full confidence among the brethren is restored. In the restoration it should be unanimous, as much so as when one joins by experience. If one is a preacher and his brethren are offended on account of his sins publicly against the body, he should lay his gift at the altar and be reconciled to all his offended brethren before offering his gift again. We are one people and should all strive for the things that make for peace. It is better for one member to suffer than for the whole church to be thrown into confusion. We should so live as to have the confidence of our brethren generally. There can be no fellowship without confidence. It is a serious thing to divide the Lord's people. Jesus laid down His precious life for us and we should lay down our lives for our brethren. I am sure that one who is separated from the church, if he will be meek, humble and walk as an humble follower of Christ, he will be restored to their love and fellowship.