

# THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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## **"Cut It Down and Forget It!"**

### **A Selected Article**

The Civil War left a tragic aftermath of bitterness, hatred, and resentment in America. The wounds inflicted by the war were deep and painful. Though the guns fell silent, the angry recriminations went on. Many could not forget or forgive what had been done.

One man who refused to participate in or condone this terrible harvest of bitterness was General Robert E. Lee. Lee urged reconciliation between the north and south. He knew that the war was over and that the future of the nation demanded a new attitude for a new day. To the day of his death, the "Gray Knight" was never heard to speak an unkind word about those who had formerly been his enemies. Lee even opposed the erection of Confederate monuments because he thought they would only serve to keep wartime passions alive. On one occasion a lady in Lexington, Virginia, showed him the scarred remains of a tree in her yard. All the limbs had been shot off by Federal artillery during a raid. Thinking the General would share her sense of outrage she waited expectantly for him to comment. Finally, Lee spoke: "Cut it down, my dear Madam, and forget it."

"**Cut it down and forget it!**" In many ways that is good advice for us as well! It could be applied to all the following:

### **Past Slights, Hurts, and Wrongs**

Brooding over injuries and injustices received at the hands of others will poison life. It is much better to forget them. Jesus

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taught that the forgiveness of God is conditioned upon our willingness to forgive others. "*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*" (Matthew 6:12 NKJV).

### **Past Losses, Defeats, and Failures**

Regrets can chain us to the past. "If only things had been different," we complain. But no defeat needs to be final! No failure has to be permanent! Dwelling on past defeats can blind us to the opportunities for present victories.

### **Past Sorrows, Grief, and Heartaches**

David prayed that the bones that had been broken might rejoice again. (Psalms 51:8), It is true that there is a time to weep and a time to mourn. (Ecclesiastes 3:4). But we must not remain forever obsessed with our grief. The time comes when we must turn again to life, when we must see the hope and promise which the future days hold.

### **Past Mistakes, Transgressions, and Sins**

There is a power greater than that of sin. No one needs stumble under the weight of shame and guilt. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinner" (1 Timothy 1:15). God is willing to wash us thoroughly from iniquity and cleanse us from sin. (Psalms 51:2). We can start over! We can begin again! By obeying from the heart the gospel delivered to us we can be made free from sin! Remorse over sin can be turned to rejoicing over salvation!

The apostle Paul knew the importance of cutting down some things in the past and forgetting them. "*Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 3:13-14 NKJV). Whatever stands between us and a greater service to God needs to be rooted out of our lives. There is no more appropriate time than now! "**Cut it down and forget it!**"

## **No Fleshly Incentives**

**Bill Hall**

The use of fleshly incentives to draw people to worship services is becoming more and more common. One church offers free cokes, doughnuts, and balloons to its bus riders. Another offers a prize to the child who brings the most visitors. Still another uses some sports figure or entertainer to attract a crowd. Dinners and socials; elaborate church buildings; "Friendliest church in town" or "Fastest-growing church in town" advertising; the list of gimmicks is almost endless.

A study of 1 Corinthians, chapters 1 and 2, suggests that the people of our generation are not the first to demand fleshly incentives. The Jews and Greeks of Paul's day demanded them. "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom" (**1 Cor 1:22**). Paul could have produced both, but he refused to do so: "But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumblingblock and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (**1:23-24**).

Paul recognized the fact that some people are just not "convertible": "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (**1:26**). Why are such infrequently called? Because the majority place their trust in the flesh rather than in God. They are fleshly-minded. And Paul was not about to coax fleshly-minded, "unconvertible" people "into the church" by the use of signs, wisdom, excellency of speech, enticing words, or any other fleshly incentive. To do so would result in getting their names on a "church roll," but not in bringing them to Christ to the saving of their souls.

If Paul refused to use signs and wisdom as fleshly incentives, what would have been his reaction to the use of cokes and doughnuts? If he came "not with excellence of speech or of wisdom" (**1 Cor 2:1**), what would he have said concerning attempts to attract crowds through the use of

sports figures and entertainers? If Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, followed a "no fleshly incentive" policy, should that not be our policy? And should we not always be able to say with Paul, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (**2:2**)?