

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

Church of Christ
371 W. Main Street
Greenwood, IN 46142
(317)888-8288

www.churchofchristatgreenwood.org

VOLUME 8 NO. 26

August 21, 2011

If We Believed What They Believed

By Gary Kerr



One of the reference works I usually keep close at hand when studying any part of the New Testament is the paraphrase translation of J.B. Phillips, *The New Testament In Modern English*. I don't agree with all of Phillips' suggested wording, but I often find his efforts helpful in clarifying some particular passage or point. The translation was originally produced in sections, with the first, *Letters To Young Churches* (Romans through Colossians), being published in London during World War II (it included a

preface and recommendation written by C.S. Lewis).

In his introduction to that book, Phillips writes the following about the New Testament epistles and their authors and recipients:

"Without going into wearisome historical details, we need to remember that these letters were written, and the lives they indicate were led, against a background of paganism ... Slavery, sexual immorality, cruelty, callousness to human suffering, and a low standard of public opinion, were universal; travelling and communications were chancy and perilous; most people were illiterate. Many Christians today talk about the 'difficulties of our times' as though we should have to wait for better ones before the Christian religion can take root. It is heartening to remember that this faith took root and flourished amazingly in conditions that would have killed anything less vital in a matter of weeks. These early Christians were on fire with

2

the conviction that they had become, through Christ, literally sons of God - they were pioneers of a new humanity, founders of a new Kingdom. They still speak to us across the centuries. Perhaps if we believed what they believed, we might achieve what they achieved."

That final sentence is profound and powerful -- "Perhaps if we believed what they believed, we might achieve what they achieved!"

Within a generation of the establishment of the church, the apostle Paul could write of those who carried the gospel message that "their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world" (**Romans 10:18**). Paul wrote about the gospel that it had been preached "in all the world" and that it had been "proclaimed in all creation under heaven" (**Colossians 1:6, 23**). This is an incredible achievement -- to begin with a few comparatively unknown and uneducated people (**cf. Acts 4:13**), and to have a message did not appeal to the "wise", the "mighty," or the "noble" according to the flesh (**1 Corinthians 1:26**). But they had strong faith and a zeal born of

that faith, that caused them to launch out boldly and sacrificially, to the point of being willing to give up their lives for the cause they had taken up. And God gave them amazing success. They were "on fire" for the kingdom, for the gospel, and for the souls of their fellow human beings, believing with all their hearts in the sacrifice and promises of Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of men. Being a Christian and going to heaven meant everything to them, and they wanted "all creation under heaven" to share with them in these blessings.

Do not be deceived into thinking that their achievements were easily accomplished. Right from the start they were opposed and persecuted. When the first of their number was martyred, such a widespread persecution developed that all except the apostles were driven from their homes and scattered abroad (**cf. Acts 8:1**). But this did not slow them down or dampen their enthusiasm. Wherever they went, they were found "preaching the word" (**Acts 8:4**). They preached it as they had opportunity, not depending on others (i.e., preachers, elders, etc.) to do the work for them. Each Christian considered

him/herself both privileged and responsible to win souls for Christ. Their cause was new -- they were pioneers.

I fear that today we do not appreciate our "spiritual blessings" as they did. It is not our life as it was theirs. We are not spending and being spent for it as they were. To some degree, at least, perhaps we do not "believe what they believed."

"Perhaps if we believed what they believed, we might achieve what they achieved." If we did, I am convinced that God would give us success, too.

Are You Growing Up?

By Mike Pittman

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (**2 Peter 3:18**).

"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (**1 Peter 2:2**).

"...but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head - Christ" (**Ephesians 4:15**).

What do all of the above verses have in common? It is clear, isn't it, that they

encourage Christians to grow. Are you growing? Let's think about some things which might be an indicator that you are growing up.

You are controlling your speech. "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect ("mature" - M.P.) man, able also to bridle the whole body" (**James 3:2**). What does it say about us when we go around gossiping, backbiting, tying, and speaking unkind words? Isn't it saying that we have some growing up to do?

You are eating solid food. "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age... (**Hebrews 5:12-14**). It's ok to be "a babe." It's not ok to stay one. Progressing to meatier teachings of the word is a sign of growth.

You are becoming less gullible. "Till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to

a perfect ("mature" -M.P.) man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to a fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head- Christ" (**Ephesians 4:13-15**). We all need to get to the point where we can identify truth and error. We need to be like the Bereans (**Acts 17:11**) and be searchers of the scriptures. We should be serious students of the Bible and not have to be spoon-fed the word of God.

You are acting more mature. You are not petty and selfish - you are thinking of the needs of others and of their feelings. You are not easily offended and vengeful. You do not lose control and throw temper tantrums. Are you growing up?

*Something happens when we
pray---
Powers of evil lose their sway.
We gain strength, and fear gives
way---
Therefore, let us always pray.*

**One moment can change
a day.**

**One day can change a
life.**

**One life can change the
world.**

**What are you doing
with your "one"?**