

A Godly Man in Wicked Surroundings

By Bill Hall

Elijah was a man who reached true greatness in the Lord's service. He was always ready to go where God would send him (**I Kings 18:1; 19:15**); to pray whenever prayer was needed (**I Kings 17:20, 21; 18:36, 37**), and to confront evil whenever confrontation was necessary (**I Kings 18:17-24; 21:17-19**). He was translated without seeing death, and he, along with Moses, was chosen to appear with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration.

The remarkable thing about Elijah is that he attained this greatness while living in a wicked and hostile environment. Had he lived in Judah during the righteous reign of Hezekiah or Josiah, we might not be surprised at Elijah's attainments. But he lived instead in Israel during the wicked reign of Ahab. He was subjected to the cruel intents of Jezebel. He was under constant harassment and threat of death. He became so discouraged at one point that he asked to die, but he never denied his God.

In this wicked environment Elijah was able to influence others. The widow of Zarephath was blessed through Elijah (**I Kings 17:8-24**). The multitudes on Mount Carmel were led to cry, "The Lord, He is God!" through his courageous efforts (**I**

Kings 18:39). Elisha, his successor, must have been greatly influenced by him. And even Ahab was brought to humility on one occasion, clothing himself in sackcloth as a result of Elijah's rebuke (**I Kings 21:27-29**). The message of Elijah is clear. You can live a godly life and influence others for good in a wicked and hostile environment.

When one hears the excuses people make today, it is obvious that Elijah's message is badly needed in this generation. People excuse their failure to teach others the gospel with, "People are so prejudiced around here they just won't listen"; when the truth is, little effort has been made. If they are approached about their ungodly conduct, they explain that "You just don't know how terrible the people are that I have to work around every day". If their children go astray their explanation is, "Our children are faced with pressures that we didn't have growing up". Such statements, repeated often enough, become to many a "license" to do wrong and a salve to soothe their troubled consciences.

We must throw aside our excuses and make up our minds to do right. Elijah could serve God in wicked surroundings. And so can we.



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The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (**Matthew 5:16**)

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Why I Left the Baptist Church

By Larry Rouse



Thought to Ponder

He who provides for this life but takes no care for eternity is wise for a moment but a fool forever.

Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or E-mail: LarryRouse@aubeacon.com

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!
Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

In the fall of 1973 I had no intention of leaving the church in which I was raised. On the contrary, I had recently publicly professed my faith in Jesus Christ and was baptized on the same day. I could well be described as "on fire" for the Lord. I was quickly received and surrounded by men and women who wanted with all their hearts to reach others with the gospel. Both in social settings and in door-to-door efforts I was taught and shown by example how to share my faith.

I began studying the Bible on my own for the first time in my life. I was greatly encouraged in this by others in the Baptist church who also expressed great confidence in the Bible as the perfect, complete word of God. They encouraged me to memorize scripture, to quote scripture, and, above all, to follow the scripture, even above what a man or a church might want. I truly had learned the nature of a living faith as expressed by Jesus when He said: "If you love me, keep my commandments" (**John 14:15**).

There were issues that I began considering as I looked at the current state of what was broadly called "Christianity." Jesus clearly pointed to a definite, clear path for all of those who trust in Him to follow (**Mt 7:13-14**). Our Lord, in the very night He was to be betrayed, prayed to the Father about each of us that would later come to believe in Him. "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also

may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me (**John 17:20-21**). When I read the Lord's words, uttered in the very shadow of the cross, I became determined that I would not be the one that would cause another to turn away from the Lord. These words plainly show that unity can come only from a complete commitment to the Lord.

Anyone who looks at the religious world can easily see that most of the effort of men in the name of God is done to be seen by men and out of loyalty to men and the denominations they build (**Gal 1:10, Mt 15:13-14**). While my knowledge of the Bible was limited, I decided to test my own practices and be open to new things by focusing on God's word and not on men. "The Lord will not lead me wrong" was often in my thoughts as I looked at the scriptures. I was not afraid to be challenged by His word!

One Sunday morning, as I was driving from the Baptist College, Samford University, to my parent's house, I heard a lesson from a preacher concerning the Lord's Supper. While I was in the Baptist church, I had never partaken of this memorial of the Lord. The lesson on the radio described passages that I had read, concerning how Jesus instituted His supper and how He wanted every disciple to partake of it (**Mt 26:26-28; 1 Cor 11:23-25**). As the preacher continued, he showed the significance of Sunday, the first day of the week, in the regular assemblies of Christians (**1 Cor 16:2**). The Holy Spirit recorded how

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Check Us Out On the Internet: www.aubeacon.com

Classes this Week

Kid's Class at the Building at 5:15 All Are Invited	Monday Night Men's Class at 7 PM at the Davis'	Wed. Morning Ladies' Class at 10 AM at the Humphrey's	Thursday Night Acts Study at 7:00 PM at Jillian Petty's
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Sick

Fran Snyder (Mother of Carla Humphrey)	Pam Dial (Laura Weldon's Mother)
Albert Boyles (William Herd's Relative)	Rose Tate (Toni Herd's Cousin)
Adriana Mininno (Haley Chittam's Cousin)	Dave and Betty Bradford
Blake Whatley (Hunt's neighbor)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Carrie Chavers (Friend of Sharon Bailey)
Carol Dickerson	Chick Wade
Rachel Bragwell	Call Yvette to add others to this list.

News and Notes

- Let's remember our expectant mothers: Laura Weldon, Anna Miller and Laura Humphrey.
- Please remember these families in your prayers:

Cheryl Wilson passes away this week.

The Grandmother of Carson and Suzanne Nichols passes away.

The great-grandmother of Jared Ramsey passes away last week.

- Please sign up for the communion preparation and locking/unlocking building lists.

- Encourage others to visit our website at www.aubeacon.com

- Audio CDs of Today's Sermon will be immediately available.

(Continued from page 1)

one church partook on the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16**). As I drove my car, I also wrote down these and other passages of scripture to examine later. I became convinced that I should partake of the Lord's Supper on every first day of the week.

That very day I faced a dilemma. The Baptist church where I attended was not offering the Lord's Supper that Sunday. How was I going to resolve this situation? Rather than point to inconsistencies of others, or make up some hypothetical situation to justify myself or "my church," I simply tried to obey the Lord. That day I viewed the lunch I ate at my parent's house as a private partaking of this supper of the Lord. I was soon to see that this sincere effort was not the way to follow these instructions of Jesus. It would not be long, however, before I would find a proper way to remember Jesus as He had instructed.

After attending a semester at Samford University, I had enrolled at the University of Alabama and was in the process of visiting several churches. On a Wednesday night I decided to visit the University church of Christ. I sat in the back of the auditorium and heard a class taught by their campus minister, Ron Gholston. This class would plant a seed that would change my life.

Brother Gholston began with the great commission of Jesus as recorded in the book of Mark. "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (**Mark 16:15-16**). The teacher likened this verse to a math equation ($1+1=2$). He proceeded to make this point. "Suppose someone decided to be baptized but did not have a personal faith in Jesus. Would he be saved? It is like taking one of the "1's" away from the equation. When that happens then you cannot have the proper result. A person who does not believe but is baptized cannot rightly expect salvation."

I fully agreed with brother Gholston, but was surprised at the next point he made. "What about the person that believes but is not baptized?" He gave the same illustration with the equation ($1+1=2$) but then made a point that I had not considered. Was baptism an *essential* step in salvation?

Over the course of that class I came to see passages of scripture that I had never considered. The preacher made a similar point with the equation illustration ($1+1=2$) on another passage of scripture. Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy

Spirit" (**Acts 2:38**). He began to make the point that whenever you find baptism and salvation (or forgiveness) in the same context, that baptism always precedes salvation (**1 Pt 3:20-21**). This point made a deep impression on me.

As a Baptist, I used the "4 Spiritual Laws" tract. In this tract I taught others to seek the forgiveness found in the blood of Jesus shed on the cross (**Rom 3:23; 6:23**). I urged them to receive Jesus as their Savior by saying the "sinner's prayer," being a fruit of genuine faith and repentance. This is what I had been taught and this was what I had seen practiced in the Baptist assemblies.

Brother Gholston continued in his class to give the example of the conversion of Paul. After the Lord had struck Paul blind, we find that Paul now came to believe in Jesus and obediently follow His instructions (**Acts 9:1-6**). I heard many sermons in the Baptist church describing how Paul was saved at that point. I could read in my Bible how Paul in Damascus was fervently praying and fasting before the Lord (**Acts 9:7-11**). I had considered Paul's prayer as positive proof that he was now saved.

There was one more scripture to be presented in the class that would deeply move me and cause me to reconsider earlier teachings I had received as a Baptist. When Paul, in his own words, describes what Ananias said to him, it became crystal clear to me about the point in time that Paul was saved. "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (**Acts 22:16**). Paul had prayed and fasted for three days and still was not forgiven! He needed to be baptized!

The next week I spent a considerable amount of time in Bible Study and reflection. I privately talked to brother Gholston and came to see that there were some real questions about my own baptism. From the Bible I learned that it is possible to be immersed in water for the wrong reason and, as a result, that baptism not be acceptable to God (**Acts 19:1-6**). Rather than be unsure about my stand, I was baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of my sins (**Acts 2:38**).

This was just the beginning of my journey with the Lord. I knew that I needed to stand for the undenominational Christianity that the Lord had prayed for (**John 17:20**). From that point on, I have sought to be a part of local churches that would stand with the Lord in keeping the great commission He gave (**Mark 16:15-16; Mt 28:18-20**).

Since that time I have continued the same process of examination and standing. I since have often thought about Paul and the reasons he left the religion in which he was raised (**Phil 3:4-11**). Are you standing in God's righteousness alone?



Can You be Trusted?

By Steve Klein

Trust. It is a vital part of every positive human relationship. Think of the problems that come when nations cannot trust each another, or when suspicion and doubt clouds the relationship between parents and children, husbands and wives, citizens and governments, or bosses and employees. How many wars, separations, divorces, revolutions and strikes could be attributed primarily to a lack of trust? Surely we could fill the world's oceans with the tears of bitterness and pain that have streamed from the eyes of people who could not trust each other.

"Well, yes," you say, "Lack of trust ruins a lot of good relationships, but the solution is simple; we should all just decide to trust each other!" Really? Do you think the United States should just go ahead and trust the governments of Korea and Iran with all the nuclear weapons they want? Should citizens whose government has been oppressive and murderously violent continually trust their government to do the right thing? Should the boss give the combination of the safe to the employee who has been caught stealing? I think you see the problem. Trust is not something that can or should be extended to people who have shown themselves to be unworthy of it. Most of the time there is a reason for a lack of trust.

The Bible shows clearly that those who break trust are responsible for causing the pain and problems that a lack of trust brings. Trust-breakers often want to place the blame on others and seek pity for themselves. But frankly, it is hard to feel sorry for the teenager who complains "My parents don't trust me" after his parents have found drugs in his room, or an unpaid speeding ticket in the mail, or a beer can in the floorboard. Those who have been untrustworthy need to bear their own reproach, face the consequences of their own actions and (if they wish to be accepted by God and trusted again by their fellowmen) repent and take appropriate steps toward rebuilding trust.

Here are some things that those who have broken trust must face up to:

- ❑ They've caused pain for others. It hurts to count on someone who can't be counted on! "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint" (**Proverbs 25:19**).
- ❑ They have created their own problems. "The right-

eousness of the upright will deliver them, But the unfaithful will be caught by their lust" (**Proverbs 11:6**). "Good understanding gains favor, But the way of the unfaithful is hard" (**Proverbs 13:15**). "He who walks with integrity walks securely, But he who perverts his ways will become known" (**Proverbs 10:9**).

❑ Their lack of faithfulness and fidelity is disgusting to righteous people. "I look on the faithless with loathing, for they do not obey your word" (**Psalms 119:158, NIV**).

❑ People have good reason not to trust them in other areas. Unfaithfulness in one area indicates a tendency to be unfaithful in other areas. In **Luke 16:10**, Jesus said, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (**see also Jeremiah 9:1-5**).

❑ They must commit themselves to rebuilding trust by making full confession of their unfaithfulness, seeking forgiveness and changing their behavior. Rebuilding trust takes a lot of effort on the part of the one who has been unfaithful. When one who has behaved in an untrustworthy way attempts to hide part or all of what he has done, or minimizes it in any way, it becomes very difficult to renew trust. Look at what God instructed Israel to do to rebuild their relationship with Him after they had been unfaithful. "But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me . . . if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and if they accept their guilt; {42} then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land" (**Leviticus 26:40-42**). The restoration of Israel to a good relationship with God depended on her willingness to humbly acknowledge her guilt.

Trust is such a precious thing. If you have it in the vital relationships of your life, do everything you can to maintain it. Be faithful. Be true. Be honest. If you've been unfaithful, untrue, or dishonest, do all within your power to restore the trust. You'll be glad you did.

