

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“I Expect That’s Right”

By Paul C. Keller

During the early part of 1947 it was my privilege to attend a religious discussion, in Birmingham, Alabama. My good friend and brother, W. Curtis Porter, debated Glen V. Tingley, who represented the Christian-Missionary Alliance. Both were able men, and favorably known among their respective brethren. The first three nights of the debate were conducted in the building of the Central church of Christ and the last three at the “Birmingham Gospel Tabernacle,” which had been started by Mr. Tingley and where he was the very popular preacher. The debate had been well-planned and well-advertised; twelve to fifteen hundred people attended every session at both places, crowding into every available space. The conduct of the audience and speakers was excellent; good order and a fine, congenial attitude prevailed throughout.

Both debaters were able men; nevertheless, there were marked contrasts distinguishing the two. Mr. Tingley was an outgoing, articulate man and with an evident ability to communicate ideas and influence people. In a word which has seen considerable use in recent years, he had charisma, a personal magic of leadership that aroused popular loyalty and enthusiasm. He had built a large following for himself in Birmingham; was well-known and influential in that city. He seemed not to lack for self-confidence; in fact, his air of self-assurance was such that there seemed to be more than a trace of conceit, cocksureness. Yet, he was a likeable person. While brother Porter had superior abilities and knowledge of the Scriptures, there was no showiness about him. He was a quiet, God-fearing man who loved the truth; always meek and humble. He “put on no airs.” He did not fluff. He did not bluster. But when a defense of the truth of God was called for, he was ready, willing and able. It was then that his true worth and abilities were made evident. Tingley and Porter met each other for the first time during this debate. It is my personal opinion that the humility of Porter, the complete absence of display on his part, plus the fact that he was known to come from a little country town in Arkansas (Monette), was disarming to a man of Tingley’s disposition, and hence, caused him to underestimate the task before him. If he had deceived himself about this he was soon undeceived. He soon learned that he had met more than his match, as the errors Tingley espoused were exposed and refuted through six sessions of debating.

On the third and fourth nights the subject for discussion was baptism. Porter affirmed: “The Scriptures teach that water baptism to a penitent believer of the gospel is essential to salvation from alien sins.” In his first affirmative speech, his third argument presented was based on the commission given by Jesus, as recorded in Mark 16:15,16: ***“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*** After quoting this he then proceeded to make his argument based on the simplicity, the understandableness, of Jesus’ statement, pointing out that it does not say, “He that believeth and is saved can then be baptized if he wants to.” That is not, first believe; second, baptism; and third salvation. Rather, it is first believe; second baptism; and third salvation. He argued that the Lord stated it that way, and that if the passage makes belief necessary to salvation, it also makes baptism necessary to salvation; that, according to Jesus, salvation is dependent upon those conditions.

Continuing this argument, brother Porter, in his characteristic ability to make matters plain, said: “Remember that no amount of reasoning can make that read, ‘He that believeth, and is saved can then be baptized,’ because that is not what the Lord said. People will quibble about it, and will try to reason around it, and get it out of the way; but if the thing were expressed in material value, there would be no quibble about it. Suppose, for example, that when you go home from this discussion you turn on your radio and hear the President of the Ford Motor Company broadcasting this statement: ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall receive a new Ford.’ Do you suppose there’d be any quibbling about it? Would people try to reason the thing away and claim that it is not essential - ‘you do not have to do that, just believe in Ford and that is all that’s necessary.’ No, you would not hear any quibbling about it. If you should hear that broadcast tonight from the Ford Motor

Company, there'd be the biggest baptizing tonight in Birmingham before daylight you ever heard of. You would not be able to keep people knocked out of the river or the creeks with a club; and among the first to get wet would be my friend, Elder Tingley."

At this point, there was some laughter from the audience. And, Tingley joined good-naturedly in the laughter - and then he laughingly nodded and said, loudly and clearly, "**I expect that's right.**"

Then, when all was quiet, brother Porter continued his speech, very forcefully saying: "He says he expects that's right! If a Ford were involved, Elder Tingley would not try to reason it away! But if salvation is involved, he tries to get around it. Is salvation worth as much as a new Ford, Tingley? Do you think more of a new Ford than you do salvation? You said you'd do it if it were a Ford involved. You would not try to reason it away; you'd accept it; you'd do it. You'd be one of the first men to get wet; but where the salvation of the soul is involved he tries to reason the thing out and get it entirely out of the way. He knows if, he tried to do that with a new Ford, somebody else would get the new Ford, and he'd be left out, you see. I am saying that if it were expressed in material values, there'd be little quibbling about it. Why quibbling, then, when salvation is the thing involved, and the Lord said, '**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved?**'"

Having said this, Porter went on to his fourth argument. He did not need to say more. Tingley saw it. The audience saw it. And, although Tingley tried hard to put on a bold front, he never regained the aplomb he had shown earlier. Throughout the remaining sessions of the debate, Tingley had a difficult time, although he made determined effort. He had shown that although he could understand the teaching of Jesus, he was determined to try to get around it.

More than forty years have come and gone since this occurred. During these years I have thought about it many times - not only about Glen V. Tingley, but about countless other preachers of the various denominations, who can understand what Jesus said, and meant, but who, nevertheless, try to deny, try to get around, this plain teaching of Jesus, and who work so hard at trying to keep other people from believing and obeying what Jesus taught. If the President of the Ford Motor Company were to make the proposition in our day as was suggested by brother Porter in this debate in Birmingham, these preachers could understand it, and they would not quibble about it, nor hesitate to comply with it - they'd head for the water, and soon be seen proudly driving their new Ford cars! But when it comes to the matter of salvation, their denominational dogmas, stubbornness and/or pride causes them to try to get around this teaching of Jesus - and to prevent others from understanding, believing and obeying it. Think about it! In all candor, I say, I would not stand in the shoes of such a preacher for a million worlds like this one. – *Guardian of Truth*, January 7, 1988. ■

"I Don't Know and I Don't Care"

By Mike Pittman

Supposedly, when asked if apathy or ignorance was this country's greatest problem, someone said, "*I don't know and I don't care!*" That describes the feeling of many people about doctrinal controversies in religion. They don't know what the Bible teaches on disputed issues, and neither do they care.

But the Bible emphasizes the importance of knowing the truth (Jn. 8:32) and warns against believing error. The apostle John said, "***Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world***" (1 Jn. 4:1).

While some questions may not be worth contending over (like the one about how Cain got his wife), other controversies arise that affect people's salvation. If the point of contention is over the acceptable response of man for the remission of sins, or the worship that is honoring unto God, the person who says "*it's just not that big of a deal*" is guilty of making trivial that which is important to God.

Please, let us learn that ignorance and apathy can cost us our souls. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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