

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## “Anonymous Trouble-Makers”

By Dennis C. Abernathy

It is sad that local churches have problems, but the fact of the matter is that they do from time to time. Local churches in the New Testament had internal problems and churches today will have them. At times problems are stirred by certain individuals and the flame of turmoil is fanned until it reaches an inferno. More often than not these flame-fanners (trouble-makers) hide behind the cloak of anonymity. In situations where strife is thick, try asking a few pertinent questions.

Who are the “they” in “*They say the preacher isn’t doing his job*”? Who is the “we” in “*We think the elders ought to step down*”? Who is “someone” in “*Someone told me that no one is friendly to the new members*”? Who are the “many” or “*A lot of people*” who complain about this or that anonymously? Well, usually “many” means “one or two,” “someone” means “me,” “we” means “me, myself and I,” and “they” usually can’t be found anywhere!

The critic may say, “*A large number of the brethren feel this way.*” When asked to name a few of the brethren, he responds: “*I don’t want to name names.*” How can problems be solved or disgruntled members of the church be corrected if names are not mentioned, especially if “*a large number of people really do feel this way*”? In most cases one must have specific information to solve problems. The reason so many churches have internal problems and also problems with neighboring congregations is the failure in getting specific information. Some brethren (preachers included) believe any and everything without bothering to check out the information. May I suggest something for your consideration? Anonymous critics who relay gossip and slander and who create imaginary supporters have no desire to resolve anything! They just want to cause trouble and that they surely will do if we listen to them!

The simple solution for not getting caught in the middle of a situation where we are asked “not to tell who said it” or where someone is heaping their disgruntlement of the brethren on you, is to point the anonymous critic to Matthew 18:15-17. Let us all read that passage over and over, and when properly applied, it will stop a lot of the critics who bask in anonymity!

Brethren, as hard as it may be, let us all resolve not to listen to someone gossiping about a problem they have with a brother or sister and treat anonymous complaints like we treat anonymous letters to the editor...just don’t publish them! The Bible warns against slander and malicious gossip. David said to the Israelites: “***Whoso privily slandered his neighbor, him will I cut off***” (Psa. 101:5). If someone won’t sign his name to a complaint or qualifies his remark with “don’t use my name,” one of two things is usually true: either he has no good reason to complain or he is just lying!

Brethren it is possible for us to allow ourselves to be a pawn in some brother or sister’s effort to hurt someone through malicious gossip or slander. Don’t do it! – *Guardian of Truth*, July 7, 1988. ■

---

## “Fake News” in Religion

By Bobby Witherington

Turn on the TV and do some channel surfing of the different news outlets, and you will become amazed at the conflicting presentations of the same news item. It readily becomes obvious that some are guilty of “slanting” the news, and others are just plain lying! It seems that one’s party identification, or whether or not the news reporter is a “liberal” or a “conservative” greatly affects that person’s analysis of a given news item, and how he

(or she) reports it —whether in a positive or negative light. It becomes rather obvious that somebody is either misinformed, or uninformed, or just plain dishonest. Consequently, perhaps more than ever before, we are hearing people complain about “fake news.” And, frankly, I think the term “fake news” is an appropriate description of much of the news we hear.

The aforementioned situation, caused in large part by “fake news” is very serious, the ultimate consequences of which no one is able to fully predict. However, there is another realm in which “fake news” is causing much greater damage. Specifically, I am referring to “fake news” in the **religious** realm!

“Fake news” in this realm is not a new thing. For example, with reference to *“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,”* God said, *“you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”* (Gen. 2:17). Adam and Eve had God’s word on this topic, and God’s *“word is truth”* (Jn. 17:17); in fact, *“the entirety”* of God’s (Psa. 119:160). However, in complete contrast to what **God** said about eating of the forbidden fruit, Satan said to Eve, *“you will not surely die,”* and then further lied about the supposedly positive benefits she would receive if she disobeyed God’s word. Hence, Eve, *“being deceived, fell into transgression”* (1 Tim. 2:14); she ate of the tree and *“also gave to her husband, and he ate”* (Gen. 3:6). Consequently, *“through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”* (Rom. 5:12). “Fake news,” deceitfully framed by Satan, the *“father”* of lies (Jn. 8:44), is that which resulted in the fall of man and from which, either directly or indirectly, has resulted all the sin, heartache, death, destruction, and misery which has engulfed the human race. “Fake news” in the religious realm is not a matter to be lightly regarded!

Yes, Satan is the *“father”* of lies (Jn. 8:44), but he has many agents spreading his lies. Regarding this point, the apostle Paul said *“such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ”* and he then said *“and no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light”* (2 Cor. 11:13, 14)! In the New Testament, writing about some who lived in Old Testament times, the apostle Peter said *“there were also false prophets among the people,”* but he then warned, saying, *“there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction”* (2 Pet. 2:1). That is bad, but what is even worse is the news in the next verse, namely this, *“And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed”* (2 Pet. 2:2). Beloved, let us face certain facts. — *Rise Up And Build*, July 16, 2017. ■

---

## Baptism Saves

By Ray Warfel, Jr.

Did God command penitent believers to be baptized in order to be saved or because they already were saved? Most denominations teach the latter, but the Bible does not. The Bible gives three reasons why baptism saves.

**Baptism saves because the Bible so states.** The apostle Peter wrote, *“Baptism now saves you”* (1 Pet. 3:21). These words are as inspired by God as, *“whoever believes in Him should not perish”* (Jn. 3:16). Many accept John’s statement but not Peter’s, yet Jesus said, *“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved”* (Mk. 16:16). If belief saves, baptism does also.

**Baptism saves because it puts one into the body of the saved.** *“The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”* (Acts 2:47 - KJV). Did the Lord leave any saved people out of the church? People are added to this same church when they are *“baptized into one body”* (1 Cor. 12:13), for this one body is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). Since baptism puts one into the body of the saved, failure to be baptized leaves one where?

**Baptism saves because it precedes newness of life.** Paul wrote, *“We have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life”* (Rom. 6:4). Jesus was raised from the dead only after he first died and was buried. No person today can be raised to spiritual life until he or she first dies to sin and is buried or baptized in water. — *Knollwood Church of Christ Articles*, October 2017. ■

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

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: [www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com](http://www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com) - Email: [lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com](mailto:lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com) - Phone: 209-365-9250