



We are honored and blessed to have you worshipping with us today and we extend our warmest welcome. Our service is modeled after the New Testament pattern of worship. If you have questions or concerns please express them to us. We are all here to serve.

**Please Pray for:**

**Health** - Zandra, Ebony, Wanda and Peaches, Prince, Leola, Thom and Mary Elizabeth, Irma, TC, Rene Formantes, Tonette Kirkland, the Hadnot's granddaughter Maya, Michael's grandfather, Sister Hawkins mother.

**Surgery** - Lenard, Lorena in February.

**Also** - The well being of Kevin Williams and family. Shannon's well being. The Pruett family as they mourn their loss.

**Memorial Service For J'Couri Pruett**  
At the Apple Valley Church of Christ Church Building  
**Thursday January 17th 11:00 AM**

**Today's Services**

- Singing
- Opening Prayer
- Singing
- Preaching
- Invitation Song
- Communion Song
- Communion
- Offering
- Announcements
- Closing Song
- Closing Prayer

**Friday Jan. 18th 5:00 PM**  
**Movie Night**

**Do you know your Bible? Test Your Bible Knowledge**  
Saturday January 26th  
10:00 AM - 12:00 Noon

**Yearly Congregational Meeting**  
Today following worship.

**Brothers Preaching**  
Sunday January 27th

**Teacher's Training**

Monday January 14th 6:00 PM

**Schedule of Services**

- Sunday Bible Class 10:00 AM
- Sunday Worship 11:00AMAM
- Wednesday Class 7:00 PM

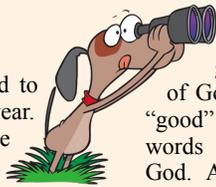
**God's Plan of Salvation**

- Hear Romans 10:17
- Believe Mark 16:15-16
- Repent Luke 13:3-5
- Confess Matthew 10:32-33
- Baptism 1 Peter 3:21
- Live Faithfully Revelation 2:10



## Looking Ahead

by Royce Pendergrass



As another year has closed, we need to look back and evaluate the previous year. In addition, we also need to make the year ahead a better one to the glory of God. We certainly should not linger on things past but to concentrate on the future. A good example of looking back to one's own detriment is Lot's wife. God had commanded that Lot's family not look back upon the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah "But Lot's wife looked back from behind him and she became a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19:26). When we disobey today, we will not become pillars of salt for looking back, but we will be punished for looking back to the enjoyment of past sins and continuing therein. Only repentance followed by righteous, faithful living can save us from punishment.

Jesus dealt with looking back as He said, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Once you make the change to become a Christian, you and your life belong to the Lord. If not, your Christianity is a farce. Jesus taught in Matthew 6:24, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (that is riches, wealth and evil). You or I will serve one or the other.

We must always learn from our mistakes and change our ways where necessary to please God. We must look ahead because there is no future in looking back. Isaiah told the people of his time to cease to do evil and learn to do good (Isaiah 1:16-17). From this, we understand that looking back can bring us to the point of repeating our past mistakes, and we see that doing good is a learned behavior, not one that comes to us automatically. We must develop the traits of doing good.

In teaching the brethren at Thessalonica what a Christian must do, Paul instructed, "see that none render evil for evil to any man but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men" (1 Thessalonians 5:15). Follow that which is good. How do we determine what is "good"? Paul taught the Roman brethren this way. "...Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye

transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2). In other words, "good" is what occurs when the actions and words of a faithful Christian give glory to God. All people understand the difference between good and evil behavior and can understand that good glorifies God and evil pleases Satan.

As we look forward to a new year, determine that you will live your life to the glory of God and not to please Satan. We all know that sin is evil behavior and understand that it destroys the souls of men. Paul instructed, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). To make sure you understand what God expects of His people, study His Word more and determine that you will dedicate your years in service to Him. Remember that it's what we cannot see (eternity) that is important.

In this new year ahead, don't be guilty of doing what the people of Jeremiah's day did. God had commanded, "...Obey My voice and I will be your God and you will be My people; walk in all the ways that I have commanded you that it may be well with you. But they hearkened not nor inclined their ear but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their own heart and went backward and not forward" (Jeremiah 7:23-24). Don't go backward into sin, but look forward toward Heaven! 🍎

## The Way It Was

by Ronald D. Reeves

The apostle Paul related to the past in a two-fold manner. He said, "but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Philippians 3:13b). He also said "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). With respect to his old Jewish prerogatives and attainments, he was constantly disregarding and discarding them, putting them out of his mind. With respect to his past sinful opposition to Christ,

Christianity and faithful children of God, he was ever mindful of his grave though conscientious course of error. In one instance, he grew beyond the past while in the other instance the past was ever with him.

The history of specific congregations of the Lord's church and the history of individual members therein may be approached similarly. As we look to the past, either individually or congregationally, there are some things beyond which we must grow as we maintain a realistic hope of spiritual and practical growth in Christian endeavors. There are also some things of the past onto which we must maintain a firm hold and keep ever with us if we realistically hope to fulfill our golden cup of service in the vineyard of the Lord. This latter point is of special interest presently.

Many congregations have been established with humble beginnings, including limited financial resources, facilities and personnel. In time, some congregations have truly grown so that a large congregation assembles regularly in very adequate facilities as they are led by quality and numerous brethren. This spiritual, numerical and financial growth occurred as a consequence of specific positive factors that characterized the congregation, not for a brief period of time but permeated the congregations over a larger span of time. I fear that some congregations have reached and maintained a plateau in their ongoing efforts to prosper spiritually and numerically. Perhaps other congregations actually have been diminished both in size and spirituality as the years have passed by. I, for one, do not believe that such a cycle is a necessary one. Why has this and why does this occur? Can it be avoided? I honestly believe we can understand why such occurs and can therefore make a stronger effort in avoiding what may be an unnecessary decline in congregations of the Lord's church.

Unto what, then, may we attribute past numerical and spiritual growth? I suggest the following for your review and consideration: **1. Faithfulness in daily Christian living.** Congregations that have grown have a membership largely characterized as living an influential life in

Christ. The members are known for their everyday stand for good as they lead their families in godly service. **2. Strong dedication to the cause of Christ.** Congregations that have grown exhibit a real, personal commitment in efforts to cause the local congregation to prosper. Members take seriously the charge to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. **3. Energetic activity in the kingdom of God.** Congregations that have grown have a membership which is not content to passively sit by while a few do the needed work. The congregation has a clear majority that speak as Isaiah and say, "Here am I, send me." **4. Genuine personal spiritual growth.** Congregations that have grown do so because members are making concrete efforts to be more knowledgeable and spiritually-minded. The members have an abiding hunger and thirst for righteousness. **5. Sacrificial Christian living.** Congregations that have grown have a membership that does not hesitate to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of the church. Such includes the sacrifice of time, money, use of talents and sometimes even personal relationships. **6. Love of the New Testament church.** Congregations that have grown have genuine love for the church. The members care for the church similarly as they care for their personal families. The members draw closer in fellowship as they grow in the grace and love of Christ. **7. Love for the souls of men.** Congregations that have grown have genuine love for each and every lost soul within their reach. Social and ethnic concerns are not allowed as barriers to seeking and saving the lost. The world is truly the scope of their evangelism.

The characteristics listed above have been a historical part of many congregations. These are the things onto which we must maintain a firm hold and keep ever with us if we realistically hope to fulfill our duties and potential in the kingdom of God.

May we have a balanced view of the past. Let us grow beyond the errors of the past while we ever hold close to us what has served the body of Christ so well. May we be able to say, as Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). 🍎

