

A Preacher's Article and a Preacher's Response

Prefatory Note: The following article by the late Tim Smith, a faithful Gospel preacher appeared in a 2006 issue of *Contending for the Faith*, to which Dub McClish responded.

"Endeavoring to Keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace"

Tim Smith

The words selected for our title come from the fourth chapter of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, verse three. What do they mean? How do they apply to the congregation with whom you serve the Lord? Let us take a few minutes to investigate that very question. First, the word *endeavoring* means (basically) "to make haste to acquire speedily the prescribed attribute." The phrase *to keep the unity of* indicates a "togetherness" or "sameness" of purpose. The *Spirit* is, of course the Holy Spirit. The phrase *in the bond of peace* means "to be held together in peace." What is the application of the previously noted passage? It enjoins upon each faithful child of God the duty of exerting immediate and long-term effort to bring about peace in the Lord's Church by standing for the "sameness" delivered by the Spirit to the Church (that "sameness" that was delivered is the New Testament). We should know in the beginning that sometimes "unity" is not the result of standing for the Truth, at least not in the sense in which we usually think of "unity." If one is "for" the truth and another is "against" the Truth, the one standing "for" it may well find conflict and strife as a result of his/her stand. But know this: the only way true peace is either given by or required from God is when that peace is founded upon the Truth. If strife grows out of our efforts to do exactly what is required in exactly the right way, then that strife between brethren is required to avoid strife between God and His people.

God does not require of us "peace" at any price, or that we endeavor thereunto. He requires that we seek peace maintaining the "unity of the Spirit" What is the difference? I have known many instances wherein "peace" (as the world defines the word) could be had if only the faithful would compromise. The "peace" that would ensue would be "between brethren," but would it be the "peace" of Paul's context? No. For to establish peace on terms that violate God's Word is to create strife and friction (indeed, division) between God and His people. The "peace," therefore, unto which we strive and for which we endeavor is a peace based upon and growing from faithful obedience to the Word of God. Sometimes when you advocate the Truth you may well be accused of "stirring up trouble" in the church. If one element wishes to do that which violates His word and you oppose them, someone might come to you and whisper

something like this: “Just let them alone in doing what is wrong, they will be lost (should they die in unrepentant condition), and if you go along with them you will be lost (should you die in an unrepentant condition).” This kind of “peace” is no peace at all! Strive for peace but do it properly. Do only what He says, all of what He says, all of the time. This may make for trouble today, but it will make for peace in the after-a-while.

– 171 Radford Circle
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Editor’s Note: On 5/4/04 in a car crash that was not his fault, Tim Smith, a faithful Gospel preacher, suffered two broken ribs, and severe damage to disks and many nerves in his back. Tim’s prognosis is that his nerves will continue to die and the disks in his back will bulge and degenerate. Because of this degeneration he suffers from chronic pain. Further, there is no treatment available to heal him. But his pain can be helped. However, the doctors tell him that in time he will not be able to walk due to all that is involved in his case. Also, his liver is beginning to fail, and he may come down with diabetes. Tim takes up to 20 pills a day for his pain and other physical needs.

To compound these physical ailments, in combating error where he did preach, after 14 years preaching for the same church, he was forced to resign because of his unwillingness to compromise the Truth. With his health as it is Tim decided he could not go through the fight that is trying on a healthy person, much less one who is ill. He and his family have joined with other brethren in a new work. Because they are few in number, Tim receives very little salary. If you can help Tim and his family, please do so.

There are those brethren who continue to remain true to God under the weight of this world’s ordeals and/or the torment some brethren inflict on the faithful. Our prayers continue on behalf of Tim and his family. Also, read the letter from **Dub McClish** to Tim that follows Tim’s article.

– David P. Brown, Editor

Response to Tim’s Article

Dub McClish

Tim:

First, I extend my encouragement to and prayers for you during this difficult time. I know your physical problems must only serve to intensify the problems caused by the two-legged “dogs” who have rejected the holy things and are nipping at your heels and the two-

legged swine who wouldn't know a spiritual pearl if it jumped up and bit them (Mat. 7:6; Phi. 3:2). They have proved what they are by their turning against and attempting to rend a righteous man. I hope you will take new courage in knowing that not only the Lord is behind you, but that many faithful brethren who admire you and your family are as well.

Second, the persecution that is most difficult to bear at times (besides that which comes from fleshly kindred) is that which comes from brethren in Christ. We expect the world to hate us and mistreat us, but when those we love and have worked with closely (and who profess to be God's people) do so, it is perplexing and painful indeed. But we must remember, it was not the heathen who persecuted the OT prophets, but God's chosen people of Israel ("For so persecuted they the prophets..." [Mat. 5:12]). One of Paul's great sources of pain was "perils among false brethren" (2 Cor. 11:27). The more things change the more they remain constant.

Third, experience has taught us that when the preacher is persecuted, his wife and children feel it just as keenly as he does. Please let your family know that we are mindful of and prayerful for them, as we are of and for you. We are thankful that they love the Lord and His Truth even as you do, and that they are there to help support you.

Fourth, anyone who has preached even for a few years, and who has been determined not to compromise the Truth, will have such experiences as you are undergoing. The more years one preaches, the more such painful experiences one will suffer at the hands of evil brethren (ask some of us how we know). Several of us could literally "write a book" (some of us more than one) about such matters. Isn't it amazing that some brother or sister who was baptized thirty years ago can't remember enough Scripture to recite the plan of salvation to a sinner, but can remember something the preacher said 10 or more years ago that he or she didn't like (and maybe, because it was Truth that hit him or her between the eyes)? The human brain is indeed a wonder. Selective forgetfulness and remembrance are alive and well.

Fifth, sometimes otherwise sound brethren sin against faithful preachers through sheer idiocy and/or thoughtlessness. This phenomenon has been around a long time. Though not intended as persecution, such thoughtlessness and folly equals persecution nonetheless. In 1956 (I was a second-year student at good ole F-HC), my father literally worked himself sick, preaching for the Lord's church in Boise, Idaho (live radio program, teaching home Bible studies 2-4 nights a week, et al.). The church tripled in size in the three years he had been there. His hard work not only caused the church to grow, but it landed him in the hospital for a few weeks from exhaustion and a bleeding ulcer. The elders, all of whom professed to greatly love

and respect him, must have met and discussed how they could encourage him during this ordeal. They came up with the generous gesture of cutting his salary in half while he was in the hospital, since he was not able to work and be productive (you can't make this stuff up). Brethren have learned much about paying those who preach over the past fifty years. Still, many of those who control what preachers are paid (usually with no insurance coverage, rarely with any retirement provisions, and often with no raises even to keep up with increased cost of living) would not long tolerate working under such circumstances. They expect good wages and benefits to come their way, but so many seem to begrudge any such advantages for the preacher and his family. Ironically, preachers are in a "catch 22" situation regarding their support. We are reluctant to even try to teach brethren better lest our motives are misjudged, yet there is no one besides preachers who are in a position to do so.

In 1964 I "tried out" at Martin, Tennessee (all of our children were very young, as were Lavonne and I). The elders seemed very interested in our moving there. When they asked me how much salary I would need (translation: "How little can we offer you and still get you to come?"). I told them I could not support my family on less than I was being paid at the time (I was having to supplement my salary with part time sales work at the time). They promised to let me know something soon. A few weeks later a preacher friend called and said he just read in the bulletin of that church that they had a new preacher – and it was not I. I inquired of the elders why they had decided not to pursue any further discussions with me and why they did not at least let me know of their decision. To the first question they said, "We wanted someone who was more interested in spiritual matters than in money." They still have not responded to my second question. Looking back, it was perhaps providential that I did not move there, given such obtuse thinking and ungodly attitudes.

Having told all the horror stories faithful preachers can tell, those who love the Truth, the Lord, and the church of God cannot keep from preaching, even if they have to flip hamburgers to pay the bills. And, overall, we need to remind ourselves occasionally that even our worst afflictions are indeed light compared to those in whose footprints we have the exalted honor of walking. The fire of old Jeremiah just keeps burning in our bones, doesn't it?

Sixth, the saying, "you haven't been 'loved' till you've been 'loved' by a 'loving liberal'," is no less true of "conservative" brethren who "get it in for" those (preachers and others) who are determined to stand for the Truth at whatever cost. There is a parallel between the behavior of such "conservative" brethren in local congregations and their treatment of preachers and the behavior of numerous brethren among the new "balanced conservatives" who have shown their true loyalties over the

past year and one-half. In both cases, such brethren find it easy to forget some of the most elementary and fundamental principles of the Gospel. When brethren on the local scene turn on the preacher, they act like they've never read Mat. 7:12: **"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets."** They justify themselves in lying, spreading rumors (as long as they hurt the preacher and his family), losing their tempers, and sometimes even cursing and swearing. When I was fired at Granbury, TX, in 1980 (before beginning work with Pearl St.), someone floated the rumor that I had had an affair with a high school girl, another said I didn't get along with the high school administration and faculty, and the best one of all – when a brother asked one of the elders why I was fired, the elder said, "There are things about Dub McClish that we dare not tell."

Such brethren can renege on a 90-day severance "contract" without batting an eye, all the while sadistically rejoicing in seeing their brother and his family suffer at their hands and believing they are doing God a service by their wickedness. A word of advice to all faithful preachers: When (not if) you're fired and you have a "90-day agreement," ask for the 90 days' pay in one check, and then take it straight to the bank. Had I not done so in the place mentioned above, the elders would have cut me off in two weeks. They changed the locks on the door of my study so that I could not even get to my library, my typewriter, or my files without begging for a key. Ah, those loving brethren.

Have not the leading brethren in the current controversy [i.e., caused by my removal as editor of *The Gospel Journal*, July 2005] once considered by us all to be "conservative," behaved the same way? In all of this mess they have had no problem ignoring Matthew 7:12. They act as if they never heard of 1 Peter 3:15: **"...but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: *being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear:...*"** And they are soooo loving in their epithets: "toxic loyalty circle," "neo-antis," "radicals," "extremists," "witch hunters," "watch dogs," "gossips," "tale bearers," "rumor mongers," and so the list goes.

Seventh, some preachers (by their immorality, laziness, meanness, et al.) deserve to be fired. They would greatly advance the cause of Christ if they would quit preaching and dig ditches. Such evil doers give all of the faithful ones a bad name. However, when one is fired because of his dedication to the Christ and His Word, he should "wear" his firing as a spiritual "purple heart" for being wounded in action. I feel no shame whatsoever in the times I had to move, whether because I was fired or because I beat them to the punch. (For the same reason, I

feel no shame whatsoever at being removed from the editorship of *TGJ*.) Those many moves and the stresses related to them likely have aged me prematurely, but they certainly cause me no regrets. I moved to two different places back in the 1960s and early 1970s and stayed in each place only seven months. The elderships and I both thought they wanted a Gospel preacher, but we were both mistaken (one of these places was a church with 1,200 members). I left both of these and some other places, knowing the axe was going to fall if I did not get my neck off of the chopping block first. The late and lamented Bill Jackson and I were talking one day a few years ago, swapping preaching experiences, and I told him I had stayed only seven months in two places. He retorted, "Don't think you've got the record. I stayed one place only two months." Tim, just remember that your ouster at Enon is a double-edged sword: It demonstrates your loyalty to the Truth, while at the same time demonstrating the lack thereof on the part of those who engineered the ouster.

Eighth, many of your co-workers in the kingdom (especially some of us old heads) have been through the wringer, sometimes more than once, compliments of the brethren. Should I call their names you would know or know of many or most of them.

Ninth, take heart. Regardless of how bleak and dark the days are and how vain our efforts appear at times, Truth and righteousness will win at last, and we will all sing with full meaning, "Heaven HAS surely been worth it all." We'll all have to wait till "farther along to know all about it and understand why." As you know, what we're made of is not revealed when the sky is blue, the sun is shining, and the wind is at our backs. We learn what and who we are (and others learn this about us) when the headwinds are strong, and the storm clouds are fierce and menacing. **"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord"** (1 Cor. 15:58).

Yours in the one faith,

Dub McClish

[**Note:** I wrote this MS for and it was published in the November/December 2006 edition of *Contending for the Faith*, ed. David P. Brown.]

[**Epilogue:** Some five or six years following the writing/publication of the foregoing material, Tim Smith passed to his reward, after enduring an increasing decline in his health related to the automobile accident. DM]

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