

## ***Mighty Oaks from Little Acorns***

"Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them" (Hebrews 2:1, ASV).

The word 'drifting' aptly describes the process of apostasy. It is seldom accomplished by giant leaps; rather it is the result of short steps. The steps appear to be only the slightest variation from the accepted truth and altogether innocent, but each one is used as justification for the next one until truth has been left completely, even by individuals who would never have dreamed it possible.

We have known of congregations where a piano was first allowed in the basement to teach children how to sing. But having learned with it, the children continued to need it in their Bible classes. Once this was allowed, someone asked the difference in young folks and adults — the difference in Wednesday night and Sunday night. No logical difference could be shown so it was allowed at those times.

Then someone had only to point out the inconsistency in using it Sunday night and refusing it Sunday morning, and from then on it was used at all services, a thing that would have been opposed when the piano was first moved into the basement.

A group of Americans preaching in Africa said they were strongly opposed to churches of Christ operating a hospital in the United States. But they thought churches could and should support a nurse in Nigeria to treat wounds and minor illnesses. But once the nurse was supported, a hospital was proposed. Anyone who objected would be asked, "If you can support a nurse and clinic, why not a doctor and hospital?" No logical difference could be shown, so the hospital was built. Often now we are hearing of a proposal for a "Church of Christ Hospital" in the United States. The argument: "If we can do it in Nigeria, why not here?" Granted that premise, no sound reason can be given. It all started with letting a church support a nurse.

A church we know has a kitchen. They defend it on the grounds that it costs the church nothing. The kitchen and equipment were in the building when it was purchased and they have a minimum electric and water bill each month, anyway. But a generation will arise that is accustomed to the kitchen. They will want to build a new building and they will want a kitchen. Their argument will be "We've always had a kitchen. If we could have it in the old building, why not in the new?" There will be no chance of keeping it out.

In our town, a kindergarten is beginning in the meetinghouse of one of the churches. In a news item, it is stated, "The kindergarten will be at the church, but will not be operated by the church." This will satisfy the minds of many who would object to the church operating or supporting a school of any kind. But one of these days another step will be proposed. It may be opening a first grade. If someone objects, the question will be raised, "But what is the difference in a first grade and kindergarten?" There is no difference, so the opposition will be silenced and the way will be clear for second grade, third grade, etc., etc.

But some day the school will need to be subsidized. Those opposed to support of education will rise up to object. But someone will say, "It's true we haven't been contributing from the treasury, but we have been providing a place for the school and it has been using the name of the church. Now if we can contribute facilities and influence, why not money?" That question will be hard to answer, for there is no difference and the opposition will then be silenced.

From this, the next logical step will be to send money to a college, because, after all, what is the difference between contributing to our own school and contributing to one operated by someone else? And it all began with a kindergarten, which "will be at the church, but will not be operated by the church."

Truly, "Mighty oaks from little acorns grow." The mistake is ever allowing an acorn to get mixed with the seed of the kingdom. Every innovation, regardless of how small, must be rejected, not only for its own sake, but also for the sake of attendant corruptions that will surely follow in its train.

- by *Sewell Hall*

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***"We Just Don't Go To Church"***

A young couple who had not been to church services for a number of years asked, "What have we done wrong besides not going to church?" They had robbed God of thousands of dollars (1 Cor. 16:1,2); they had forsaken the Lord's own memorial supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26); for years their voices were unheard in the praises of the saints, their petitions and thanksgivings absent from the prayers of the saints, and their knowledge of God's word stifled and fading, while their spiritual growth was completely neglected- to say nothing of the bad example set and the wrong influence exerted upon others around them! Indeed, their souls had become dead to God, and yet they ask: "What have we done wrong besides not going to church?" May God help us to see ourselves as He sees us!

- by *Bill Crews*

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### ***'What Have You Done For Me Lately?'***

First, let us acknowledge that we have important, essential duties to one another as fellow Christians. We are to help, encourage, edify, strengthen, support, and care for one another. This includes both physical necessities and spiritual imperatives. No one denies these realities.

However, it seems that some Christians are looking to be on the receiving end of these services – but apparently feel little need to give back to their brothers and sisters in Christ. They are quick to criticize if they think they have been neglected, but they do little to reach out to others. It appears that some even have a sort of 'chip on their shoulder' which can be easily knocked off if some constant 'stroking and petting' is not directed their way. And, the fact that they have been helped numerous times in the past is not enough. If recent attention has not been paid to them, then they will let their displeasure be known.

To these folks, we would say:

- 1) We can always do better, and we'll keep trying to grow in the important area of brotherly love (1 Thess. 4:10-11). We feel a true burden to help you and we want to fulfill it faithfully.
- 2) But, please be grateful for the help and love your brethren have shown you in the past. Gratitude is a command (Col. 3:15) and ingratitude is a sin (2 Tim. 3:2).
- 3) And, look for YOUR opportunities to serve others. Every Christian, regardless of their specific circumstances, can and must serve their brethren (John 13:12-17). No one can remain exclusively on the receiving end of this relationship. Jesus Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

We cherish our special bond within the family of God. Let us all do our part to make it as good as it can be.

- by *Greg Gwin*