

The Man Who Tried Three Religions By W. Frank Walton

“Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task” (Acts 6:3).

The growing Jerusalem church consisted of converted Hebrews from Jerusalem (Acts 3:13, 4:5) and Hellenistic Jews “from every nation” (Acts 2:5). The Hellenistic widows’ needs in the church were being overlooked, so the apostles’ put seven spiritual “men of good reputation” in charge of this benevolent task (Acts 6:1-2).

How many can you name from memory of these early benevolent servants in the Jerusalem church? Probably Stephen, later the first martyr (Acts 7), and Philip, who later devoted himself to evangelistic work (Acts 8:5). All seven men in this list have Greek names. These are Hellenistic Jews, except one man listed last: “...Nicolas, the proselyte from Antioch” (Acts 6:5).

Nicolas is the first Gentile convert documented in Acts. Previously, he had converted from Gentile paganism to Judaism. Greek paganism was frightfully superstitious and morally bankrupt. In this idolatrous darkness, Nicolas the Gentile was attracted to the goodness and righteousness of the Jewish religion (Deut 4:6-8). He became a practicing Jew that meant annually going up to Jerusalem for feast days (Exodus 23:17).

Hence, it is most likely he was among that international crowd of Jewish worshippers on Pentecost (Acts 2:5). If so, he was touched by the gospel of Jesus, by penitent faith in the Messiah, and gladly obeyed Christ in baptism (Acts 2:36-41).

What an exciting conversion story out of the wilderness of religious confusion! I like and admire Nicolas. He grew up amid Gentile idolatry, converted to Judaism, and then became, upon hearing the gospel, a disciple of Jesus Christ. Here truly is a “good” man, willing to be led and controlled by “the Spirit” (Acts 6:3)! Having been in two other religions, he again was willing to change when faced with the truth. At last, he discovered the true religion of the Son of God and obeyed “truth as it is in Jesus” (Eph 4:21).

This is the spirit of an idealistic truth seeker (Acts 17:11). “Lord, what will you have me to do?” (Acts 22:10). Each person is his own “restoration movement” to be all the Lord wants us to be. In seeking to be right before God, we must be willing to change wherever we err, as revealed in Christ’s ultimate and final word of truth (Jn 1:17). This is the final test of a good heart’s true sincerity: obeying the truth wherever it leads (Matt 5:6,8; Lk 8:15).

Aborting Doctors By Mike Thomas

This past Sunday, Scott Roeder shot down and killed George Tiller, a prominent abortion doctor. This was a deliberate act against Tiller, whose clinic is one of a few in the country where late-term abortions are performed. President Obama released a statement on the shooting: “I am shocked and outraged by the murder of Dr. George Tiller as he attended church services this morning. However profound our differences as

Americans over difficult issues such as abortion, they cannot be resolved by heinous acts of violence."

Whether you agree with Tiller's death or not, the President is correct in charging that we are not to resolve the abortion issue with further acts of violence. I'm not as "shocked and outraged" as our President since Tiller was guilty of killing thousands of innocent lives, but I do agree that we must abide within the laws of the land, as God tells us (Romans 13:1-2). If everyone took justice into their own hands against injustices in our society, there would be an even greater slaughtering of corrupt doctors, lawyers, politicians, accountants, and so forth. This is certainly not the way God wants us to respond to evil; He will take vengeance in His own time (12:19).

I must admit, though, that I am amazed at the outrage over Tiller's murder and not the unborn children he killed. Late-term abortions are performed in the second and third trimester, when the baby is capable of surviving outside the womb. But Tiller and others like him would cut the baby into pieces and vacuum them out of the womb. Where is the outrage over this heinous behavior? Why is there no shock over these acts of violence?

If you don't want the baby, let him go to one of the many loving people trying to adopt children. Murder should never be an option for eliminating unwanted children...or even the doctors who would kill them. (Beaver Dam, Kentucky)

The Upside Of Aging By Libby Grandy

George McDonald wrote, "Age is not all decay; it is the ripening, the swelling of the fresh life within." Sadly, our culture doesn't have such a fond opinion of growing older.

Does the mirror determine who we are at 60, 75, or 100? The body is naturally subject to the depredations of time. But must the inner person be subject to aging as well? Not necessarily. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16 where Paul tells us, "Even though the outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."

The retirement years are not a time for mourning a life passed by. These years are a time of growing in God's Spirit, a time of freedom. A person does not need to be defined by a job, education, physical fitness, etc. Time can be spent with friends, children, grandchildren, in church, in helping others, and in prayer. Your time is your own, to be used only as God sees fit.

Bodies break down over the weight of years, but other burdens melt away. Old age has a way of releasing us from caring about what others think of us, and freeing us from the duty of living up to other's expectations.

Growing old helps us to stop taking our time for granted. Wise people don't spend their time on bemoaning what might have been or on their own physical deterioration. They use their time to serve the Lord, to make a positive contribution, helping others, all with an open heart. Older people are no older than they choose to be.

Avenues of Retreat

"No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

When Cortez landed at Vera Cruz in 1519 to begin his conquest of Mexico with a small force of 700 men, he purposely set fire to his fleet of eleven ships. His men on the shore watched their only means of retreat sinking to the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico. With no means of retreat, there was only one direction in which to move, forward into the Mexican interior to meet whatever might come their way.

To be a disciple of the Lord, we also must purposely destroy all avenues of retreat. We must resolve that whatever price is required for being His follower, we will gladly pay. We have become citizens of the kingdom of God, and we will not retreat to the world.

A Moments Wisdom

An immoral man is dangerous whether he is armed with a gun, or with a Bible.

God does not promise "loaves" to "loafers."

When an optimist gets the worst of it, he makes the best of it.

No amount of riches can atone for poverty of character.

If you want to do something to make a better world, improve yourself.

Tact is the ability to close your mouth before somebody else wants to.

The scars of others should teach us caution.

Charity gives itself rich; covetousness hoards itself poor.