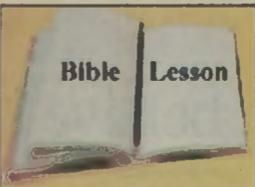


8B

RELIGION

Life 1B



Leaving for the last time

Acts 20:17-28

Our text opens with the apostle Paul preparing himself and the church in Ephesus for his departure to Jerusalem. Additionally, Paul probably was calling on people along the way, greeting friends or making new converts while taking advantage of the time to talk with God. There is nothing like time alone with God to regain peace and confidence in the midst of uncertainty. Paul knew what his fate would be once he reached Jerusalem, yet he hastened. He intended to be there by Pentecost, a time when he could witness to many people who would have traveled there to observe the holy day. This would have been an opportune and strategic time to save souls for God's kingdom. Paul arrived in Miletus, sending for the elders of the Ephesian church to come to him there, for if he had gone to Ephesus, he would have struggled to leave. Paul called them that he might instruct and encourage them for the benefit of those under their leadership. Paul, who had been accused of waffling and criticized by those who opposed him, was very logical in his exhortation to the Ephesians. Paul reminded them of his conduct, encouraging them to look not only at evidence they could see in him but also at God's consistent character. Paul never did anything to cause anyone to question his intent or jeopardize the kingdom of God.

Paul reminded the elders of his humble service to God, despite the persecution inflicted on him, even by his own people. Refusing to seek his own comfort or benefit, he did not compromise truth for his own self-preservation. Rather, he spoke openly, praying all who heard would believe and receive the Christ he knew. Paul went to synagogues and spoke openly in the markets, even while working at his trade when opportunities were given. He also became personal and visited private dwellings, "labouring night and day" that all might come to know Christ (1 Thess. 2:9, KJV). Paul was sensitive to the Spirit's leading and compassionate toward all people.

Throughout the Book of Acts, Luke reported Paul giving messages to various groups of people. However, this address differed from the others in that it was a farewell message to people very dear to the apostle's heart. His previous messages

Please see LEAVING/7B



Homosexuality and religion was the topic of discussion at a recent town hall meeting in Charlotte at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center.

Gay rights group rejects N.C. Baptist stance on homosexuality
Expulsion efforts enrage Human Rights Campaign

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WINSTON-SALEM — The nation's largest gay-rights organization has condemned efforts of the state's Baptist convention to expel any church that "knowingly affirms, approves or endorses homosexual behavior."

"The church should be a beacon, not a barricade," Harry Knox, director of the Washington, D.C.-based Human Rights Campaign Foundation's religion and

faith programs, said Wednesday in a statement. "Gay parishioners contribute in meaningful ways to their local churches and communities and the convention should focus on love and compassion, not finding ways to demean and marginalize the faithful."

On Tuesday, delegates at a meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina asked the group's board of directors to gauge the stance of individual

churches on homosexuality. The decision would add that standard to the question of whether a church is "in friendly cooperation" with the convention.

Existing policy only puts the convention at odds with churches that fail to contribute financially to the association, said convention spokesman Norman Jameson. With 1.2 million members, the North Carolina convention is the second largest association of Baptist churches

in the nation.

The convention has sanctioned churches for having openly gay members, but has never had a written policy. The organization expelled a Cabarrus County church in 2003 for accepting two gay men as members and later baptizing them.

"I hope (the public) will take it to mean that North Carolina Baptists are voicing our biblical conviction ... (but also) that God offers

Please see GAY/7B

ACLU sues to expand Bible tax to all books

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — Acting on behalf of the owner of a metaphysical bookstore, the American Civil Liberties Union has filed a lawsuit arguing that a Georgia law exempting only the Bible from sale taxes is discriminatory and should be extended to all publications dealing with the meaning of life.

"If they're not taxing someone's holy scriptures, they shouldn't be taxing anyone's," said Candace Apple, who owns the Phoenix and Dragon Bookstore in the Atlanta suburb of Sandy Springs. "I'm not willing to stand at the counter and tell someone, 'Oh sorry, your religion is wrong.'"

Apple and Thomas Budlong, former

president of the Georgia Library Association, sued Georgia Revenue Commissioner Bart Graham in federal court Monday, arguing the tax break is unconstitutional and should be suspended until the 1950s-era law can be reconsidered by state lawmakers.

Graham had no comment with litigation pending, Revenue Department spokesman Charles Willey said Tuesday.

The law exempts from sale taxes the Bible as well as "similar books commonly recognized as being Holy Scripture regardless of by or to whom sold."

Apple argues that the phrasing is too vague to be restricted to Judeo-Christian publications, or even to books reflecting major religions.

"What about 'A Witches' Bible?'" Apple said, referring to a book she sells for Wiccans, practitioners of a fast-growing polytheistic religion.

"There's nothing wrong with exempting the Bible, but they need to broaden the law for it to be constitutional," said Budlong's attorney Maggie Garrett, with the ACLU's Atlanta office.

Apple said that defining which books would fall into a broader category could turn out to be impossible, so the easiest way might be to eliminate the tax break.

Similar exemption laws have recently been struck down in Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and the Carolinas, Garrett said.

Pastor collects 500 turkeys from church roof

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PITCAIRN, Pa. — A pastor who had been camping on his church roof came down after surpassing his goal of collecting 500 turkeys for needy families.

Pastor David Martin of

the Pitcairn Assembly of God had been on the roof, camping in a tent, since Monday.

He had 255 turkeys as of noon Wednesday. Someone promised him more than 100 turkeys,

which with other donations, surpassed his goal.

"It just an idea that dropped in my head," he said. "I wanted to bless the community. And you figure if you do something a

little strange, people will show up, and they did. They have given over and over — more than I could have imagined."

Martin said he reached his goal sooner than expected. He had planned to stay on the roof until Friday.



Najiyah's technique, emotions, need work

Najiyah Threatt
It's Just Me
Nona Hendryx,
executive producer
Rhythm Bank Entertainment



Najiyah (pronounced Na-gee-ah) Threatt is but a child but she's got a near-adult voice.

It's a good voice, one with a bit of range and depth. All she needs is to get her technique down and tap into some more emotion and she'll be phenomenal.

Until then, Threatt is OK, maybe a bit better than that. Most of the original compositions come off quite well. "His Name Is Jesus" lets Threatt rumble and run with some expression. She sounds connected to the song. Even some of the standards are compelling. Threatt combines with Michael McElroy on "His Eye Is On The Sparrow." It's the best this CD has to offer as far potential. Threatt is near awesome. She gets past her youth and sings like a veteran. McElroy pushes her to near perfection. Threatt also holds her own with Jennifer Holliday on "Through The Storm."

But more often than not this CD sounds a lot like a kid singing gospel music. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but cute can take you but so far Threatt's handling of Donnie McClurkin's "Stand" is almost robotic. Never have I heard such a bland rendering of such an inspiring song. She does better on "Home" from "The Wiz" (which seems out of place on this CD) but it comes off sounding like something from a talent show.

"It's Just Me" is a fine start for such a young singer. It's not perfect, but there is loads of potential from this young woman.



Ratings

- Classic: ★★★★★
- Excellent: ★★★★
- Good: ★★★
- Fair: ★★
- Why? ★
- No stars — A mess

CHURCH NEWS

The deadline for announcements is 5 p.m. on Fridays. Fax your announcements to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail to cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com.

Ongoing

New Outreach/Hoskins Community is seeking donations of turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinners. Donations are being accepted at 3900 Gossett Ave. For more information call Pastor Brenda Stevenson at (704) 398-1777.

November 22

Mecklenburg Ministries will host an interfaith worship celebration.

The Rev. Clifford Jones of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church will be the speaker. The Rev. Thomas Moore will lead the interfaith choir.

Rabbi Judy Schindler and Temple Beth El

will host the worship service.

To accommodate holiday travel schedules, the service will be held on Tuesday at 7 p.m., at Temple Beth El, 5105 Providence Road.

November 24

Greater Gethsemane AME Zion Church, Memorial Presbyterian Church and Mt. Carmel Baptist Church will host a joint Thanksgiving concert at Greater Gethsemane, 531 Campus St. The event begins at 10 a.m.

November 27

The St. Phillip Missionary Baptist Church's Deacon Board will host a concert titled "Praising God Thru Song" at 3 p.m. at the church, located at 400 Dellwood Drive.

December 3

Pineville Church of the Nazarene Students Ministries present the seventh annual Bethlehem Revisited from 6-9 p.m. through Sunday

The outdoor experience recreates an ancient Bethlehem marketplace. The church is located at 8614 Pineville-Matthews Road. For more information call (704) 542-3618.

The congregation of Peace Moravian Church will hold its annual Candle Tea and Christmas Bazaar on its campus at the corner of Rea Road and Colony Road from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. The event will include demonstrations of Moravian Christmas traditions, including candle tea served by church members in colonial Moravian costume, a display of nativity sets and the presentation of the Christmas Story.

For more information call Peace Moravian Church at (704) 759-9939.

December 6

Liberty Baptist Church, 3000 Sam Wilson Road, will host Jon Jenkins through Tuesday night. Jenkins is from Grace Baptist in Gay-

lord, Mich. Services begin each night at 7 p.m.

December 9

The Hickory Grove North Worship Department presents "An Angel's Story" a cosmic Christmas. The production centers around best-selling author Max Lucado, who imagines the spiritual conflict surrounding the coming of Christ. Tickets are \$15 and include dinner.

Show times are 7 p.m. Friday and 6 p.m. on Sunday. For more information call (704) 531-5333.

December 11

Our Children's Memorial Walkway will hold its annual memorial service at Frazier Park, 1201 West Fourth St., to remember children who have departed from this life. This service is specifically aimed at giving grieving people of all faiths and races the chance to come together in a place of life rather than at a cemetery to remember their loved ones.

