



By Mrs. Bessie Wilbon

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, London had several clubs of atheists that were active in denying Christianity. One of the leaders advertised that he would like to have a debate with any Christian in one of London's most famous auditoriums. An unknown Christian answered the challenge. On the night of the debate, the atheist gave a long speech giving reasons for not believing in the existence of God. When the atheist concluded his eloquent oration, the Christian, who had never debated, invited 100 men to the stage. As the men stood on the stage, the Christian said, "Ladies and gentlemen, standing before you are 100 men. Many of these men you know well. In the past, these men were alcoholics, chronic gamblers, homosexuals, etc. But Jesus Christ has changed every one of them. I challenge our opponent to bring 100 atheists to the stage tomorrow night who can testify that their lives have changed for the better because they do not believe in God."

The debates that were scheduled to follow were cancelled by the atheists.

Every Christian is on trial. The world makes up the witnesses, the judge, the prosecuting attorney, and the jury. Will the world find enough evidence in us to charge us with being "Christian?" Does your lifestyle provide a dynamic alternative to the ways of the world? Or are we blending in so nicely that it is difficult to tell that we are Christians? So Jesus was on trial for being God's man. Whose person are we?

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus knew that His hour had come before He went to the garden. At the garden He faced tomorrow with the cross. Every human feeling inside of Jesus was saying, "Let's not go through with this." And so He prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But Jesus didn't make His decisions out of feeling. He made them out of commitment to God's will; so He also prayed, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

In order to get rid of Jesus; His enemies lied, blasphemed, and murdered. Yet they would enter into their religious observances pretending that all was well between them and God. All is never well between us and God if all is not well between us and our fellow man.

THE LESSON

"Pilate went back into the palace and called Jesus. Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked Him. Jesus answered, "Does this question come from you or have others told you about me?" Pilate replied, "Do you think I am a Jew? It was your own people and the chief priests who handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus said, "My kingdom does not belong to this world; if my kingdom belonged to this world, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities. No, my kingdom does not belong here!" So Pilate asked Him, "Are you a king, then?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this one purpose, to speak about the truth. Whoever belongs to the truth listens to me." (John 18:33-37).

The Jews had brought Jesus to Pilate, but they couldn't get any specific reason when they were asked what accusation they brought against Him, (John 18:29). Their answer was so general it had no substance to it. "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you."

Pilate saw through their motives. Jesus did not look nor act like a revolutionary. He surely was not trying to replace the Roman king nor compete with him. So Pilate didn't ask Jesus, "Are you a king?" or "Are you trying to lead a rebellion against Caesar?" Pilate surely thought that Jesus was more a religious leader than a political one, and thus a threat to the traditions of the Jewish religion rather than to the Roman rule. And so he asked, "Art thou the king of the Jews?"

Jesus turned the tables on Pilate. Now Jesus became the judge and questioned Pilate. By this question, ("Does this question come from you or have others told you about me?") Jesus forced Pilate to face the music. Would he simply be a puppet in the hands of the Jews and swallow whatever he heard without any evidence, or would he sift the evidence and make up his own mind? Pilate dodged answering Jesus' question directly, but did suggest that he got his information from the Jews. However, Pilate wasn't satisfied with what the Jews had said, so he asked Jesus, "What hast thou done?"

Up to this point, Pilate gave us an example that all of us should follow. He didn't settle for gossip about someone. Before making a decision he talked with Jesus face to face.

How about us? Do we go to the person who allegedly has done wrong or do we allow second hand information to condemn that person in our minds? Any second hand information is used information, and used information quite often is abused information. If it has been abused by misuse and twisting, it will abuse others. It would be better for all of us to refuse to listen to gossip, even if it is true. We need to be careful, for the moment we listen our minds can easily become somewhat poisoned against the person involved. People change, but many times a poisoned mind against a person does not change.

(V. 16 - Chapter 19). "Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away."

The battle between right and wrong that had waged in Pilate's heart was now finished. He had capitulated to his baser instincts when the people had cried, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend." Pilate did not want to infuriate this blood thirsty mob by releasing Jesus against their wishes. He knew that these devious and spiteful men were fully capable of misrepresenting his actions to Caesar, and thus causing Caesar's wrath to fall on him. So, to save his own skin, he handed Jesus over to the mob, giving in to their demand that Jesus be crucified.

Do we ever do that when we are pressured by our peers to do or say things that we know Jesus would not approve? Sometimes we too are more interested in being friends of the Caesars of our day (the power people around us) than being followers of Christ.



Mrs. Bessie Breazeale
.....100 years old

Turning 100 Is "Just Another Day" For Mrs. Bessie Breazeale

By Teresa Simmons
Post Managing Editor

Turning 100 years of age seemed like just another day for Bessie A. Breazeale. She didn't feel any different, but everyone seemed to be making such a fuss.

The president of the United States sent a birthday card. Friends were dropping in and out. A little cake with one candle was given to her. And it was a grand time for her to reminisce and talk about her faith in God.

Sitting in her Edwin Tower's apartment, Mrs. Breazeale was alert and ready to answer any question. Her body is no longer able to work the fields for cotton. But it did not hamper her mind's capability of gearing up for a conversation.

One would expect her to be sitting in a cushioned rocking chair. Her hat embraces her face outlined in thinning gray hair.

As she talked about her past there was a sense of discovering a portion of hidden history. And as she talked about her future one's pessimistic views of growing old desolved, disappearing into the cracks of her old furniture and photos hung upon the walls.

At 100 Mrs. Breazeale is glad to be alive. "I feel pretty good," she began. "I'm glad to be here. I could have been gone. I praise the Lord. If it were not for Him I would not be here."

Mrs. Breazeale was born Bessie Nedward February 6 in 1885. Her mother Lucinda was born two years after slavery was abolished. Mrs. Breazeale married a Smith at the age of 16. She has since outlived two other husbands, Pruitt and Breazeale. She has one daughter, Evangeline Mosley Ligon.

Born in Abbeyville County, now called Greenwood County, Mrs. Breazeale can remember working on the farm, keeping the children of the affluent white, making soap during the war, ironing and sewing for the family. She worked on the plantation of the Fleets for 40 years. She was blessed in that the Jim crow laws barely brushed her life. Through the influence of her employers, often their word was enough for her to purchase items for her use, or use the courtesies of the town bank.

"I worked pretty hard," Mrs. Breazeale continued. "I think I've lived so long through God's blessings. I've never been a person to mess into other people's business either. If I wasn't working I was at home."

She also attended church, however. And down through the years she has worked as a deaconess and in several aspects of the church. When she moved to Charlotte in 1965 she joined Union Missionary Baptist Church.

Friends seemed to drop in here and there on Mrs. Breazeale's birthday. A church member and friend, Adline Cole dropped by. Ada Wilson, Site Coordinator for the Nutrition Program of Charlotte Mecklenburg at Edwin Towers came up with a birthday cake and candle.

"I've prayed for my health and strength," Mrs. Breazeale revealed. God wrapped his hands around me when I was born and He has brought me through the desert."

Sorority to Hear Dr. Flood Friday Night

The Adam's Mark Hotel will be the headquarters for the March 21-23 Southeastern Regional Conference hosted by the Beta Rho Sigma and Alpha Epsilon Chapters of Phi Beta Sigma, Inc.

Dr. Dudley Flood, Associate State Superintendent, Department of Public Instruction, will be the featured speaker for the public forum Friday at 7:30 p.m. Music will be provided by the Johnson C. Smith University Choir, under the direction of Christopher Kemp.

At the awards luncheon on Saturday, March 23, James T. Floyd, national president of Phi Beta Sigma, Inc., will be the speaker. This affair will be closed to the general public.

More than 100 members are expected to attend the regional conference which includes North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The theme of the conference is "Sigmas: A Renaissance in Brotherhood."

Dr. James A. Clarke (former Charlotte-Mecklenburg school administrator and current superintendent of the Halifax School System) is presently the regional director and will preside over the three-day conference. Joseph L. Swain, retired Charlotte-Mecklenburg School administrator, is president of the host graduate chapter, Beta Rho Sigma.

Phi Beta Sigma, Inc. had its beginning on the campus of Howard University, Washington, D.C., on January 9, 1914. The three founders: A. Langston Taylor, Charles I. Brown, and L. F. Morse, were determined to have a broad base representation and to form a brotherhood that could relate to all persons.

Phi Beta Sigma is known and recognized as "the people's fraternity" by many. It embraces the principles of brotherhood, service, and scholarship which are expressed in its motto: "Culture for service and service for humanity."

Project Sigmas Attack on Defects (SAT) is among the outstanding social action programs of the fraternity. This program is co-sponsored by the National Foundation of the March of Dimes.

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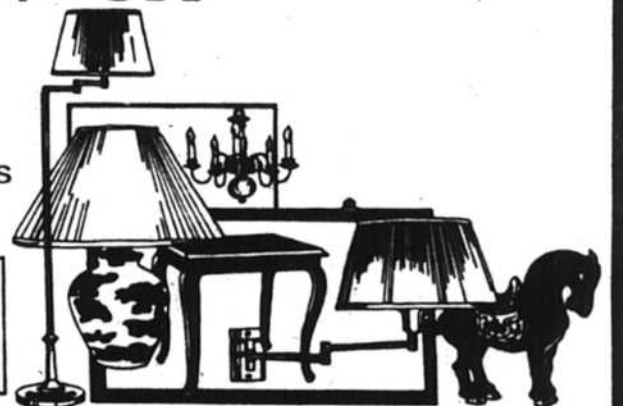
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Channel 42, March 28
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