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John Allen Chalk: Personal Correspondence

John Allen Chalk

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From: Harry E. Steele

Harry E. Steele

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1295 Homer St.,
Memphis, Tenn. 38122.

February 24, 1969

Mr. John Allen Chalk,
Herald of Truth,
Box 2439,
Abilene, Texas 79604.

Dear brother Chalk:

I appreciate very much your kind letter of February 5th, and also your series of sermons on the "Three American Revolutions" series. I am carefully reading every one of them and will keep and treasure this little volume. They are filled with truth but this is an area where our brethren do not recognize it, however plain, or at least many of them do not. For instance, I have since resigned as an elder because of the refusal of the other six to agree to minister to our "changing" neighborhood and integrate the camp, but just this past Sunday one of the elders in reading the scripture at the start of the service, his selection, read 1 John 4:20, and apparently does not see the inconsistency of it.

I am to teach five lessons on Sunday nights in March at the Carpenter Street, "Negro congregation", where three of the Harding Graduate School students are helping out. I have had offers, or at least requests, from two inner-city churches, for my services. We are still attending some services at Jackson Avenue, but I am sure as time passes I will be busy at other places. Two elderships have now responded and have agreed that this is the Christian stand. It is my understanding that my city-wide letter has come in for considerable discussion everywhere, and I trust some of the preachers will join in, because I am convinced that many could be swayed with proper teaching. The pity of it is that so little is being done. As far as I know, the problem is being ignored in most churches. I know it is at Jackson Avenue. I cannot blame the preachers too much and as long as my pay does not hinge on keeping quiet or speaking up, I cannot feel that I am so courageous. I do not think I would keep quiet, but I do not know.

I am enjoying the latest issue of 20th Century Christian, and am glad to see that you will be the Associate Editor for the next six months. This publication is the very best in my opinion.

My best wishes to you in the future. I have faith that good will eventually come from every effort we make. I know now that I will not be able to do anything big, but with God's help will do a lot of little things and perhaps some of them will bear fruit. In a way my resignation was wasted because they did not give the congregation the true reason for it, merely saying that "he will help the colored brethren," even though my resignation said: "I can no longer serve as an elder in a Church where race is made a criterion for full fellowship". This is a pretty bald, blunt statement, but I still don't know any other way to say it. At least now, when I do get a chance to speak, I can "say it like it is," but I trust always, I will do it in the spirit of Christ.

Sincerely,

Harry E. Steele
Harry E. Steele

One of the excuses I hear often for white people not being willing to attend one of the "Negro churches" is fear of going into those neighborhoods. I have disproved this several times and agree with Helen Keller on "Security", which I will pass on to you, in the event you did not read it:

"Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. The fearful are caught as often as the bold. Faith alone defends. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. To keep our faces toward change and behave like free spirits in the presence of fate is strength undefeatable."

Harry Steele