

**THE CLEVELAND AVENUE CHURCH OF CHRIST
and friends**

4214 Cleveland Avenue
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA



Minister O. B. Porterfield, speaker

On Wednesday night, March 24, 1965 the following speech was delivered over television station WKAB, Montgomery, Ala.

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Good afternoon, we are living in troubled times. World War II ended a few years ago followed by the Korean Conflict. Diplomatic relations have been bad with some countries during the last few years. Just recently Cuba was overtaken by Communist which is another word for Atheism. Crime is increasing at an alarming rate. Young people's crime—all that are known such as murder, forgery, dope, etc. are committed by the young people and hundreds are being committed to institutions. Marriage has become a play thing, the divorce rate is alarming. In John 17:20, and 21, Jesus prayed that we may be as one that they may believe that thou has sent me. Jesus said that unity was necessary in order to cause people to believe in Him. We need a unity movement tonight, more than any time in our history. Back to the Bible has been the theme for members of the Church of Christ since the Restoration movement. I do not mean that we are to just walk under a banner of unity, and teach different Doctrines but I mean that we should agree on religion and God's plan to live right—to go by God's plan of salvation and have a unified effort to fight the crime that exists. We need a united effort to do more.

Since the Church of Christ had its beginning about 2000 years ago we have been pleading for people to stay with God's word. Since the Restoration movement statements have been made such as back to the Bible, go as far as the Bible goes, do the work outlined for Christians without addition, substitution or subtraction. For a long time we have pleaded with preachers to stay out of politics and preach just the Gospel. For that reason neither I nor any Minister of the Church of Christ as far as we know has been seen parading up and down the street or praying on the street corners to be seen of men. Our job first and foremost is to serve Christ, save souls and not prove points. Today there are over 3 1/2 billion people living in the world, more than at any one time and approximately 1/3 of these people do not believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God. We, as Ministers of the Gospel do not have time to spend on political or social matters until we have done a better job, until there are more people that believe in Christ, until the crime rate decreases, divorce rate decreases, less boys and girls are confined to institutions and the morals are higher. We need to stick to the pulpit and tend to Christian living and preaching.

If we as preachers do a better job, then the world will improve. For these reasons, we the Cleveland Avenue Church of Christ plead tonight with the so-called preachers from out of the state that have invaded this city and this state and those in the state that have joined hands with these so-called preachers to do this—get off the streets, get out of the march, go back to your pulpit, but on the way back study to see what God said to do before you enter the pulpit again. Now to the preachers that are in the march, regardless of who you represent, if you are interested in helping people here is a question that I have: How can you, as preachers stay with a group of people that are guilty of committing fornication on a street in Selma and also in Montgomery. We know that these things happened because there was evidence that these things happened. After the demonstrations occurred, the evidence was found. With this low moral conduct among the people that you are representing don't talk to the people about rights tonight but talk to the people you represent about moral conduct among them. How can a preacher after leaving his duties to join this un-Godly movement explain having in the march a single pregnant girl and there is definite proof that she is marching along with you. Is this the type person that you ministers are upholding tonight and fighting for social equality for. To the preachers—when the march was held in Montgomery on Dexter Avenue in front of the capitol—when the parade permit was violated what did you have to say about law and order at that particular time. How do you account for that if you stand for law and order. When this group of men and women, black and white, young and old, were lying in the street after sometime they began to "relieve" themselves—you know what we mean—to the extent that it flowed down Dexter Avenue for approximately 1 or 2 blocks into sewers. Now my question is this: As so-called ministers of God how can you endorse tonight in the name of God Almighty and a religious movement such a group of people that act like Heathens on the city streets of Selma and Montgomery and display more animal conduct than human. How can you represent such a

group. Some were arrested for indecent exposure. The least that you could do tonight is cease requesting so-called civil rights and social equality until you present to the people of Montgomery a higher type person and better morals. But lets go a little further. Your plea may be that we are trying to help these people gain their rights, let me emphasize that I think every person should have the rights that they deserve but are you really working for rights and as a so-called Minister is that your responsibility. Ministers are not to preach social reform and political rights but we are to preach the Gospel so that we can be saved.

The best case that I can cite is the one of Onesimus in the new Testament. He was a slave converted to Christianity. Paul did not tell Him to run, he did not tell him to fight. But another example we have in the last chapter of Phillipians is there were Saints in Caesar's household. Now remember that no doubt this Ceasar was the one that killed a young boy, his mother, and his wife. Don't you think tonight that if Onesimus could live as a Christian as a slave and if this particular group of people could be Christians in Caesar's household, don't you believe tonight that anybody that wants to go home to Heaven whether they are white or colored can do so in the country and the state that we live in? That's the job of preachers to see that we go home to Heaven. How many times have you heard preachers say we are not interested in material or physical things but we are interested in spiritual things. Is the march from Selma material or spiritual; are the lie-ins and sit-ins, the harassment programs, are they spiritual or are they physical? You know as well as I do that these things are not necessary for a man to go home to Heaven and these acts will instead cause people to be lost for all eternity.

Isn't it the rankest type of Hypocrisy for preachers to say that we are preaching spiritual things and instead they are parading up and down the street with outside agitators, law breakers, beatniks, fornicators, nasty people, long bearded men, harlots and every other type person to stir up racial discord in Montgomery and Selma and in Alabama. It is good to vote, yes, and it is good to be educated, yes, but neither of these things are necessary for salvation. We tonight would have to look upon a preacher that preaches that he is interested in spiritual things and instead devotes his time to physical, as we do upon the Hypocrites and scribes that Jesus talked about in Mathew 23. Today there is not much respect for religious people, the great majority in some places do not have much respect for preachers because so many have been so mercenary in days gone by, money, money, money, and now these preachers come and debase religion even further and drag it down so every Christian must speak out now and be heard. Let's consider another angle for these preachers. If they say, well, we can't help the morality of this particular group of people, and I grant you, you would have a hard job if you tried with some of them. I went to Selma personally and looked at some of these people. I went to Montgomery and looked at some of these people, and I grant you that in these marchers, not all, but a large number of these boys and girls are the scum of the earth! They are as low class of group of people as ever I saw. I grant you, I love their souls, but that does not improve the class of people that they represent. But, tonight, can you imagine a man or woman, white or colored, permitting their teen-age daughters and sons, and especially daughters, to go to a far away state like Alabama, lie in the streets with men and women, and live here and there!

If the preachers tonight want to do a good job, then they can return to their respective homes and teach the parents of these wild children how they ought to rear children. They could begin with the statement of the wise man to bring up a child in the way that he should go, Pro. 22:6, and they could go to Ephesians the sixth chapter and point out the responsibility of parents to children and children to parents. Cars coming into Alabama from far away states that contain school girls with loads of men have been stopped. I have carefully looked at some of these girls and boys, and evidently their teaching has been extremely poor as far as the Scriptures are concerned. I shudder to think about the type parents that produce such a breed of men and women, young men and women, that have invaded our city and are harrassing the society at this particular time. These people need to learn

something about training children, and any preacher that wants to do a good job, can return to his home, and teach them. Let's remember this, that every man that says he is a minister of God, is not. John said "Beloved believe not every spirit but try the spirits to see if they are from God." I John 4:1 One man was asked "which church do you represent"—he had on a collar and a vest and he said "none." "Why do you wear this garb that you have on?" He said "I wear it for protection."

Now another reason that I stand opposed to this so called movement and the Cleveland Avenue Church of Christ stands opposed to these people in the city at the particular time—it is our opinion by reports from the Police Officials and by news media, that certainly some of these people are members of communist front organizations, which means they represent an atheistic group of people.

But let me show you something a little farther. If you will notice in your newspapers for the past few weeks, there has been a story concerning the trouble at the University of California. Now, listen carefully to this—A man named John Thomson, and here is his picture in Life Magazine—for no reason whatsoever, wrote a four letter sex word and paraded on the University of California with it, and he is not a student there—a four-letter sex word—you know what it is—all right, this man was arrested. So some members of the Free Speech Movement joined him, and they wrote the same four-letter sex word, and they paraded with it. Now, why have I told you that concerning the present crisis in Alabama? This man that is the leader of the Free Speech Movement named Mario Savio, he is the one that is the leader of the Free Speech Movement, and this man, Life Magazine said, is in Selma to march with the people. Now, all of this is in Life Magazine, March 19, 1965, page 43. I am trying to impress you tonight that it is not a question of segregation versus integration; it is not a question of civil rights; but it is morality versus immorality. This is mob rule. Is our government and the decisions that they make going to be made by sensible people who live in a community or are we going to be led and influenced by long-haired nasty beatniks, prostitutes, so-called preachers and those that spread vulgarity on our streets? But listen to this carefully.

To show you how dangerous this movement is, two days ago Governor George Wallace told me there were students from the State of Michigan, which university or high school, I don't know, but from that state that have raised money and clothes for the Viet Cong, and that they are now here participating in the civil rights movement. Now, can you remain silent any longer? Can you give endorsement to this by remaining silent, when the great Governor of the State of Alabama knows that people that are enemies of our country are being supported by the same people to some degree that even are in these marches when this great crisis exists—can you remain silent any longer?

I have an affidavit, in my presence, on March 16th, in a church building in the City of Montgomery, one of the leaders of this group, one that is well known by the Police Department, but not a preacher, he was speaking to an audience concerning integration and segregation, and I am of the opinion also, because I have been told that nuns or ones in nuns attire, I don't know whether nuns or not, were in the audience, and in this speech concerning segregation, he used the same sex word, the four-letter word, except he added i-n-g to it. A so-called preacher in this movement that is also well known by the Montgomery Police Department, said "I am sure that God will forgive him, that the television crews will delete it from their films, and newspaper men will not print it." Now, that is being said in the pulpit of some of these people. Morally speaking, we are in the worse condition in the State of Alabama that we have ever been in, and I am begging the people that believe in high ideals to speak out, that every member of the Church of Christ ask their preacher to speak out, also, if he is for this type of conduct, let it be known, but if he is against it, let him be heard. I beg ministers of all denominations, I beg the members of all denominations to ask their preachers to speak out against this conduct. It is time that we pussy foot not one more minute on this issue, but we must stand like we have never stood before.

The word "work" is used hundreds of times in the New Testament. Christians are to work for God, work to support our families, we are to work for widows and orphans and for all needy men, and do you believe that I or any Christian today has the time to lie in the streets, stand at barricades, harass policemen, pray on street corners and still have the time to work enough in order to do all the work God had told us to do? Who is supporting these people? I have to work. My friends have to work for a living. The people of Alabama have to work for a living, and we do not have time to lie in the streets.

Now, when you attend the Church of Christ service, you will go to hear the Word of God, and not a rabble rouser. You will not hear freedom songs, but instead you will hear singing and praising to God. You will not hear bad things about the Sheriff or Col. Lingo or the Governor but you will meet to take the Lords Supper. When you pray you will sincerely pray and not meet on the corners. You will give of your means in order to preach the Gospel, and to help those who are in need and not to spread racial discord. The Church of Christ deals with Godly things in Godly ways. In the Church of Christ we are not a member of the United Churches of Christ and we are not a member of the National Council of Churches. How can any one be a member of a church that is a member of the National Council of Churches. I am of the opinion, because I have read that thousands of dollars have been spent in the project called "Revolution in the Delta", meaning in Miss. I have reason to believe, because I have copies of records in my presence, that this group, the National Council of Churches—listen to this carefully—that they are against a proposed Constitutional amendment to rectify the decision of the Supreme Court on school prayers. Now, don't fool yourselves, if you are sending money to this group, you are supporting it, and if the church you are a member of is sending them money, don't fool yourselves by saying that we request that our money be spent for this purpose or that. If you are a member of the church that supports the National Council of Churches, you are a part of this thing, and the only way you can cease to be a part is to cease to support this organization, or to leave the denomination that you are a member of. The Church of Christ is not a member of any organization, absolutely none, not the National Council of Churches and we are not the same as the United Church of Christ. We have local government in each congregation as the Scriptures teach. No one on the face of this earth can dictate to a local congregation how they are to be. The money given to a Church of Christ is used to preach the Gospel and to help the needy. In the Church of Christ we call Bible things by Bible names. The word "Reverend" is used only one time in the English translation. You will notice in Psalms 111 and 9, it refers to God there, and it says "Hbly and reverend is his name." We do not call any man on the earth reverend because that title belongs to God. Since that title belongs to God, we leave it to God. No one has the right to expect to be called by this high and lofty title, and if they do expect it, we do not owe it to them, and we must not give it to them.

Men like Martin Luther King and Ralph Abernathy, that have brought so much strife and trouble to this area, to call them reverend, or any man, is sacrilegious, a down right sin and a disgrace in the eyes of Almighty God, and I am opposed to calling them or anyone else by any such titles.

If we violate the laws of County, State or the Federal Government, we are punished. No sympathy is due us. We should be punished. If a police officer enforces the law that I have violated, is he at fault or am I at fault? If a police officer has to bring me physically into subjection, why should I cry for sympathy? No, I don't like to see people hurt, and I don't like to see people have to be brought into subjection, but neither do I like to see people violate the laws of the land.

In Titus 3:1 a definite command is given that we are to obey civil authority. Preachers, don't you believe this commandment? If I have to be brought into subjection and my head gets "conked" by them bringing me in, I am not a martyr as Paul or Christ. They suffered in order that they may preach the Gospel, and I will be suffering because I violated the laws of the land. So, white or colored, if the police, because you violated the laws and would

not follow their instructions, bring you into subjection, you do not have anything to do but repent and ask them (the police officer and God) to forgive you for violating the laws. The State Troopers under the good leadership of Col. Al Lingo, the Sheriff of Montgomery County, Mac Sim Butler and his good deputies, the Sheriff of Dallas County, Jim Clark and his good deputies enforce the laws for our good and the violators good. I owe them gratitude tonight for this very reason. I am not crying brutality to those men. When a murderer is electrocuted, do you hear people cry "brutality." These men have risked their lives and they have gone to the last degree in order to protect the citizens of the State and the intruders from danger. Our Troopers have been on duty constantly and yet they are accused of brutality, and some people agree with these charges and should be ashamed of themselves and the ones that do not speak up and are not heard concerning this matter should be ashamed of themselves when men risk their lives in order that we may have peace and joy and happiness and a free society.

But let me tell you something that may alarm you. A Trooper, I heard and I asked the question—I do not intend to embarrass him, but I asked him some questions, and here is what I found—this Alabama Trooper named Captain Joe Tom Masters who is a member of the Baptist Church in Mobile—this man must be extremely dedicated, because he was on duty Sunday, and he asked to be relieved in order to go and worship at his particular church. He went to a large denominational church in the southern section of Montgomery. He left his pistol in his automobile. But when he got to the building and entered, the man that is on the whatever you might want to call it, the watch committee at the door. this man said "What is your business here?" Can you imagine that? He said "I am here to worship." He said, "Would you go into a room and pray?" And he says "No, because I have come to worship." This man asked, Captain Masters, "Will you recite the church creed?" Whoever heard of such a thing? And he said "I can't do it, I have never done it, I don't know it," and he said "All I have come to do is worship." He was refused a seat at a large denominational church in the southern section of Montgomery. But, let me emphasize this, this man did not violate a custom or a social order of Montgomery. He is a white man. He went to a white church. He went to one that refused him a seat in the city of Montgomery, and if you do not believe this, I have proof of that and **I will tell you the name of the church.** If you will inquire, you can find out, and the only reason that I am not exposing that large denomination is because I do honestly believe that a large number of that group does not so endorse that policy. I am so glad that the people of the State of Alabama have not lost confidence in our Public Safety Director, Col. Lingo. I am so glad that those that have tried to cause a rift between the Governor of Alabama and Col. Lingo have not been successful. I am so glad that I have seen no indication of that, because the Communistic idea has always been, and I am not saying the Communists have had a part in this, but their idea has always been, if we can destroy the people's confidence in the police, we are beginning to win.

But, tonight, I extend to Col. Lingo, Sheriff Butler, Sheriff Clark, Governor Wallace, and all law enforcement officers, a special invitation to worship with us at the Cleveland Avenue Church of Christ, and you will be treated with the courtesy you deserve, and we will honor you by complimenting you for these trying hours that you have endured.

Now, let me point out something else. In Matt. 23:5, when you see these preachers praying with their collars on backwards and their little black coat, why is it you haven't seen a Church of Christ minister dressed in such a way? In Matthew the 23rd chapter and the first few verses, and the fifth verse in particular, the Pharisees and Scribes were condemned for changing their type clothing in order to be seen of men. We do not wear our collars backward, but instead we try to live a righteous life. Some preachers have been so honest that they have returned to their home and have spoken out against the great evils that occurred. **We do not want to rest until every one returns with the truth.** Let me show you something else. In Matt. 7:12, known as the Golden Rule, "therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." Do the people that have invaded our city have the right to deny the people

that live here police protection? We don't have it because they are having to nurse the people as they are lying in the street with these young girls and old girls and young men and old men. President Johnson didn't like for his daughters to be disturbed by the confusion of the demonstrators. Why doesn't he practice the Golden Rule, too, and I intend to send him a copy of my remarks and ask him to practice the Golden Rule and get this unholy, ungodly mess out of our streets, if he does not want it in his home.

A physician in Montgomery had to close his office because he couldn't treat his patients due to the confusion. The Alabama Bible Society closed their office early one day because of the confusion and danger of so many people outside. The entrance to St. Margaret's Hospital by these demonstrators was blocked for one hour. An ambulance—listen carefully—an ambulance, in matters as far as life was concerned, whether a white person or colored, it makes no difference, this particular one happened to be a white person—an ambulance was blocked and a lady, a white lady of this city died because she could not get hospital treatment that would have possibly saved her life. Some say, how about let's praying about this? Let's don't pray about it. Prayers are good. Prayer is a good thing for Christians to do. But this is not a thing we necessarily pray about. **It is time we teach obedience to civil authorities and most of all to God Almighty.**

In 1st Peter 4:16, it says that "if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." But listen to the 15th verse, it says there, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busy body in other men's matters." So, I advise people tonight, if you are where you have no business and where you are not wanted, you are blocking the streets, my advice to you is that if you are hurt, you are not suffering for a righteous cause, and the thing you need to do is pack up your grips and go home and preach the Gospel to people there. In all of the New Testament, there has not been a single case that I can find of a man of God fighting back. Instead, men of God, as we are in the Church of Christ, we are humble as we possibly can be, we love one another, and the preacher does the very best at every minute to set a good example. Ministers of the church of Christ, and I am sure others, are striving to preach the word of God as best they know how, and not be entangled with the things of this world. There is not a single case of a man of God leading his people in rebellion against their government in all of the Bible. But you can find them telling good things, leading them in good things and setting a good example. Some may say, even in the Church of Christ, don't you think, Bro. Porterfield, it would be best to be silent and not say anything? Let me ask you this, do you believe that if we quit preaching on adultery, that we wouldn't have much adultery? Do you believe if we quit preaching on teen-age crimes, that all of them would quit after awhile? If we cease to preach on whiskey, that everybody would quit drinking whiskey or on divisions in the church that all would be united. I don't believe that would exist and neither do you.

Now, who are we to say that we cannot speak out in matters of this kind when religion has been made a mockery of, and the morals of the people are as low as they can be, and yet we say that we are to speak out against the whiskey drinkers and the other sins. We live in a country and we live in a state, and we live in a beautiful city where we can worship God without fear of outside molestation. My plea tonight is will you listen carefully, my plea tonight is, if you feel, white or colored, that you have been mistreated, turn the other cheek as Jesus said in Matt. 5, and it will work out in the day of judgment. If you, white or colored, believe that you have been imposed on, go the second mile, as Jesus says in Matt. 5, and it will work out. When you get ready to pray, don't go to the streets and look for the television cameras that are grinding, but instead, go to the house of worship. Don't go to the street to do your worshiping where they are shouting and lying in the streets, and men and women are holding hands and where they urinate in the streets and commit fornication in the streets and vulgarity is committed in the street, but, instead, go to the house of worship and serve God there. Preachers, start preaching the plan of salvation, Christians, let's teach high ideals. Let's have a good influence on everybody. And you people in the demonstrations, now let's quit this sex activity that

everybody knows about. Preachers, turn your collars back like they are supposed to be. Cut off the titles that belong to God. Teach obedience to parents and civil authorities and to God.

One hundred eighty people are dying approximately every minute of the day and night, and we must move. Our march is not a march from Selma, even Harry Truman said this march is "silly", but our march is for the Master. We are following the Master and the example of the man that gave us the perfect way. Martin Luther King is not the perfect leader. While those negroes and white folks were sitting under the tent or lying under the tent with blistered feet and sunburned faces, he was in his house trailer and it was warm. But the Leader we have will absolutely show us the right way. Isn't this what the Church really is to be, isn't this what the world is seeking for tonight, **a real restoration of simple New Testament Christianity?** I beg you, let's keep peace in Montgomery. Let's love our fellow man. Let's don't impose on people who do not want our company. **Let's don't go to the march tomorrow.** Let's stay at home. Let's don't look at the march. Let's don't encourage the march, but instead **let's speak out against the march** and pray to God that our words will be the right ones during these trying times.

May God bless you. Worship with us Sunday at the Cleveland Avenue Church of Christ.