

## **Introduction**

The chapters in this work were adapted from sermons preached at the Bendavis, Missouri Church of Christ from January to April 2002. The original sermons were inspired by a book entitled, "Basic Truths of the Christian Faith" written by Herbert L. Willett (1864-1944) and published in 1903 by the Christian Century Company, Chicago, Illinois.

On September 10, 2001 I flew from Springfield, Missouri to Chicago, Illinois and then on to Savannah, Georgia. My purpose for traveling was to gather information, as part of my job at Drury University, about a program we wanted to implement at our institution. The significance of the date that I flew is obvious to all. The next day, September 11, 2001 besides being my birthday is also infamous because of the terrorist attacks upon our nation.

As a result of the incidents of September 11 all air travel was suspended. I was fortunate to complete my original mission of gathering information and very fortunate to be able to rent a car for my return home. On the morning of September 14th I began the long drive home.

As I drove through Chattanooga, Tennessee I decided that I needed a break from the road. As anyone who knows me will attest, one of my favorite pastimes is finding used bookstores and seeing what books are available. In downtown Chattanooga I found a used bookstore and went in. Among the many musty volumes I found a book I had never heard of before, Basic Truths of the Christian Faith. In light of the tragic events that had so recently took place I was immediately struck with the appropriateness of the message of the book. I bought the book and continued on my long trip home.

After I got home and began reading the book I was impressed with the timeliness of the contents. The more I read, the more I felt that I should adapt these chapters into sermons and preach them. Since September 11th many people have turned to God for comfort and hope. Even the leaders of our country have been emboldened to stand up for their faith. I was impressed with the sight of United States Senators and Representatives standing on the steps of the Capitol building and singing "God Bless America".

As I pondered these things I also thought about what the apologists for Islamic religion were saying. Things like "Islam is a religion of peace" and "We all serve the same God". It was then that I decided that it was time for Christians to stand up and be counted. For too long Christians have been willing to remain silent lest people start thinking we were too religious. We have the greatest message in the world! In light of the fact that many people are turning to God in these days I felt that the time was right to preach a series of sermons patterned after the subjects in brother Willett's book. With the intense media propaganda telling Americans that we must be tolerant of other faiths and the ever present danger of neglecting our own children religiously I feel that these subjects are extremely important.

America was founded as a Christian nation. The very documents of our government testify of the Founding Fathers' belief in God. Because of the influx of immigrants to our country and the prevailing attitude of political correctness that has existed in America, many people are unaware of the basic truths of the Christian faith. My purpose in these essays is not to provoke people of other faiths, but rather to promote the faith of those who founded this great nation. I know there are those who will call me intolerant because of the things written in these essays. I will admit to being as intolerant

as Jesus who said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except by Me". It is my prayer that these essays will help point someone to Christ and to the salvation that is found only in Him.

Concerning brother H.L. Willett I can say that he was a very influential leader among the Disciples of Christ during the latter part of the 19th Century and until nearly the middle of the 20th Century. Brother Willett was also very controversial in his time. He was identified with the liberal segment of the church and held several opinions that very likely we would not agree with. In a time when many ministers in the church were not well educated, brother Willett earned a Ph.D. He was very studious and wrote for several influential journals among the churches. He also was a firm believer in higher criticism of the scriptures, an inevitable trait considering he earned his doctorate at the University of Chicago which was a center of higher criticism during the late 19th Century.

As a firm believer in the inspiration and authority of the scriptures I cannot agree with some of the conclusions brother Willett came to in his book. On the other hand, I believe that the subjects within his book formed a concise template of what every Christian should know and understand about the Faith. My procedure was to follow as closely as possible the thoughts and points that brother Willett made in his book, then I added pertinent scriptures to facilitate the sermon delivery. Once the sermons were delivered I sat down and transcribed them to match as closely as possible the actual delivery, while adding any scriptures or thoughts that arose.

It has been almost 100 years since brother Willett wrote the little volume that is the inspiration for these essays. The world today is a vastly different one from 1903. The

Wright brothers flew their first airplane in 1903, today we can travel into space. Radio and television were unknown in 1903, today we not only have these conveniences but also cell phones, computers, and the Internet. However, the basic truths of the Christian faith are unchanged. They are the same today as they were in 1903 or the year 33. My hope and prayer is that these thoughts will have an impact on good and honest hearts and point the way to Jesus.