

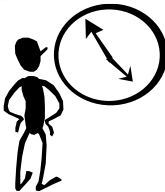
THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.

Worship 10:00 a.m.

Every other Sunday night:

Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

I Have Fought a Good Fight

By J. D. Tant (1861-1941)

Sixty years have come and gone. I hope and pray that long after I cross the great divide, hundreds will read my sermons, be taught the way of life, and take up their cross and follow Jesus. I am leaving this bit of history that others may know that life was no flowery bed for me but fraught with many hardships all along the way. If Paul could tell his experiences and troubles for the benefit of those who would live after him, I see no reason why my readers should not know something of my past life that it may encourage the poor boy or girl who seeks a higher plane in life, to know that all difficulties can be overcome by the one who will not give up the fight.

I was born in Paulding County, Georgia, in 1861. I was only eight days old when my father started to the war and was four years old when he returned, and I was taught that he was my father and that I must respect him. Our home was on the New Hope Church battleground. After the battle, nothing was left on the farm but some oak trees. My dear mother and oldest brother walked twenty-two miles to where they heard of a wheat field outside of the army's march and pulled up two bushels of wheat, beat it out on a rail the next day, brought it home and for three months we lived under an oak tree, with nothing to eat except boiled wheat and salted water put in it. The salt was obtained by mother's digging up the ground where the smokehouse had stood and boiling the dirt to get the salt from it.

At the age of fourteen, I joined the Methodist church. At fifteen years of age, with my parents, I moved from Georgia to Texas. About this time I became interested in an education, and fortunately, we located near a high school, but unfortunately, I had only one dollar to supply all my earthly needs. I invested that in three yards of cloth, from which my

mother made me a pair of pants. I did not have a single school book. My teacher agreed that he would leave one window unfastened each night and for me to come and get all books containing my lessons for the next day, learn my lessons, and put the books back the next morning before school.

About this time I thought I was up on vocal music and began to teach in different communities. I stood high with the Methodist and passed my examination for a preacher at nineteen. I then went to southwest Texas, and was teaching music, and breaking wild horses to ride, for a living, and preaching Methodist doctrine to help the people. About this time I heard old Brother W.H.D. Carrington preach the gospel, and I was shaken into a congregation of Christians on my Methodist baptism when twenty-one years of age. After trying to preach the gospel, and ease my conscience for three years on Methodist baptism, I made up my mind by studying the Bible that the Lord knew nothing of sect baptism. I then got on a Texas pony and rode one hundred and twenty-seven miles and had John Durst to baptize me into Christ.

On one occasion I started out afoot to my appointment to preach, fifty-five miles away. No brother would loan me a horse, yet a Baptist woman let me ride her saddle horse. Six miles before reaching my appointment I had to swim a creek and got wet all over. I wrung out my clothes but my shoes were new, and with all the work I could do, I could not get them on while wet. So I went on to the church house and found it crowded. I walked down the aisle with one shoe on and the other in my hand, set it on the pulpit, and preached the gospel.

Many times I have ridden forty miles during the night, have laid down and slept on the ground two or three hours, and gotten up and gone on to my appointment. I have gone more times than one without dinner and supper to reach my appointment to preach.

The church of Christ at Holland told me to go out and preach and they would guarantee me \$50 per month, provided the people would give it to me. Some subscribed liberally. One old brother, worth \$80,000 promised \$10 to the work and never did pay it. Another brother worth \$40,000 promised \$10 and paid it. One sister worth \$600,000 was glad I was in the work, was anxious to help, but on account of a large herd of cattle she had bought was unable to pay anything.

It was J.D. Tant who held the first meeting at Killeen, Bell County, Texas, bought candles to light the house, stayed at a third-class hotel, and bought my horse feed at a wagon yard from Wednesday till Sunday before a single member out of the five families who lived there invited me to their homes. Yet I formed a congregation of eleven members and put them to work. Killeen now has a good house and two hundred members, yet I do not suppose they want me to preach the gospel there. I labored five months under Holland at \$50 per month as they had promised. They then called me in and heard my report. I had baptized fifty-three and done much good, but they feared they would have a drought. They were pleased with my work but did not feel able to support

me longer for the work. They paid me \$96 of the \$250 they owed me, and let me go. I guess they will pay me at the judgment day.

During September 1886, I got up my first debate. I did not have sense enough to get up the proposition so I rode one hundred and forty miles horseback to get McGary and Hansbrough to help me word propositions for debate. Since then I have had experience in debating in seventeen states with thirteen denominations. I have held over two hundred debates and think I know more about debating than I did then.

It was during the year 1886 that I attended the Austin state meeting where the church of Christ divided when a small faction pulled off and organized a human society and introduced instrumental music in worship. I did not go there to attend the meeting but to hunt for a wife. I found the girl I wanted and told her my business. Four years later we were married. She became the mother of two children. Both of them are now dead. She was called home in 1894. A grander woman for a preacher's wife never lived. I count on seeing her with the redeemed in the city of our God.

In 1896, I married Miss Nannie Yater, who now stands by my side and helps me fight the battles of life. She is the mother of six children.

I write this bit of history only for the benefit of the young who may come after me so they will not think a preacher's life is all flowers and sunshine. If I had to live life again I know of but few changes I would make. I learned forty years ago that to become a Christian, a man must hear Christ ([Matthew 7:24](#)); have faith in him ([John 20:30-31](#)); repent of his sins ([Luke 24:47](#)); confess Christ ([Matthew 20:32](#)); and be baptized for the remission of sins ([Acts 2:38](#)). I have never had occasion to change but still preach it that way today.

As I come nearer the river's brink, I am fighting harder and trying to do more, that God may welcome me, than ever before. Only a few more miles and I shall rejoice to see the other side. If God accepts me, all will be well with me.

"J.D. Tant died at 4:30 o'clock, Sunday afternoon, June 1, 1941. He was buried in the Cleburne Memorial Cemetery, Cleburne, TX. A simple stone marks the spot, bearing the legend: "Jefferson Davis Tant, 1861-1941, "I have fought a good fight." (From the book of J. D. Tant's sermons, *The Gospel X-Ray*, published by the Firm Foundation in 1933.)" [*Guardian of Truth*, November 20, 1986].

The biography of my grandfather, titled *J. D. Tant, Texas Preacher*, was written by my father, Yater Tant about 1958, and is still in print, and I have been told it has sold more copies than the biography of any other gospel preacher. And my grandmother's biography, *Nannie Yater Tant*, is also still in print. They are fascinating stories. [Jefferson David Tant]

Dentists and the Gospel Message

By Alan Smith

"Open wider," requested the dentist, as he began his examination of the patient.

"Oh, no!" he said. "You've got the biggest cavity I've ever seen -- the biggest cavity I've ever seen."

"OK Doc!" replied the patient. "I'm scared enough without you saying something like that twice."

"I didn't!" said the dentist. "That was the echo."

I did something this past week that I never look forward to doing – I went to the dentist. Fortunately, it wasn't anything traumatic, just a routine cleaning of the teeth. But it reminded me of something I have long believed – that going to the dentist relates to what we're doing as a church (and specifically, what I'm doing as a preacher). Allow me to explain.

Like many people, I don't enjoy going to the dentist and I tend to put it off a lot longer than I ought to. It's not primarily because of the cost (although that's certainly a factor). And while some people are afraid to go to the dentist, fearing possible pain, that's never been a problem for me. I don't mind the sound of the drill, or the poking and the prodding in my mouth. No, the reason I dread going to the dentist has to do with guilt.

You see, I don't floss as often as I ought to. I know it's important, but I have always found flossing to be a difficult habit for me to keep up. And whenever I go to the dentist, I know what he's going to say – "You're not flossing. Don't you know how important flossing is? You need to floss!" And I want to say (but don't), "Yes, I know. I'm guilty! I knew I was guilty before I walked in here. I don't need you telling what a terrible person I am!"

I understand the position the dentist is in. He wants what is best for my health. If I'm doing something that is not beneficial to my teeth, he has a responsibility to tell me. I don't want him to stop caring about me. But because of my guilt, I don't want to hear it, so my response is to simply avoid going to see him.

I wonder how many people there are who approach the church in the same way. They know they're not living right and when they go to worship, they know what they're going to hear from the preacher -- "You're not living right. You need to change your life! This is the way you ought to live!" Their response is to say (or to think), "Yes, I know. I'm guilty! I knew I was guilty before I walked in here. I don't need you telling what a terrible person I am!"

I'm in a situation similar to that of my dentist. I have a responsibility to talk about sin because I care about the spiritual well-being of others. We can't ignore sin just because talking about it makes people uncomfortable. But if people already feel a

burden of guilt and they don't want to hear about it, they simply stop coming to worship.

As I was considering the awkward position my dentist was in ("Do I say something and make my patient feel more guilty or not say something and show that I don't care?"), his dental assistant found the perfect words. She said to me, "As you know, you need to floss more. I understand, I have a hard time with it myself."

Suddenly, I felt at ease. Here was someone who cared enough to tell me what I needed to hear, but who wasn't looking down at me, criticizing me, and "beating me up." Instead, we were on the same level, facing the same problem together. All it took was her saying, "I understand what you're going through. I struggle with that, too."

What a difference it would make if we could all simply acknowledge to one another, "You're not doing what's right, but I understand because I struggle, too." What a difference it would make if the world could see us, not as a bunch of people looking down on them, criticizing them and "beating them up," but as a group of people who share in their struggles and who truly desire to help one another to live holier lives.

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness..." (Galatians 6:1).

(And in case you're wondering, yes, I did floss this morning!)

Have a great day!

The Great Speckled Bird

"Mine heritage is unto Me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her..." (Jer. 12:9)

By Guy Smith

What a beautiful thought I am thinking Concerning a great speckled bird;
Remember her name is recorded On the pages of God's Holy Word.

All the other birds are flocking 'round her, And she is despised by the squad;
But the great speckled bird in the Bible Is one with the great church of God.

There are those who'd lower her standards; They watch every move that she makes.
They long to find fault with her teachings, But really they find no mistakes.

She is spreading her wings for a journey; She's going to leave by and by.
When the trumpet shall sound in the morning, She'll rise and go up in the sky.

I am glad I have learned of her meekness; I am proud that my name is on her book,
For I want to be one never fearing On the face of my Savior to look.

When He cometh descending from heaven On the cloud as He writes in His Word,
I'll be joyfully carried to meet Him On the wings of that great speckled bird.