

# The Berea Baptist Banner

*"Then hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" Ps. 60:1*

## The Church's Special Responsibilities and Privileges

By Timothy J. Hille  
of Ashland, Illinois

**Matthew 18:17-20**

It should be the desire of every member of Christ's body that personal offences end at the personal level, and are scripturally resolved without being brought before the church. The purpose of offences, from the sinful standpoint, is to interfere with the mission of Christ and the commission of Christ's kind of



church: "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18:11). Sad, would it not be, if ever our personal behavior proved an interference to the saving work of our blessed and wonderful Lord, Savior, and Head? I do not mean

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## The Lazy, the Deceitful, the Angry, and the Fools

By Paul Stepp  
of Indore, West Virginia

"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to



sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man." (Prov. 24:30-34).

There are at least four prominent types of men that are condemned in the Book of Proverbs. Those four types of men I want to speak of are the Lazy, the Deceitful, the Angry,

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## True Deaconship

By Roger Reed  
of Mansfield, Ohio

Over the years, I have traveled many miles and heard and preached many sermons. I have met many of my fellow Brothers and Sisters in the Lord and observed many things pertaining to church decorum and church attitudes. But one of the most disturbing to me is the role of deacon and how the pastor is treated by them.



There are two things that I would like to touch upon in this article—one concerning the deacon's duties and responsibilities and one on the treatment of the pastor.

The first mention of the duties and responsibilities of deaconship

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## Was James Ignorant? Or Thoughts On Understanding The Epistle Of James

By Curtis Pugh  
of Poteau, Oklahoma

There is disagreement, and has been for centuries, as to whom James wrote his epistle. This disagreement is not mere impractical academics, but affects the meanings of various statements he wrote and is therefore important to us. Understanding this part of the context of the book should guide our understanding of it. So we furnish this brief consideration of the time and circumstances of James' epistle hoping that it might be a help to the reader in understanding The Epistle of James.

That James wrote early in



Christian history is universally agreed upon, probably as early as A.D. 45, making his letter the earliest written of all New Testament Books. As best we can date things, Saul (Paul) had been fetched by Barnabas from Tarsus in A.D. 46 – the year after James wrote – and they had traveled to Antioch in Syria. We know where they were the next year for the Scripture is clear: "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had

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The purpose of the *Berea Baptist Banner* is as follows:

1. To honor God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To preach the gospel to lost sinners.
3. To spread the whole counsel of God's Word.
4. To encourage God's preachers and to strength-en His churches in the most holy faith.
5. To motivate God's children to a closer fellow-ship around His Word.
6. To inform people of world events in light of Bible prophecy.
7. To condemn and expose error wherever it may rear its ugly head.
8. To stimulate Christian growth in grace.
9. To make the Devil and his demons as mad as possible.

## Church's Special

(Continued from page 1) ♦

to intimate that we can keep the Lord from saving any one whom He seeks to save. But I do mean to state emphatically and plainly that we can be found opposed to Christ and His cross in our behavior, our attitude, and our speech (Matt. 17:21-23).

Now, when we speak of the church, we mean what the Bible means. We see in our text that the church has the responsibility of exercising church discipline upon its members – those who are called "brethren" – who will not repent of personal offences against other members. This can only be understood of a local, visible congregation, which congregates or assembles at a specified place and time for the purpose of worshipping God and carrying out the commandments of Christ. This is the only kind of church that we find mentioned or described in the Scriptures. The notion that there is any other kind is without scriptural warrant or basis.

We have certain scriptural responsibilities and privileges granted us as a church of the living God, like and descended from the first church which Jesus personally instituted and established during His personal earthly ministry, comprised initially of the persons whom John the Baptist had made ready for the Lord. The first responsibility which we find mentioned in our text is that of dealing with sin in the way which our Master and Head has prescribed. We will not continue as a church of the living God long in this world without having to deal with sin in our members. Each of us personally has to deal with sin in the members of our mortal bodies (Col. 3:5-11). It is

no surprise, then, that the church body will have to deal with sin in its members, seeing that the church body is comprised of individual members who are having daily to each deal with sin. The desire of each of us in dealing with sin should be that our sin not have to be dealt with by the church. We should be zealous and repent without the need for brotherly or church rebuke. The watchfulness which we are to exercise over ourselves should call to our attention that we have grieved the Holy Spirit of God, and at once send us to mourning the loss of the smile of our indwelling Companion and Helper, who is so like Christ to us that He was sent by Christ to occupy Christ's place with us all along our pilgrim journey here below, until Christ comes for us Himself to receive us to Himself. That we should offend that gracious divine Person who has worked in our spirits to produce saving faith which has made us right with our great and gracious God; who is Himself the divine pledge of eternal triumphs and treasures to come; who has sealed us to the day of redemption; and who dwells with us and is in us, and takes up our heart cries to God as His own personal, unutterable groanings; to grieve Him should immediately cause us heart-rendings of godly sorrow which produce repentance!

Then, there is also the motive that ought to move our hearts to almost the same degree, that we have offended a brother (for first loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and understanding, we ought next to love our neighbor as our self). To cause our brother or sister to stumble – to be the cause by our own action or inaction, our own selfishness, our own carelessness, our own sinfulness,

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of the injury of one who is a member of our own selves – **“for we are members one of another”** (Eph. 4:25), saith the Word of God – should cause us at once to mourn our own personal folly, and at once seek to be forgiven, and to again walk in the right way as we ought. Would you wound your own eye for spite? Would you injure your own hand, or arm or foot, for sporting fun's sake? You would be accounted a fool – yea, more than a fool, a mad man – by all right-thinking people. Oh, let us labor to heed that wonderfully wise admonition of Scripture: I John 2:1-3.

All responsibility is ultimately personal responsibility. Sin in the church – sin committed by members of the church – is the personal responsibility of the one who committed the sin, and the one who was sinned against. May we labor so that any sin which we do commit ends there, between me, the offender, and my brother or sister whom I have offended. And, I say, such that it is committed no more, and the commission of it is repented of, confessed, forsaken, and forgiven. Should the sin not end there, it will likely become the responsibility of all the members of the church – which is a grievous thing, because then all are exposed to the sin, and sin is a deadly cancer which grows and enlarges itself by leaps and bounds, and is greatly contagious! **“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”** (I Cor. 5:6)? Sin is mightier than we. It slew us in our infancy – yea, it slew us in our conception – **“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”** (Ps. 51:5) – and it will make us the downfall of

every other person with whom we have contact if we do not slay it by the power of Jesus' cross! Oh, what carefulness must be exercised, what humility, what Christ-like-mindedness, when we, as a body of Christ, are required to take on the responsibility of dealing with sin in our members! Sin is a misshapen thing, and it misshapes all else. Remember what trouble was caused Israel of old when Achan trespassed in the accursed thing. **“Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day”** (Joshua 7:25), was the divinely recorded condemnation upon Achan and his house. Remember what trouble sin wrought in the church at Corinth, such that they behaved exactly the opposite as they should have. They should have been in mourning, but they were puffed up with pride (I Cor. 5:1-2). Sin is no cause for celebration. It is worthy only of a funeral, and so let us give it one whenever it rears its ugly head. Let it be mourned and mortified, for only such may it be rightly dealt with by us.

Let us remind ourselves at this point as to the aim of our dealing with sin personally and in the church. **“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother”** (Matt. 18:15). The object is to gain our brother, not to lose him. I am reminded of the failure of King Saul, when he sinned in failing to obey the commandment of the Lord in utterly destroying the Amalekites, that avowed and bitter enemy of God and God's people, against whom God had sworn eternal warfare (whom do you think will win in that war, God or Amalek?). Saul spared Agag, the king of Amalek. He showed more affinity

## Little Hills By Nathaniel Hille of Plant City, Florida



### The New Birth #13 Evidences of Having Been Born Again—Part 6

**“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and everyone that loveth him that begot loveth him also that is begotten of him”** (I John 5:1). In addition to believing that Jesus is the Christ, those who are born of God will love the brethren—those who are also born of God. The Bible speaks of a natural affection that we have for our spouses, children, friends (II Tim. 3:3). But natural affection is not that love which evidences one is saved. The word **“loveth”** in our text is ‘agapo.’ It is that self-sacrificing love that caused Jesus to leave His Father's throne and go to Calvary to die for wretches

like me.

The Lord Jesus stated: **“This is my commandment, that ye love one another, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU”** (John 15:12) (emp. NH). Loving those who are born of God AS JESUS LOVED ME is the love that evidences that I am saved. The love that Jesus Christ has for those whom He has born again is a super-natural love. His love for His people **“passeth knowledge”** (Eph. 3:19); forgives and forgets sin (Luke 23:34); loved me in Gethsemane while in agony (Luke 22:44); love led Him to Calvary (John 3:16). We must ask ourselves: “Do I have this love for my brothers and sisters-in-Christ; or do I have mere natural affection because they are friends and family?”

to an enemy than to God. Samuel the prophet called for a sword, and **“hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal”** (I Sam. 15:33). Samuel did not hack King Saul to bits, though he did mourn because of his sin. We are not to hack one who is a brother to bits; but we ought to take the sword to any and all sin. I say again, let us remember our aim, which is the destruction of our enemy, sin, and not the destruction of our brother.

What is our responsibility as a church toward sin in one who is called a brother? Jesus states, **“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church ...”** The church is to first listen, and then be heard; and if she is to be heard, she therefore she must

speak. She must – we must, as a unified body – (1) speak to the sinning, erring brother; and (2) speak against his sinning. The object in mind is the recovery of our brother. What pleadings, beseechings, earnest exhortations, and admonitions are called for! What supplications, intercessions, and crying before the throne of grace must go before, around, and behind all, we cannot measure! With lowliness and meekness did Christ come to recover us from the pit of sin; and with such lowliness and meekness must we seek to recover a brother or sister who has been overtaken in a fault. **“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the**

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**spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted**" (Gal. 6:1). We must not say, "Oh, I am not spiritual enough for this." A brother is at stake! We must be spiritual! We must put on the armor of light, for our own brother is being assaulted by the forces of spiritual darkness and wickedness. They would have him if they could; and if they cannot have him, they would ruin him if they might; and failing that, they would scar his conscience. Satan desired to have Simon Peter, to sift him as wheat: and as yet, **"your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"** (I Pet. 5:8). Israel was compelled to love the brethren by not permitting sin to go unchecked (Lev. 19:17). How much more are we, members of Christ's body, compelled to love one another, being commanded both by a new commandment as well as by a living example to love one another and lay down our lives for the brethren! How much more ought we to take a watch care over ourselves personally and one another collectively, that we do not allow that wicked leaven of malice, hypocrisy, envy, idolatry, and lying deceit to corrupt our membership!

What means, this, then, when one who was called a brother or sister must be unto us **"as an heathen man and a publican?"** We would not hold concourse or close fellowship with **"an heathen man and a publican."** We would not account it fitting of our calling, or worthy of that gospel by which we have been saved and are kept safe, to have fellowship with their unfruitful works and ways. So, that is what it means. We are not to carry on

friendly fellowship with them in the same manner as when sin had not made inroads by way of their conduct into our midst. The Jews would not countenance the ill-gotten gains of a publican. They would not enter the house of a person of an heathen nation (refer to Acts 10:28). We are told that while one whose name was numbered among the members of the church refuses to repent, we are not so much as to eat with them (I Cor. 5:11). Will their feelings be hurt? Very likely. Will they be destroyed by our withholding fellowship from them? Not at all, but sin may be. In the world, "love" is said to entail never disagreeing with someone's behavior; but not so in the Word of God. **"Can two walk together, except they be agreed"** (Amos 3:3)? The church and the erring member are no longer walking the same way; and either we will walk with the erring member, or we will walk with God. I can love a person whose behavior is foolishly and recklessly dangerous; but I do not have to expose myself to their folly and recklessness on account of love. I can warn, set a right example, pray and intercede; but that does not require me to ride along the road of disaster in the passenger seat with them while they drive farther and farther from God's will.

We find that the next special privilege that is granted the church of the living God while she "occupies until He comes" is that of obtaining answers to united prayers. **"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven"** (Matt. 18:19). I feel that this is one of the more neglected of divine grants given to the Lord's kind of a church in this

dispensation. What a peculiar and precious privilege, that the request of even the smallest of Christ's congregations, be it offered in holy and divinely-effected unity, is guaranteed fulfillment! In my carnal mind, I find it unbelievable; but in my renewed mind I rejoice and am moved to leaping for joy that such a promise is given by our wonderful Savior and Head, who never exaggerates or lies, not even for effect, but is always altogether truthful and faithful. Oh, church, have you grasped this promise? You have no greater to take hold upon during your earthly hour of service to your Lord and Master. All requests granted, when requested in unity. We hear many speak of the blessing of unity, but unity in what, we ask? Here Jesus exhorts to unity in praying and beseeching God for the things needed and desired in His service. How often, when confronted with the responsibility of dealing with sin, as was previously noted, have we gone hand-in-hand, heart-with-heart, **"boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"** (Heb. 4:16)? How often, if an erring brother was restored, have we joined in united giving of thanks to God for the mercy given and the longsuffering shown?

I say again that this is a special privilege granted peculiarly to the Lord's churches. This gracious grant of divine mercy is a privilege of every congregation of the Lord, should they exercise it (and they should). We find the first church doing so on at least two occasions, once for divine aid in preaching the gospel; and once for divine deliverance from persecution (Acts 4:23-33; 12:1-17). It is divine aid and deliverance which we need at every hour and in every circumstance. Having, therefore,

this divine grant of exceeding gracious liberty, let us exercise it with believing hearts.

Notice that this privilege requires agreement. What sort of agreement do you suppose is required? I have heard many in churches state that so long as they agree and the church decides on something, that is all the agreement that is required to do anything they desire. I do not think so. I think that these who **"agree on earth,"** as Jesus says, must not violate the principle which governed everything He ever said or did during His own earthly ministry, which was, **"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"** (Matt. 6:10). Is it not the principle of all prayer, **"that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him"** (I John 5:14-15). These two (or more, as the case may be, if the church has more than two members) who agree are first of all in agreement with God. That was the problem with the previously considered erring brother – he was walking contrary to God, God's Word, and God's will. When the church members are united in obedience to God's will, then may they ask God what they will and their request shall be granted.

Let me offer a simple illustration. Suppose all of the members of a church are united in placing video gaming machines in the annex of the church facility. They propose that the proceeds will all go to support some worthy cause, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and assisting the poor. They are united, they "pray," and then they proceed to acquire and install the machines and

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# The Noted Pastor



By Todd  
Bryant  
of  
Northport,  
Alabama



## Why Can You Not Pay Attention in Worship?

**“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe”** (I Thess. 2:13).

It is a burden for every pastor that I know. People show up for a church service dressed appropriately and talking the talk, so to speak. Service begins and somebody is not singing. They are talking. Maybe it is talking to a kid or to a spouse or to a friend – who knows? But nonetheless, the worship of God is being put aside for idle chatter.

Then, the singing is done. The pastor steps into the pulpit to preach the sermon he has studied for all week while praying that God would enable him to reach the flock. His hope for the past several days is that hearts and minds would be changed by this sermon. Hours have gone into the study and preparation. Words (English, Greek, Hebrew – all) defined...phrases laboriously studied...notes became an outline. He rose up early Sunday morning while everyone was still asleep to restudy his outline in prayer that

God would use him that day. He glances out to his flock that he cares for so deeply – the flock he has studied to feed. More idle chatter...more talking...people engaged in conversation that clearly has nothing to do with God or worship. Why does this happen?

If you struggle to listen to a pastor exposit God's Word for you, something is wrong. First things first, if you are an adult, you should be able to show enough respect for God and the man He has called to lead you by listening to what he has to say. It is simply disrespectful to ignore a man that has put in so much effort the past week – for you and the good of your soul. And if the pastor is worth his pay, he has put in far more effort than you will ever realize in this life. None of us would appreciate such an attitude on a personal level. Yet, many believers struggle with it. We must learn to respect those God has placed over us to lead us. **“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you”** (Heb. 13:17).

I do not begin to have all the answers as to why people get up, bathe and drive to church only to sit there on their cell phone and talk with their neighbor. There is no common sense in that. And furthermore, it shows that we (as citizens of a free country) are completely spoiled. There are believers today in other parts of the world putting their lives on the line every time they assemble. Can we not at least respect them?

But honestly, respect is not nearly the whole issue. There is a root cause as to why you might

think it is OK to “visit” during the services rather than pay attention to the Word of God as it is preached – to you. Maybe you are not saved. I guess that is quite a bomb to drop. But in our text verse above, Paul differentiates the salvation of the believers in Thessalonica as it compared to those that did not regard the Word of God as worthy to hear. If you do not care about the preaching of God's Word and you feel talking to your neighbor (and thereby hindering their listening) is more to be preferred than listening attentively, that is a great cause for concern. Something is gravely off and it may be a false profession on your part.

That said, some true believers certainly waver from time to time in their walk with Christ. The Word of God is often laid aside for other secular things in life. Perhaps athletics, or some hobby, or children or even work has so drawn your attention that it's difficult to focus on God. Let us all remember that we must **“not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”** (Matt. 6:19-20). Jesus followed this instruction up with this declaration, **“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”** (Matt. 6:21). If your heart just is not in church worship, your treasure is not either. Do not fool yourself. Your priorities are off. Take note, **“for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart”** (I Sam. 16:7). God Himself knows what is going on even if you are

able to fool those around you.

Do not pass up the opportunity to listen to God's Word preached. Do not flippantly sit in worship visiting with your neighbor while the pastor shares his hours of labor in God's Word with you. I have sat in the living room of a dying man with tears flowing down his face as he admitted how he had had far less regard than he should have for God's Word and the preaching of it. If you are a child of God, you will face the same death with the same regrets as that man if you treat the worship service flippantly. We are blessed (for now) to be free in America, to sit in a congregation that preaches God's Word (if your church does not, you need to find a new church). You will certainly look back and wish you had listened if you do not now. Remember, you, as a church body, hired a man to care for your souls. Allow him to do the job you called him to do. You can only do this when you approach the preaching of God's Word attentively and prayerfully.



## A SERMON QUERY

**“Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him”** (II Chron. 18:6)?

An article or sermon comparing people from every walk of life that were saved during the ministry of Christ compared to people of our day and time.

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An article comparing the churches of the early apostolic age with modern day assemblies.

Editor's Note: In years past many of the old Baptist papers would publish a sermon query in the pages of their paper. These were inquiries of interest in an idea for an article on the described topic.

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invite folks to play so as to fund the worthy causes mentioned. All are satisfied. All, except God, I daresay. Unity is not the only requirement. The world is, and will be, united against God in sin and sinning; but they shall not prosper, their unity notwithstanding. The Lord's kind of a church may not do whatever the members want, and assume they have God's approval. Merely because they mouthed a prayer and did what they wanted does not mean that God approved or helped. God allowed a Jezebel to hold sway in the church at Thyatira for a while; but not for long, or forever (Rev. 2:18-23, 29).

**"That if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask,"** both in the case before mentioned, and in any other thing: whether it be for themselves or others; to assist them in the ministry of the word, and give success to it, for the conversion of sinners; and in the performance of any miracle, for the confirmation of the Gospel; in the administration of ordinances, for the comfort of saints; and in laying on of censures, for the reclaiming of backsliders; or be it what it will that may be done, consistent with the glory of God, the purposes of his mind, and the declarations of his will, and the good of men, provided they agree in their requests; though they are here on earth, and at such a distance from heaven, from whence their help and assistance come:

**'it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven;'** with whom nothing is impossible; and who, as he regards the effectual fervent prayer of any righteous man, so more, of two agreed

together in anyone thing; and still more, of a church and community of saints in their united requests: a great encouragement this to social prayer, though ever so few are engaged in it." (Gill, John.)

Oh, church, do not neglect your privilege, for herein lies your power. Heaven and earth may be moved by a single saint who prays believingly; how much more so when you, His espoused and beloved bride, unite in lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting, calling upon Him to fulfill His precious promises! Let all be done with and by prayer, or else all will be done in vain.

The key to this privilege of answered prayer, and the foundation upon which it rests, is the final privilege which we notice: **"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"** (Matt. 18:20). The sweetest privilege of all that is afforded the Lord's churches is His peculiar presence in their midst. It is on account of this that they are, truly, **"the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"** (I Tim. 3:15). Absent this privilege, the church of the living God would be no different than the idolatrous temples of pagan deities. Thanks be to God there is a difference, a divinely caused and effected difference, grounded upon divine promises, which cannot fail! That God should visit man to save Him were wonderful beyond imagination; but that He should abide with men, and make His habitation with them, through His Spirit, is wonder beyond wonderment! It is the highest privilege this side of Heaven, after the divine grant of soul-salvation, to be granted a place in the house of God, and to worship God therein and thereby (Eph. 2:19-

22). I will say gladly and freely, that I have known no greater joy nor peace nor satisfaction in this life than that which I have known by way of being in the house of God. **"One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple"** (Ps. 27:4).

In the Old Testament, God's house was **"called an house of prayer for all people"** (Isa. 56:7). It was the place where God was to be approached, acknowledged, adored, and sought after. So is His house today, which is His kind of New Testament church, wheresoever she may be found upon the face of the whole earth. It is on account of Him who meets with His people in His churches that their prayers acceptance gain, and their requests are performed by the living God, who rules over all things, visible and invisible, in Heaven, in earth, and under the earth.

Let me conclude by stating that such a privilege is in itself a responsibility. Having a divine pledge to be in our midst when we meet together, how can we do anything but meet together to claim this gracious pledge! If a king, queen, president, governor, celebrity, famous athlete, or rich person of high station were to promise to meet with us, we would not think or dare to decline or miss the meeting, had we even common manners or decorum. But here is a pledge from the Prince of Peace and Life, He who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, the Lord of lords and King of kings, the Savior of the world! How can we decline to ever meet with Him (Heb. 10:23-25)?

God's grace be with you, dear

church of the living God!



## True Deaconship

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is found in Acts 6:1-7.

Then we see the qualifications for deacons in I Timothy 3:8 and Titus 3:12. We see Paul acknowledges the deacons along with the bishops (pastors) at Philippi. **"Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons"** (Phil. 1:1).

For one reason or another some deacons have forgotten (or never knew) what their true duties are. It appears, (from my observation) they think their duties are to run, and dictate to the pastor and church, and run roughshod over them both. That is NOT the duty of a deacon. I have not for the life of me figured out why or when this line of thinking came about. Maybe there needs to be a seminar to teach what is required of a deacon before they are ordained. The duties of a deacon are to serve, not rule or be head honcho.

According to the *Baptist Church Manual* by J. M. Pendleton the deacon's responsibility is as follows:

**"DEACONS: The office of deacon originated in a state of things referred to in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. It is said that **"..when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration"** (Acts 6:1). The **"Grecians"** were Jews as well as the Hebrews, but they spoke the Greek language,**

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and were probably not natives of Palestine. The members of the church at Jerusalem **“had all things in common,”** and a distribution was made out of the common stock **“as every man had need.”** This seems to have been done at first under the immediate direction of the apostles; and the intimation is that the large increase of the church interfered with an impartial distribution of supplies. The apostles saw that, if they made it their personal business to **“serve tables,”** it would greatly hinder their work in its spiritual aspects. They said: **“...It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables; wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business, but we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word”** (Acts 6:2-4).

Thus, the creation of the office of deacon recognizes the fact that the duties of pastors are preeminently spiritual; and that they should not be burdened with the secular interests of the churches. The opinion has been entertained by some that the deaconship was designed to be temporary. The argument is that the office was created because the property of the church at Jerusalem had been thrown together into a common stock. It was requisite to have officers to superintend and distribute it. Then the inference is drawn, that when the property of church-members was no longer put into a common stock, the office of deacon was virtually abolished. This reasoning is more plausible

than conclusive. In proof of this, it may be said that the members of the church at Jerusalem were not required to put their property into a common stock. It was a voluntary matter. Nor is there an intimation in the New Testament that any church, except the one at Jerusalem, ever adopted the common-stock regulation. It was, doubtless, considered by that church a prudential arrangement, which involved temporary expediency rather than permanent principle. That the church at Antioch did not follow the example of the church at Jerusalem, in relation to this matter, is evident from Acts 11:29. **“Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren who dwelt in Judea.”** This individual determination shows that the property of the church was not in “common stock.” And Paul’s direction to the church at Corinth (I Cor. 16:2) indicates that the Jerusalem policy had not been adopted. The same apostle, too, in his letter to the Philippians, and to Timothy, refers to deacons. There was, therefore, a recognition of the deaconship when there was, so far as we know, no common property regulation. And more than this, the irresistible inference from Paul’s first Epistle to Timothy is that the office of deacon is as permanent as that of pastor. No one doubts that the office of pastor is to be perpetuated to the end of time. The conclusion is that the deaconship is permanent in the churches of Christ, and that pastors and deacons are the only permanent Scriptural church officers.

The words — **“...men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit, and wisdom...”** — applied to the first deacons, indicates that

they were men of unblemished reputation, ardent piety, and good common sense. These qualifications should be sought in all who are appointed to the office of deacon. The phrase, **“full of the Holy Spirit,”** is an admirable description of fervent, elevated piety; and in the selection of deacons their spirituality must be regarded, for their duties are not exclusively secular. Their secular duties, however, should be performed in a spiritual frame of mind; and in this way **“...they purchase to themselves a good degree, and obtain great boldness in the faith.”** In visiting the pious poor, to distribute the charities of the church, deacons must not perform the duty in a formal manner, but must inquire into the spiritual as well as the worldly circumstances of the recipients of the church’s bounty. They will often witness such an exhibition of faith, patience, gratitude, and resignation as will richly repay them for their labor of love. As occasion may require, they should report to the pastor such cases as need his special attention, and thus they will become a connecting link between the pastor and the needy ones of the church.

As deacons were appointed at first **“to serve tables,”** it may be well to say, there are three tables for them to serve: 1. The table of the poor. 2. The table of the Lord. 3. The table of the pastor. The pecuniary supplies to enable them to serve these tables must be furnished by the church. The custom of taking a collection for the poor when the Lord’s Supper is administered is a good one, and worthy of universal adoption. It is suitable at the close of the solemn service to think of the pious poor, whom sickness or some other misfortune may have kept from

the sacred feast.

As some pecuniary expenditure is necessary in furnishing the table of the Lord, this should be made through the deacons; and it is eminently proper, though not indispensable, for them to wait on the communicants in the distribution of the elements.

Deacons must serve the pastor’s table. It is not for them to decide how liberally or scantily it shall be supplied. The church must make the decision, and enlarged views should be taken when it is made; for the energies of hundreds of pastors are greatly impaired by an incompetent support. The pastor’s compensation having been agreed on by the church, the deacons must see that it is raised and paid over. They may appoint one of their number acting treasurer, who shall receive and pay out funds; but it should never be forgotten that deacons are by virtue of their office the treasurers of the church. To appoint any other member to act as treasurer is not warranted by Scripture.

It is said that in some churches the trustees fix the salaries of pastors; and from time to time increase or diminish them according to their pleasure—that they employ choirs, buy organs, engage sextons, etc., etc. All this is utterly indefensible. Trustees have not a particle of right to do these things. The government of a church is with its members. The churches must say what pastors’ salaries shall be, whether music shall be led by choirs, with the aid of instruments or not, etc., etc. Nothing must be done which infringes the fundamental doctrine of church independence. It is well worthy of the consideration of the churches whether they should have trustees distinct from

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deacons. Would it not be better for every church to merge its trusteeship into its deaconship? We do not hesitate to answer this question in the affirmative. Trustees attend to some of the secular interests of the churches, and all these interests should be under the management of the deacons. They were appointed originally for this very purpose, and a full discharge of the duties of their office would supersede the necessity of trustees. Should the churches practically adopt this view, it might be necessary, in some cases, to increase the number of deacons. This could be done. The probability, too, is that the plan here recommended would secure a better deaconship in many churches; for they make it a point to select their best business men for trustees. These are the very men for deacons. But the supreme argument in favor of this arrangement is, that it is scriptural, while there is no scriptural authority for trustees as distinct officers." End Quote.

There are other church manuals that Baptist churches use such as *Baptist Church Manual* by Dr. J. E. Cobb, *The Hiscox Standard Baptist Manual* by Edward T. Hiscox, and *The Pastor's Manual* by J. R. Hobbs. These three along with *Baptist Church Manual* by J. M. Pendleton are the four I have in my library. There is more than enough information from these writers to know how "deacons" should conduct themselves. There may not be an agreement on every issue that these men have written down, but the guideline is certainly there for Baptist churches to use along with Holy Writ, always being first and foremost.

Before I continue, let me make something perfectly clear. The New Testament Baptist Church is an "autonomous" body. "Autonomous" means: government, 1. self-governing; independent; subject to its own laws only; pertaining to an autonomy, or a self-governing community. 2. having autonomy; not subject to control from outside; independent: a subsidiary that functioned as an autonomous unit.

First, the church is not governed by anyone or anything from the outside. Second, the church functions as a unit from the inside (the body), and no one person dictates to it. The membership as a whole makes the decisions. I am aware that our Baptist churches are split when it comes to men and woman voting and I will not argue that point here, only to this point I would say, it is up to the local church to decide.

I will not rehash what J. M. Pendleton has quoted here. But it should be obvious at this point that the office of a deacon should be used to serve tables and nothing else. The thought of deacons calling members of the church to persuade them on how or what to vote on is totally anti-scriptural. And it blows my mind that this is even happening and I can assure you it has. There is no excuse for other members of the church whether deacon or not, to engage in such a practice either. This would be unacceptable as well.

Now, so I do not get accused of telling churches what they can and cannot do, let me clarify something. Whether I would agree or not, if any New Testament Church would vote to have their deacons call other members of the church to persuade them on any issue or

put the deacon in the position to run roughshod over their pastors, the church then is in their right to do so, but in my opinion the Lord would not be pleased. Remember what Jesus said concerning the church, **"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"** (Matt. 18:18). I believe the church will be held accountable for bad decisions. Much more could be said concerning deacon meetings and/or men's meetings as our church does once a month, but again it is up to the local church to decide their plan of attack on what is best for them.

Second thing I would like to bring out in this article is the treatment of the pastor concerning his financial support. To me the pastor is the most neglected member in many of our churches today, and some treat him as a second-rate individual, or citizen, when I believe the Scripture is quite clear on this matter. Hebrews 13:7, 17, and 24 says, **"Remember", "Obey", and "Salute"** those who have the rule over you. Paul told Timothy, **"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine"** (I Tim. 5:17).

The main point I want to hit on here is the support of the pastor, which in many cases is grossly neglected. Edward T. Hiscox says concerning Pastoral Support, and I quote, "A pastor should be well and generously supported as to his salary, according to the ability of the church he serves. He will not expect to live up to the standard of the wealthiest; he ought not to be expected to live down to the standard of the poorest. When the church extends a call, they

name the amount they are willing to pay. Of course, it is optional with him whether to accept the call on such conditions. If he does, he cannot find fault that they give no more, unless, indeed, as is not infrequently the case, they delude him with the promise that they will increase the amount the next year; a promise often made, but not always kept. But let the stipulated sum be regularly and promptly paid, otherwise he will not be able promptly to pay his debts, and his reputation will be compromised and his character imperiled. It is a bad thing for a clergyman to get the name of not paying his debts." End quote.

Like I said, this is something that in some cases pastors are grossly neglected. Some believe the man of God that has been called by God should not receive a salary or some sort of compensation for all he is expected to do. That is very sad for those who do not believe in taking care of their pastor. It is very hard to respect a church that does not do this. Even Paul received help for his necessities from the church at Philippi, when he was in Macedonia and Rome, **"For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity"** (Phil. 4:16). And apparently, the Philippians were the only church that did so according to (v. 15). What a shame that others did not do the same.

Folks must not think too much of their pastor who do not see to his needs. Some may try to use the following two Scriptures. **"Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre"** (I Tim. 3:8). **"Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which**

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they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Titus 1:11), to show that financial help is not to be given to the preacher. But these two verses are letting the man know that if he desires the office of a bishop, it should be the desire for the furtherance of the gospel that drives him, not money. If I were doing it just for the money, I would not be driving eighty-six miles one way twice a week. And I would be looking for a lot bigger congregation than I have right now. So, your argument is not valid if you hold that view.

Jesus said **"the labourer is worthy of his hire"** (Luke 10:7). And Paul told Timothy, quoting Jesus, **"the labourer is worthy of his reward"** (1 Timothy 5:18). Reward meaning wages! Read again I Timothy 5:17.

If one would take the time, and most do not in these last days, to do a study on pastors and deacons, I believe they would come away in a entirely different spirit and understanding of this matter. God Bless!



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and the Fools.

These four sinful characteristics were not something new to Solomon's time and place. Nor are these four sinful characteristics – which we can see evident in our society today – in any way unique to our place and time. Instead, each of these (and every other) wicked behaviours of men can be traced to the sin of Adam, and to the depraved nature which every man born since, has inherited from Adam.

### LAZY

As in all the four sinful traits that I want us to notice, the "Trait of Laziness" is very prominent in our world today. Let me read you a passage from the Book of Proverbs: **"The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets. As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth. The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason"** (Prov. 26:13-16).

#### Lazy Society

Much of the world's society (and most noticeable to you and me is the society of the nation in which we live) has become a society and a system of government that rewards the lazy man and woman. Solomon said, **"The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting; but the substance of a diligent man is precious"** (Prov. 12:27). In fact, there are many places in the world, to which you can go, especially some countries of Europe and the United States, in which a man or a woman can, many times, make a better living off of the Government than they can while working an entry level job. For this reason men and women are encouraged to stay home, be lazy, and do not work. However, the Apostle Paul told the Galatians, **"But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden"** (Gal. 6:4-5). And then, later, we read these words of the Apostle Paul: **"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it**

toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing" (I Thess. 4:9-12). In his second Epistle to the Thessalonian Church, Paul wrote, **"For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all; but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread"** (II Thess. 3:7-12).

I think it is a shame that the younger generations, which are in our nation, are mostly made up of men and women who were brought up in a nearly socialist society in which "big government" is expected (not the exception, but the rule) to pay the way for those that do not work. Hear the words of Solomon again on this subject: **"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt**

thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man" (Prov. 6:6-11).

#### Lazy Christians

The laziness of our society, and the laziness of the world around us, has always been a detriment to the Christians that seek to serve the Lord. We see laziness all around us, and it has an effect on us as well. But, as the Servants of the Lord, it is required that we must work. In fact, the very idea of a "Servant" implies much work, and no laziness. The Apostle Paul told the Thessalonian church, **"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our payers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father"** (I Thess. 1:2-3). The word "work" is used often to describe our service to the Lord. Sometimes we think of "work" and we think of only deeds that we have done, or deeds that we might yet do. In other words, we see "Work" as a description of our mission or ministry. However, the word "work" is often used as a verb, and pictures, very definitely, labor and effort. James told his readers, **"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."** (James 1:25). James wanted his readers to be "doers" of the work.

The Lord Jesus Christ told His Disciples, **"..No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the**

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**kingdom of God"** (Luke 9:62). I do not know if you have ever noticed this fact, but there is a definite idea of work and labor in the picture of this **"plough."** And, there is a definite idea of laziness and faithlessness in the picture of the one that would turn away from the **"plough"** and be **"looking back."** The way is not always easy. The way of Christ can be hard and laborious, and work and effort is required on our part. He will help us, and give us strength and will ease our burden and our way as we trust in Him; but it is only His strength that can make the way passable – it is, indeed, a way of difficulty, and work, and labor, and trials.

## DECEITFUL

The second sinful trait I want to consider is that of "deceit." In the world in which we live, it has become an accepted practice to lie and deceive. In fact, it seems that one almost cannot make it in the political or corporate world without being deceitful. The wise man Solomon had something to say about the deceitful man as well. **"He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation. Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him. A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin"** (Pro. 26:24-28). In fact, earlier in the book of Proverbs, we read this: **"Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight"** (Prov.

12:22).

I think lying is something that a child learns at an early age. And, I think that in our society today, contrary to the way it was in times past, lying is allowed and even condoned amongst children. Children are raised in such a way they are not taught that it is wrong to lie; in fact, the implication is normally conveyed that deceit can work out in a beneficial way. When they have as their examples, men and women in our government, in our businesses, in our entertainment industry, and in society as a whole that openly lie, and get away with it; is it any wonder that they grow up accepting deceit as a way of life, and even as a means of advancement?

Brothers and sisters, it should not be so! The people of this land, and the people of our society and government, should not condone the sin of deceit, nor should we make it something that is an acceptable means to an end! We read in the Law of God, **"Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another"** (Lev. 19:11). This is a plain teaching of Scripture. It is just as much a command of God, as **"thou shalt not kill,"** or **"thou shalt not commit adultery."** And yet, deceit and lies are openly committed all around us, and I am afraid it even creeps into the churches of Jesus Christ.

Consider the words of the Apostle Paul which he had for the Colossians, **"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds"** (Col. 3:9). There should not be any such thing as even a "little white lie" that we allow amongst the children of God. We should all make it our daily objective, to speak the truth, and lie not. (See I Timothy 2:7). We need to be an

example to the world of deceivers amongst whom we live.

## ANGRY

The third terrible trait today is "anger." I have noticed that in all aspects of our world, the trait of anger is becoming more and more prevalent. This is something that the wise man also refers to: **"An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression"** (Prov. 29:22).

Anger, fury, malice, and wrath all express a similar emotion. These are things that are very prominent in the world today. We hear of "road rage." And we hear and read accounts of the anger that men and women demonstrate towards each other over what are very often, trivial matters. This anger often begins with words, and soon escalates to violence. Injury and sometimes death are many times the result of someone losing their temper.

The Bible does not teach that we should express anger and fury in these physical things. In fact, unless you want to reference the righteous anger of God, of which righteous men and women of God sometimes partake, you cannot find that the Bible condones anger in any way. Solomon instructed us with these words: **"A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident. He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated"** (Prov. 14:16-17). In Proverbs 21:19 Solomon tells us, **"It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman."** And then later he writes, **"Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul"** (Prov. 22:24-25). Anger is a snare to the souls of many. Many folks are bound to

their anger, and cannot escape the violent and destructive tendencies of the wrath of man.

Here, in these last two passages that we have just referred to, we find a key to our battle against anger: Do not associate with angry and furious folk! In other words, just as laziness and deceitfulness are contagious, so too, is anger contagious. The best way to abstain from it, is to not condone it, nor associate with it. Most folks with bad tempers and violent reactions do not have many friends. Do not let us be counted among those few friends for long!

Instead, we should control the angry tendencies of the flesh through the power of the Holy Spirit and the study of the Word of God. The anger and wrath of the world will certainly stir within us from time to time; but, the child of God should aspire for a godly and spiritual control in these purely physical and carnal tendencies. Paul instructed Titus in the requirements of a bishop, **"For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre"** (Titus 1:7).

## FOOLS

The last trait that I want us to notice is also often referred to in the book of Proverbs, and that is the "trait of foolishness." **"As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool. As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come. A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back. Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his**

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own conceit. He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage. The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools. As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honour to a fool. As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools. The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors. As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly. Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him" (Prov. 26:1-12).

I suppose that we could begin to speak of the foolish man, by saying this: Every one of the traits that we have previously observed, is a trait that is to be found with a foolish man. Foolish men are often times lazy, deceitful, and angry. This knowledge, by itself, ought to be enough to inspire us to abstain from these traits that we have just mentioned. Who wants to be known as a foolish man? Well, if a person desires to be known as a foolish man, then let him be known as a lazy man, or a deceitful man, or an angry man!

The World is Blind to Salvation

As we near the end of this message, let me take this opportunity to demonstrate unto you the greatest foolishness of all: demonstrated and practiced ignorance, in the things of God. **"To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to**

**see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD"** (Ps 14:1-4). It is foolish to deny God's existence. It is foolish to deny God as the Creator. It is foolish to deny God as the Saviour of men. It is foolish to deny God's authority over mankind. It is foolish to deny God's promises for men.

We can certainly notice that foolishness in the things of God extends to the foolish rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men. Any man or woman that hears the words of the Gospel of salvation, and then ignores or rejects that gospel, is a man or woman that exceeds all foolishness! Paul said, **"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God"** (I Cor. 1:18).

The Saved Often Demonstrate this Trait from Time to Time

We read the words of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:1, **"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"**

Just as laziness, deceit, and anger creep into the churches of Jesus Christ from time to time, so also foolishness finds its way into our midst. Perhaps not to the extent of the foolishness of the world, in that we might reject the Saviour Who has saved us. But, as children of God and as members of the churches of Jesus Christ, we do sometimes believe and practice foolish doctrines or heresies of men. And, from time to time, we may fall prey to certain foolish

behaviors in our lives which may cause us to even resemble the fools of the world.

However, let me give you the remedy for any foolishness which might exist in the hearts and minds of those who know and love the Lord: the remedy for foolishness is knowledge. Study the Word of God, and your ignorance or foolishness will be washed away in the knowledge of God's Word and the instruction of the Holy Spirit. Spend time in the public worship services of the church of Jesus Christ. Fellowship with wise and mature saints of God. Think upon heavenly and holy ideals. Acquaint yourself more thoroughly with the God Who has saved you. He is the God of all wisdom, and He will surely rid you of foolishness.

I hope that you and I will persevere as Christians, and seek to emulate the attitude and the behavior of our Lord Jesus Christ. We may live amongst lazy, deceitful, and angry fools – but we do not have to act like them. In fact, it is our duty and great privilege to witness to them of the love of God, as it is manifest in the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. It is our honor to live lives that show a willingness to work in physical and spiritual affairs; an integrity in physical and spiritual matters; a temperance in all things; and a knowledge and love for God in Heaven, and His Son, Jesus Christ.



## Was James

(Continued from page 1) ♦

**found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch"** (Acts 11:25-26).

So the ministry of Paul was in its infancy when James wrote his letter.

Understanding that James did indeed write early in the first Christian century, and if our dates are even remotely correct regarding Paul's early activities, then we can be sure of this: Paul had not at that early date yet received **"the abundance of the revelations"** he wrote of in II Corinthians 12:7. Thus at the time James wrote his epistle which he addressed **"to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad"** (James 1:1), neither he nor Paul nor any other follower of the Lamb knew those things that would later be revealed to Paul and others. They were all ignorant of some things: those things that would be later revealed. Prominent in what they did not know was the "mystery" that Jews and Gentiles would be one body. More on that later. (This ignorance regarding Jews and Gentiles certainly colored their understanding of the relationship between the two).

If we keep in mind this ignorance of God's revelation – ignorance because God had not yet revealed many things – and apply it to The Epistle of James it will help us understand much in his letter. We do not mean that James penned error: not at all! But his letter is curious in some respects, not the least of which is the matter of whom he addressed. Did he write to "the twelve tribes" of the Diaspora (dispersion) as lost Jews only or as Christians (not that they were even called that as yet), or did he write to them as a mixed group – some saved, some lost? Are we to take all his statements as addressed to saints? Are they all addressed to lost Jews? His meanings are greatly altered depending upon to whom he addressed certain statements.

Some have thought to prove that

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# The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

## 1. Are God's elect the same as the "whosoever will?" -Tennessee

Roger Reed  
20 Ledgewood Dr.  
Mansfield, Ohio 44905

Missionary of  
West Jefferson  
Missionary Baptist  
Mission  
90 E. Main St.  
West Jefferson, Ohio  
43162



The "whosoever will" are not just the same but the "whosoever will" "ARE" the very elect of God! I hope the questioner truly desires to know the truth here and not just wanting a debate from the writers of the Forum.

I have heard this argument from so many Arminians that I worked with, and I have gotten really tired of their argument. Why anyone would challenge the Sovereign Grace of God is beyond me, but they do and it is really a sad state to do so.

First, let me set the record straight. The Word of God was written to the elect of God- God's people, and no one else. It is a personal letter from God to His elect. Then I know what the next question would be, "well, could someone not be saved by reading the Bible?" If they were saved by reading the Bible, then they would be the "whosoever," the elect of God!! But I am partial to Romans chapter 10, especially Romans 10:8-17.

Second, since the questioner did not give a Scripture reference for the "whosoever will" I will take it that the text they are quoting here is Revelation 22:17.

The phrases, "whosoever will" (Rev. 22:17), "us-ward" (Eph. 1:19; II Peter 3:9) "for many" (various references in the New

Testament) are all referring to God's elect that He has chosen, predestinated, foreordained before the foundation of the world. Then, at the appointed time, God's elect are called out of darkness unto the marvelous light as Paul was on the road to Damascus.

If one would just take the time and prayerfully study the first three chapters of Ephesians and Paul's conversion, which is told three times in the Book of Acts, there would not be a need for this question or ever a discussion about man's "Free Will" concerning salvation.

God is a Holy, Sovereign God. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). And it does not matter if you agree with it or not, it is still a fact!! God Bless!

ROGER REED

Matthew Stepp  
286 Big Creek Road  
Wayne, WV 25570

Pastor  
Big Creek  
Baptist Church  
286 Big Creek Road  
Wayne, WV 25570



"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:24-25). "Whosoever will" is found many times in slightly varying forms throughout the Old and New Testaments. Of those references,

I have tabulated a non-exclusive list of 27 times it refers to the evidences of salvation, 13 verses quote a positive result, 10 reveal a negative result, and 4 are like the text that shows both pathways which a man may take, either positive or negative concerning God and His Holy will for His creation. Selah! Think about it!

The first thing we note concerning these passages is that "whosoever will" is a genuine invitation. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). This is a clear invitation to those that thirst and desire to come! Scripture is replete with such invitations to "whosoever will." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1). "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

Even though we know that ALL will not or cannot come, "whosoever will" is a genuine invitation, as surely as the open door on Noah's ark was a genuine invitation. To whosoever wanted to come on board, there was no divine manifest that denied them entrance. Indeed, every single soul that wanted to come, walked on board. And of every animal that came up the ramp; Noah did not turn a single, one away.

That brings us to our second point. "Whosoever will" is an indication of the inner heart. "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his

wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby" (Ezek. 33:18-19). "Whosoever will" continue in sin and the rejection of God and His Christ is revealing to all souls their lost, degenerate heart, while "whosoever will" repent of their ungodliness will show to all observers that God has made a change to their inward heart. Our "whosoever will" fruits are an indication that God's grace has been made effectual unto our salvation. "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8). Selah! Think about it!

The third observation is a necessary one, for comprehension of this great subject. "Whosoever will" is a finite number that show the inclination given by sovereign grace to a lost soul, that God has chosen or elected to draw unto Himself. The Bible and total depravity are clear that "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. ...there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:44, 64-65).

That God inclines the heart of man to do good, is evident in the lives of saints and in Psalm 119:33-37: "Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. INCLINE my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine

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# The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. I hear it said that the angels sing in Heaven, but do they? I find no verse in the Bible that tells me they do. Mississippi

Tom Ross  
6339 County Rd. 15  
South Point, OH  
45680

Pastor  
Mt. Pleasant  
Baptist Church  
6939 County Rd. 15  
Chesapeake, OH  
45619



I have not yet entered into the glories of the heavenly land, so I am really not qualified to answer this question. I have never knowingly heard an angel sing, though it is said that it is possible for us to “entertain angels unawares,” so maybe I have and did not know it (Heb. 13:2). I do know that the angels are said to rejoice when a sinner is brought to repentance (Luke 15:6-7), so I would not blame them at all if they broke out in songs of joy. When the angels announced the birth of Jesus Christ to the shepherds it sounded an awful lot like a hymn of glorious praise: **“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”** (Luke 2:13-14). Perhaps this same heavenly host will be with the redeemed when the elect are singing a new song with glorified voices (Rev. 5:9-10). I am not sure if this qualifies as singing, but I do know for sure what the heavenly host will be doing and saying: **“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands**

**of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever”** (Rev. 5:11-13).

There are some things that are not written in the Scripture that will in all probability be revealed to us in glory. I am sure that there are some things that my finite mind could not possibly comprehend here and now, that God will open up to me in the heavenly land. Oh, how I long to find out! How I long to be forever rid of this old corrupt, fleshly nature and be completely conformed to the image of the blessed Savior who is Altogether Lovely! What a glorious surprise it would be if God would assemble a heavenly choir of angels to praise His name and allow us the privilege of hearing them! I know when I hear godly music down here it stirs my heart to worship and praise the Almighty. Would not it be wonderful to hear angelic voices singing songs, hymns, and spiritual songs composed by the Almighty Himself? May God give us grace to feast on the future and look forward with great anticipation to all the wonders He will open up to us in glory!

TOM ROSS

Matthew Stepp  
286 Big Creek Road  
Wayne, WV 25570

Pastor  
Big Creek  
Baptist Church  
286 Big Creek Road  
Wayne, WV 25570



**“Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. ...Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted”** (Isa. 44:23, 49:13).

I found four main Hebrew words that mean singing, shouting, and praising: “ranan/rinnah/zawmar/shiyr.” It really depends on the context and the translator as to how they read in our Bibles. Angels are referenced in the Bible with these words and their Greek and English equivalents, to make it fairly obvious, but even without them, several references refer directly to angels singing or playing the harps, so that none can dogmatically say that angels do not Biblically “sing.”

In Bethlehem, at the birth of Christ, we find the sky filled with singing angels: **“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”** (Luke 2:13-14). If the English word “singing” is not used, in the Greek, the word for “saying” is “lego” and is used also in Revelation 5:8-9 where the English word “sung” is indeed used in context, much as the

word “praising” is, in our Luke-referenced angelic choir, **“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”**

The Revelation 5 reference is significant, as the “beasts” are “created beings” or “angelic beings.” They are the messengers of God, which is the meaning of “angelos,” the Greek word for angels. They accompany the four and twenty elders on harps and sing the new song with them. Couple this with verses 12-13 of the same chapter and Revelation 7:11-12 and it is unmistakable, that ALL the creation of God sings His Glory, with the “spoken words” of song. Selah! Think about it!

But not just in Revelation, look at Ephesians 5:19: **“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”** The Greek word “laeo” is used here, which is ubiquitously translated as “speaking” or “said,” but in the context in this verse, obviously means to sing “the words” of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The saints are not just “humming,” and neither are the angels. They are singing “words” that have worshipful meaning, and the Bible simply references this many times, as “saying,” when the undeniable context uses words like “praising, singing, sung, worshipping,” etc.

Christ claims the title, “Morning Star” in Revelation 22:16, but

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## Forum #1

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**eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way"** (-tms emphasis).

**"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God"** (Rom. 3:10-11). The effectual call of irresistible grace is the ONLY reason that any descendent of Adam's race will ever come to the invitation of **"whosoever will"** and accept it, showing the indication of the change that grace has effected in our hearts, and that God will receive ALL the glory for our salvation, because He has gifted an inclination in our hearts toward life, light and the gospel. Praise Him! **"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God"** (I John 4:15). **"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"** (John 11:25-26). Selah! Think about it! Only God's elect will ever be found among the **"whosoever will,"** and they certainly shall!

MATTHEW STEPP

Tom Ross  
6339 County Rd. 15  
South Point, OH  
45680

Pastor  
Mt. Pleasant  
Baptist Church  
6939 County Rd. 15  
Chesapeake, OH  
45619



We must identify who God's elect are in order to effectively answer this question. God's elect are those who have been chosen in Christ by God the Father before the world began in the covenant of grace (Eph. 1:3-7; II Thess.

2:13-14; II Tim. 1:9). When God the Father unconditionally chose the elect, He gave them to Christ to redeem and reconcile with His own blood in time by way of vicarious sacrifice on the cross (Gal. 1:4, 2:20; Col. 1:14, 19-21; Rev. 1:5), thus securing their justification (Rom. 3:24-28; 5:1). The Holy Spirit of God agreed, in the very same everlasting covenant, to regenerate, call, and sanctify all that the Father chose and all who Christ died for (who are one in the same) in time. God's eternal decree to save the elect is according to His immutable purpose. It is a fact of Scripture that all the elect, chosen by the Father and redeemed by Christ will without a doubt come to a saving knowledge of Christ in time by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said as much in John 6:37-39: **"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."** From God's eternal perspective there is no doubt that the **"whosoever will"** that He chose in Christ, and that the Holy Spirit quickens and makes willing in the day of His power are one in the same.

Lost sinners are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1) blinded and captivated by Satan (II Cor. 4:3-4; II Tim. 2:25-26), and wholly incapable of producing any spiritual activity or affection in the flesh (Rom. 8:7-8). The lost are totally depraved and entirely incapacitated with regard to spiritual things. They not only hate God (John 3:18-19), they

are completely unwilling to come to Christ in their natural state (John 5:40; 6:44). In spite of their condition, they are commanded to repent (Acts 17:30-31) and believe the record of the Gospel (I John 5:9-13). Unless God intervenes in invincible grace, the lost sinner will remain in his hateful, corrupt, unwilling, rebellious condition. God must make him willing in the day of His power (Psa. 110:3). God must open the blinded eyes, the deaf ears, the hardened heart of the wicked sinner enabling him to thirst for Christ, the everlasting fountain of salvation. When God changes the sinner's will, he comes most freely to partake of free grace, drinking deeply of the water of Life.

Everything written above is scripturally and theologically correct. Let us get to the real issue behind the question. Can you and I quote John 3:16; Matthew 11:28-30; and Revelation 22:17 when we are preaching and witnessing to lost sinners? Of course! I do not know who the elect are until God calls them out of darkness into His marvelous light, yet I am fully responsible to preach the Gospel to all men. I can say with full confidence and without any reservation: **"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"** (Rev. 22:17). Those willing to come are given the ability to hear and thirst by the power of the Holy Spirit. They are the elect, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and I can guarantee they will come to salvation, according to the infallible Word of God.

TOM ROSS



## Forum #2

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in Revelation 2:28, it is a gift to the overcomers in the Thyatira church. What does it mean? Well, in Job 38:7, the context of the creation of the foundations of the earth (surely before the sixth day and man's creation) shows it to be the "chiefest" of the angels: **"When the morning stars (chief angels) sang together, and all the sons of God (the entire chorus of angels) shouted for joy?"** **"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"** (Gen 1:1). The angels were created in the first verse of the Bible and were able to witness the remainder of the creation and molding of every earthly being and substance. And it is chronicled (by God) that they sung.

Simply put, the heavens sing (Isa. 44:23), the trees sing (I Chron. 16:32), the dawn or dusk sings (Ps. 65:8), men sing (Ps. 149), waste places sing (Isa. 52:9), pastures and valleys sing (Ps. 65:13), all that is in Heaven and Earth sing (angels, too!) (Jer. 51:48), and even God sings (Zeph. 3:17). Why in the world would anyone logically conclude that God would create angels incapable of singing? Praise ye the LORD! Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP

Roger Reed  
20 Ledgewood Dr.  
Mansfield, Ohio 44905

Missionary of  
West Jefferson  
Missionary Baptist  
Mission  
90 E. Main St.  
West Jefferson, Ohio  
43162



There is a verb phrase as a definition of singing- sing out, informal. To call in a loud voice; shout: They lost their way in the

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## Forum #2

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cavern and sang out for help.

To answer the question: "I hear it said that the angels sing in Heaven, but do they? I find no verse in the Bible that tells me they do." Answer to the first part of the question, yes they do. Answer to the second part of the question, you would be mistaken, because the Bible tells us that angels do indeed sing.

I really could just answer it with one verse of Scripture in which I will, but if the questioner wants to **"strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel"** (Matt. 23:24), they might not be satisfied with my answer.

So, to satisfy the questioner with undisputable Biblical proof, the reference to angels singing can be found in Job 38:7; there we read, **"The morning stars [chief angels] sang together, and all the sons of God [angels] shouted for joy."** This took place at the earth's creation.

Whenever I think of an angel singing out I immediately think of Isaiah 6:3, **"And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."** This verse is speaking, of course, of the seraphims. Also, we see angelic beings around the throne of God doing the same (Rev. 4:6-11). I can not imagine this cry being done other than in a loud voice or shout (singing) as the described in the definition of the verb phrase. The reader, of course, is entitled to his or her view of what singing is.

Also, an occasion is found at the birth of Christ. Angels appeared to shepherds in a nearby field to announce His birth. **"And suddenly there was with the angels a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,**

**Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men"** (Luke 2:13-14). The word translated "saying" could be understood as speaking or singing, and the context seems to indicate a choir of angels singing praise to God. Dr. Gill seems to allude to this fact.

The gospel of Luke says, **"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"** (Luke 15:10). The Psalmist said, **"Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise"** (Ps. 98:4).

In Revelation 5:8-13, these angelic creatures join others to sing the new song of redemption that excels Moses' old song (Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 32). In this case, angels ascribe worthiness and grace to God and to Christ for accomplishing redemption.

To me it is more likely than not that singing is what angels do, the same way we worship God in both spoken words and song. Angels seem to always sing their praise. Songs are a most fitting and expressive means of giving God the praise due His name (Job 38:7; Revelation 5:8-9). Because of God's infinite worthiness, such a beautiful and excellent worship continues forever without ceasing.

Here are some Scriptures to consider:

1. Psalms 150, if this is true on earth in our worship of God, how much more is it true for those who are in the presence of God in Heaven?

2. Psalms 148:2, **"Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts."**

3. Psalms 103:20, **"Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that**

**excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word."**

I believe angels sing, including singing at the creation of the world, the birth of Christ, and at the end of time. Even now, I believe angels sing praises to the Lord as the Psalms indicate.

It was asked of us a while back if Jesus sang when they all got up and left the Lord's table. I believe my answer was yes! If Jesus would sing, why would not the angels do the same? God Bless!

ROGER REED



## Was James

(Continued from page 11) ♦

James wrote to Christians because he referred to them as "brethren." A study of the use of the term "brethren" by Jewish believers in the New Testament shows that this term is often used of Jews as an ethnic group and is no proof at all that those so addressed were Christians. Consider the following instances of the use of "brethren." In Acts 2:14 Peter addresses his hearers as **"Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem."** Further along in his preaching he refers to these same people as **"Ye men of Israel"** (v. 22). In the next verse, 23, he accuses them of murdering the Lord. He says, **"ye have taken [Christ], and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."** And then in verse 29 Peter addresses his auditors as **"Men and brethren."** This last, "men and brethren," is clearly an ethnic "brethren" and not used in reference to their spiritual condition at all for he addresses the killers of Christ using this term! Furthermore these crucifiers of Christ use the very same terms when addressing Peter and the other apostles, for we read, **"Now**

**when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do"** (Acts 2:37)? So then we have both apostles and the unsaved using the term "brethren" in speaking one of the other as Jews.

Again the term "brethren" is used ethnically in Acts chapter three. After the healing of the lame man recorded there, Peter accuses his hearers with these words: **"whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate"** (Acts 3:13). In verse 15 he says of them that they, **"killed the Prince of life."** And then in verse 15 he calls them **"brethren."** Clearly his usage of the term "brethren" does not indicate in any way whatsoever that they were saved! Again we cite the Bible! Stephen, when appearing before the unsaved leaders of Israel – the high priest included – addressed them as **"Men, brethren, and fathers"** (Acts 7:2). When Paul and his company arrived in Antioch of Pisidia and visited the synagogue in that place the Jewish synagogue leaders addressed them as **"Ye men and brethren"** (Acts 13:15), a purely ethnic appellation. Paul stands and replies to this invitation addressing them as **"Men of Israel, and ye that fear God"** (v. 16). In this way Paul differentiates between the ethnic Jews and the Gentiles who were converts (proselytes) to Judaism. He does the same thing in verse 26 using the words, **"Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God,"** and he uses the term "brethren" again in verse 28, saying, **"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the**

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# Was James

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**forgiveness of sins.”** The argument that “brethren” is always used as an indicator of the salvation of the one addressed is seen to fall apart since it is also used as a merely ethnic term. So the fact that James addressed his readers as “brethren” is no proof that he wrote to them as Christians.

Consider these statements: are we to believe they are addressed to Christians? **“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls”** (James 1:21). **“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”** (James 4:1), **“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God”** (James 4:4). **“Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you”** (James 5:4-6). Can anyone believe that James aimed these words at believers? Are they descriptive of the actions of true followers of the Lamb? We think not!

And yet there are a great many statements in James’ epistle which do pertain to believers: too many to list here. This combination of statements – some fitted to the lost and some fitted to believers

– seems to clearly indicate that James wrote to scattered Jews of the Diaspora - some of whom were believers in Christ and others who were not. But they were all Jews by birth or by conversion to that religion.

Now to the “mystery:” we should remember that at the time of James’ writing God had not revealed that both Jews and Gentiles were to be fellow heirs in Christ. Paul is clear on this when he wrote: **“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power”** (Eph. 3:3-7). Paul used the word “mystery.” A mystery in Scripture is not something difficult to understand, but rather something not previously revealed which was then at that time being made known.

James still viewed the Jewish Nation as God’s elect people and indeed they were, but he had no idea that the Gentiles were to be eventually dominant in the churches. Christianity was at that early time still considered to be a part of Judaism which was as Tertullian titled it a “religio licita” - a legal or approved religion within the empire. Those to whom James wrote, whether believers or unbelievers, were clearly either Jews by blood or Jewish proselytes (converts to Judaism). In James’

understanding the followers of Christ were Jews!

And so although James mentioned **“the elders of the church”** (ecclesia or congregation in James 5:14 - a word not strictly limited to a Christian congregation, but is used of a civil one as well) - he also wrote using the term “sunagoge” (soon-ag-o-gay) or **“synagogue”** in James 2:2. “Your assembly” in the King James is literally “your synagogue” as the King James translators were careful to show in their marginal note.

Even when we read James’ statement: **“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures”** (James 1:18) we must question if he was speaking of individual Christians or of the Jewish Nation since he uses the word “begat,” which is different from the idea of being born again or regeneration, although many have assumed it to be the same idea. It is true that the Nation Israel was brought forth, or produced, by the “logos,” or Word, which John says is Christ (see John 1:1-4; 14). Is he saying that the Jews were begotten (produced or brought forth) by **“the Father of lights”** (James 1:17) and that they are to be regarded as a kind of **“firstfruits,”** or are Christians to be regarded as that Jewish offering? Jeremiah definitely identifies Israel as God’s firstfruits saying: **“Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase...”** (Jer. 2:3). Since Jeremiah speaks of Israel as the “firstfruits,” should we understand that was James’ thinking as well? Or, shall we ascribe something new to his thoughts on the meaning of this word? Does he bring in a new thought making the “firstfruits” individual Christians? Or is he speaking of Israel as the

“firstfruits” as Jeremiah did?

To understand the Epistle of James we must understand the viewpoint from which James wrote, for his was a thoroughly Jewish context. He and all the believers living at that time were ignorant of those things that would later be revealed to Paul. James wrote no error for the Spirit of God superintended his mind and his hand as he wrote, but he did not see the relationship between Judaism and Christianity as later revelations would teach. Nor, indeed, had Paul turned to the Gentiles at this early time (see Acts 18:16). Each Bible writer wrote of things as they were in his time except those who wrote prophecy, and even then, what they saw and understood was colored by the amount of knowledge they had at the time.

Surely we will be safe in our understanding, and have a better understanding of The Epistle of James, if we regard its early age and the Jewishness of its nature and James’ personal ignorance of **“the abundance of the revelations”** (II Cor. 12:7) that would later be given to Paul. In this way we can be assured that we understand what James meant and what those to whom he wrote understood him to mean – and that is the message of his letter. His message – and God’s message to us - is not what ideas we might read into his writing if we view it as twenty-first century Gentile American Christians and not understand nor take into consideration its context. Let us practice solid exegesis not eisegesis: let us draw the meaning out of the Bible and not read our own ideas into it! Context, context, context! And may God bless us all as we study His Word in context!





# THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

Readers of the BBB are urged to submit religious news items which they may read in their local paper or some other publication. In sending these please give the name of the publication as well as the date it was printed. We will not be able to print all which are submitted, but we welcome any item you may feel we should read.

Send them to The Berea Baptist Banner, PO Box 39, Mantachie, MS 38855-0039.

## PEDIATRICIANS GROUP AFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR TEEN ABORTION

(WNS)--Leading pro-life activists and medical professionals have spoken out against the American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) reaffirmation of its position on adolescent abortion rights. The AAP, a coalition of 66,000 pediatricians, recently reiterated its long-standing position that while parents should be involved with their teens' decisions, the right of adolescent girls (ages 15-19) to obtain abortion should trump parental rights to notification and consent. "A minor should not be compelled or required to involve her parents in her decision to obtain an abortion, although she should be encouraged to discuss the pregnancy with her parents and/or other responsible adults," the AAP stated.

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## ELDERLY PATIENTS AT RISK OF FORCED STARVATION IN OREGON

(WNS)--Oregon pro-lifers are fighting a bill in their state's Senate that could allow the starvation or dehydration of patients with dementia or mental illness—without their prior written consent. S.B. 494, introduced by a judiciary committee, appears at first simply to update the state's advance directive laws. But it allows a patient's representative to remove undefined "life-sustaining procedures" if the patient has "a progressive illness," has stopped talking, and cannot recognize family members. Patients would no longer need an advance directive,

since an authorized guardian, spouse, a majority of their children, their parents, a friend, or if none is available, an attending physician can order the withdrawal of "life-sustaining procedures."

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## HAWAII PRO-LIFE CENTERS FIGHT ABORTION REFERRAL MANDATE

(WNS)--Hawaii state lawmakers hope to make their state the next to force pregnancy care centers to promote abortion. Twin bills in the state House and Senate would require the pro-life centers to post a pro-abortion statement in a "clear and conspicuous place" in their waiting areas or give it to women when they arrive. The statement reads: "Hawaii has public programs that provide immediate free or low-cost access to comprehensive family planning services including all FDA-approved methods of contraception, prenatal care, and abortion for eligible women. To determine whether you qualify, contact the appropriate Med-QUEST division eligibility office." If pregnancy care centers do not cooperate with the state-sponsored message, they face a \$500 fine the first time and \$1,000 "for each subsequent offense."

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## NEW RESEARCH DEBUNKS THE 'BALL AND CHAIN' MYTH

(WNS)--The "ball and chain" perception of marriage is a myth, according to a research brief by the Institute for Family Values released in February. Contrary to the common

view among men that marriage is an "expensive encumbrance on their freedom and their sex lives," new research finds married men have more money, better sex, and a longer life than their single peers. And the benefits do not apply to men just cohabiting. Researchers Bradford Wilcox, a professor and the director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, and Nicholas Wolfinger, a professor at the University of Utah, examined recent sociology studies focused on the cost and benefits of marriage for men. They found a clear takeaway: Marriage is good for men in "every conceivable measure."

**"She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life"**  
(Proverbs 31:12).

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## GEORGIA SETTLES WITH DOCTOR IN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM CASE

(WNS)--The state of Georgia settled a discrimination lawsuit brought against it by a physician-preacher who accused the state of firing him for his religious speech outside the workplace. The state, which had demanded Eric Walsh turn over his sermons as evidence, awarded the former employee \$225,000 in damages. Walsh, a public health physician and former lay pastor at a Seventh Day Adventist church, was fired in 2014 from his new job as district health director of northwest Georgia. He sued the Department of Public Health (DPH) for unlawful termination. His employers requested copies of his sermons right after he was hired, and the Georgia attorney general asked for them again during the lawsuit. Walsh refused, and the state withdrew the demand and requested mediation. "This is a clear and resounding victory for religious freedom," Dys said in a press release. "The state of Georgia was right to settle this case and acknowledge the

right of their employees to express their religious beliefs.

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## CHURCHES RESPOND TO BOY SCOUTS TRANSGENDER POLICY

(WNS)--When the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) announced in January a policy to allow transgender children into its programs, it said church affiliated troops could claim a religious exemption from the change. But it might not be that simple in practice. For more than 100 years, BSA enrolled boys into its programs based on the gender listed on their birth certificates. But now the Scouts will allow any child to become a member as long as he or she identifies as male, regardless of biology. In a video message, BSA's chief executive Michael Surbaugh said birth certificates are no longer "a sufficient reference point" as more and more states interpret gender identity differently.

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## TEXAS CONSERVATIVES TAKE ON TRANSGENDER RESTROOM FIGHT

(WNS)--The spotlight of the transgender debate is about to shine bright on Texas, where conservative lawmakers are bracing to continue the fight started in North Carolina last year. The Texas legislature introduced a bill last month requiring all government facilities, including public schools, to keep restrooms, showers, and changing areas separated by biology, not gender identity. The law allows private business owners to make their own policies in accordance with their beliefs. As lead advocate for the new Texas restroom policy, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick says he has the motivation to see this fight to the end—even if it costs him his job. Texas will hold a hearing on the bill—comparable to North Carolina's now infamous HB2 law—in early

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March. State lawmakers, including the dominant Republican caucus, remain divided on the issue. Fears of business boycotts and public ridicule could derail a bill Patrick asserts is “common sense.”

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## TRUMP REVOKES OBAMA'S TRANSGENDER DIRECTIVE

(WNS)--The White House on Feb. 22 rescinded the Obama administration's transgender directive, a policy that required schools to allow students to use the restrooms and locker rooms that corresponded with their gender identities. Former President Barack Obama threatened to revoke federal funding from school districts that kept boys and girls separated by biological sex in traditionally single-sex facilities. The order came not long after North Carolina passed a law protecting public establishments from being forced to provide restroom and locker room access based on gender identity rather than biology. The law pitted LGBT activism against the privacy rights of students and led some businesses to boycott North Carolina in protest.

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## DOCTORS CALL FOR ABORTION PILLS AT PHARMACIES

(WNS)--A group of doctors and abortion advocates are calling for easier access to abortion pills through pharmacies. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires the abortion-inducing drug mifepristone, also known as RU-486, to be dispensed at an abortion facility, hospital, or doctor's office, not a pharmacy. But the 10 authors of an article that appeared Feb. 22 in the New England Journal of Medicine are calling for the FDA to allow women to obtain the drug with a prescription at a pharmacy and

take it at home without a doctor's supervision. One of the authors, Beverly Winikoff of New York-based Gynuity Health Projects, said that the current regulations are not necessary.

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## MONTANA SENATE PASSES NOVEL LATE-TERM ABORTION RULES

(WNS)--On Feb. 23, the Montana state Senate passed a bill requiring abortionists to try to save babies born at 24 weeks of gestation and older. Even if the Republican-controlled House passes Senate Bill 282, the bill still faces an uncertain future. The Senate voted 32-18 in favor of the bill, just shy of a two-thirds majority needed to override a likely veto from pro-abortion Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock. Montana law currently prohibits late-term abortions except to save the mother's life. But SB 282 would require the abortionist, even in that rare case, to induce labor or deliver the baby by Caesarean section and then provide the baby “life-sustaining support.” The bill also prohibits the abortionist from “intentionally [causing]” a viable baby's death “prior to or during delivery.” Abortionists who violate the law could be charged with a felony.

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## JUDGE ORDERS SCHOOL TO OPEN RESTROOMS TO TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

(WNS)--A federal judge in Pennsylvania has ordered a local school district to let three transgender students use restrooms and locker rooms that correspond to their gender identity while their lawsuit against the school proceeds. The three students, all seniors, sued the Pine-Richland School District north of Pittsburgh after administrators implemented a policy requiring students to use facilities that corresponded to their biological sex. The school also has 10

unisex restrooms that all students can use. Administrators instituted the policy after some parents and students complained about their children having to use restrooms and locker rooms with members of the opposite sex. The policy was meant to be temporary while district administrators researched a permanent solution.

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## OREGON BAKERS TAKE BIAS CASE TO STATE APPEALS COURT

(WNS)--Melissa and Aaron Klein finally had their day in court—four years after losing their business for declining to create a cake for a same-sex wedding. On March 2, the Kleins' attorneys told the Oregon Court of Appeals a state agency's claim against the Kleins misapplied state law, usurped both the Oregon and U.S. Constitutions, and revealed an inherent bias against people of faith. A ruling in Klein v. Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industry likely will be appealed to the Oregon Supreme Court and from there join the procession of religious liberty cases making their way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Moments after the hearing, the Kleins read from prepared statements outside the Oregon Court of Appeals in Salem. They spoke of their faith, their desire to honor God, and their hope that people of differing beliefs could live together peaceably.

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## NORDIC NATIONS RALLY TO FUND INTERNATIONAL ABORTION GROUPS

(WNS)--Abortion advocates in northern Europe and Canada are raising funds to bail out international abortion groups after U.S. President Donald Trump reinstated the Mexico City Policy. Representatives from more than 50 countries met in Brussels on March 2 to discuss the “She Decides” initiative aimed at raising funds to compensate for

the Reagan-era policy that bars USAID funding from going to non-governmental, abortion-providing organizations such as U.K.-based Marie Stopes International and the International Planned Parenthood Federation. Organizers claim to have raised \$190 million in pledges from several nations, including Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands, as well as private donors such as Bill and Melinda Gates.

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## SUPREME COURT CANCELS HEARING IN TRANSGENDER CASE

(WNS)--The Supreme Court on March 6 decided not to hear a highly anticipated case on transgender restroom policies that had been scheduled for late March, in light of new guidance from the Trump administration on the matter. The court sent the case, Gloucester County v. G.G., back to lower courts for further consideration based on the new restroom and locker room directive. In doing so it vacated the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling against the Virginia school board at the center of the case. Transgender advocates had hoped the Gloucester County case would be a landmark decision for transgender rights. Despite the new Trump directive, which leaves policies on sex-segregated facilities up to local school officials, the Supreme Court still could have heard the case based on the question of whether “sex” in Title IX means “gender identity,” as the Obama administration claimed it did.

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## WYOMING JUDGE CENSURED FOR VIEWS ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

(WNS)--The Wyoming Supreme Court censured county magistrate Judge Ruth Neely in early March for telling a newspaper reporter in 2014

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she would not be able to conduct same-sex marriages. In its 3-2 decision, the court also ordered Neely to perform marriages “regardless of the couple’s sexual orientation.” Justice Kate Fox, writing for the majority, insisted “Neely’s religious beliefs are not an issue.” Instead, the court ruled Neely’s remarks about homosexuality and same-sex marriage violated judicial standards of conduct and jeopardized the reputation of the Wyoming judiciary. But dissenting justices argued the majority opinion legislates from the bench and forces Neely and like-minded jurists to divorce their faith from their role as judge.

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## INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS CHURCH OF ENGLAND REJECTS REPORT AFFIRMING BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

(WNS)--The Church of England General Synod on Feb. 15 rejected a report issued in January that reaffirms church canon on marriage. By a slim margin the body voted not to “take note” of the House of Bishops’ report, which provided a framework for addressing issues related to human sexuality, marriage, and the church. Impassioned speeches during the debate included calls for full LGBT inclusion into church life and pleas for fidelity to Scripture. Although a majority of delegates representing the House of Bishops, House of Clergy, and House of Laity voted to approve the motion 242-184, passage required majority support from each of the three houses. The House of Clergy dissented, ending debate and shelving the report indefinitely. Seen as a victory for LGBT advocates, the vote leaves in place decades old guidance documents that affirm Biblical marriage but raises questions about how the House of Bishops will

reevaluate the issue.

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## BRITISH COURT BLOCKS HETERO CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

(WNS)--A British appeals court ruled Feb. 21 against a heterosexual couple fighting for the right to form a civil partnership. The London couple, Rebecca Steinfeld and Charles Keidan, argued current law allowing only gay couples access to civil partnerships discriminates against their sexual orientation. In a surprising turn, the Court of Appeal agreed but ruled against them. All three judges said the law unfairly treated Steinfeld and Keidan differently because of their sexuality. But in a 2-1 ruling, the panel of judges decided the government should be given more time to decide whether to extend civil partnerships to opposite-sex couples, abolish them, or slowly phase them out. Britain legalized civil partnerships exclusively for same-sex couples in 2005, granting them the same legal, adoption, and inheritance rights as married couples. In 2014, Britain legalized same-sex marriage, opening two options for gay couples but leaving only one for opposite-sex couples.

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## DROVES OF CANADIAN DOCTORS OPT OUT OF EUTHANASIA

(WNS)--Dozens of Canadian doctors who signed up to provide lethal injections have changed their minds, according to medical officials. At least 24 doctors in Ontario have asked to be removed from a list of physicians willing to participate in Canada’s Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) law, passed in June. Some 30 more have requested their names be put on hold. Jeff Blackmer, vice president of the Canadian Medical Association, said some doctors initially think they are helping patients end their suffering but find the reality much

different. “We’re seeing doctors who go through one experience and it’s just overwhelming, it’s too difficult,” he said. “And those are the ones who say, ‘Take my name off the list. I can’t do it anymore.’”

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## SCOTLAND TO RECONSIDER CONTENTIOUS CHILD WELFARE PLAN

(WNS)--Scottish officials this month announced they are reintroducing a controversial law that would assign a state guardian to every child in the country. The announcement comes nine months after the U.K. Supreme Court struck down the “Named Person” law, a plan to monitor child “wellbeing” by having an education or health official

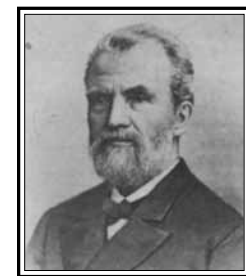
track each Scottish child from birth to age 18. The court ruled certain provisions in the proposed law violated human rights and infringed on privacy. On March 7, education secretary John Swinney told the Scottish Parliament that despite the ruling, he remains “absolutely committed” to the scheme. Swinney said he made adjustments to the law based on the high court’s ruling and plans to resubmit legislation this summer, with implementation set for 2018. Despite Swinney’s plans, critics of the law praised the announcement as a “major victory for parents” because the modified proposal does not have the teeth of the original.



# The Lord’s Supper Observed by Local Churches

By J. M. Pendleton  
(1811 - 1891)

The churches composed, as they are, of Christ’s baptized disciples meet for the worship of their Lord. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” is the language addressed to Christians in apostolic times. Among the duties and the privileges of a congregation of baptized believers in Christ is included a commemoration of His death at His Table. Every local church is required to observe this ordinance. Its obligation to do so is inseparable from its independence; and the doctrine of church independence will be developed in future sections of this chapter. The ordinances of the gospel are placed by Christ in the custody of His churches. They dare not change them in any respect; to change them would be disloyalty to their Lord. They have no legislative power; they



are simply executive democracies required to carry into effect the will of their Head. Who but His churches

can be expected to preserve the integrity and the purity of the ordinances of the Lord Jesus? These ordinances are to be kept as they were delivered to the churches and received by them. This is indispensable to the maintenance of gospel order.

What Paul writes to the Corinthians (I Cor. 11:20-34) clearly indicates the necessity of coming together “to eat the Lord’s Supper.” True, he refers to certain irregularities, which he severally condemns; but when he asks, “Despise ye the church of God?” he refers to its members, not to their individual, but in

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their collective, capacity—the congregation of God. So, in verses 33, 34, the words **“when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another,”** and **“that ye come not together unto condemnation,”** show beyond doubt that the assembling of the church was requisite to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It is a church ordinance, and therefore Baptists oppose any and every attempt to administer it privately to individuals without church sanction.

What was true of the Corinthian church as to the “coming together” of its members to commemorate the death of Christ was doubtless true of all other churches of that period. It would be absurd to suppose that there was a capricious diversity in the customs of the churches. We may therefore assume that there was uniformity.

With regard to the Lord's Supper there are different views held by different religious denominations. Roman Catholics believe in what they call Transubstantiation—that is, that by the consecration of the priest, the bread and wine are changed into the real body and the real blood of Christ. This doctrine defies all reasonable credence, and can be accepted only by a voracious credulity. It requires a renunciation of common sense to believe that when Jesus took bread into His hands, that bread became His body; so that He held His body in His hands! The statement of such a dogma is its sufficient exposure.

Lutherans, while they dissent from the Romish view, advocate what they call Consubstantiation. By this they mean that in the Lord's Supper the body and the blood of Christ are really present

in the bread and the wine. While this view differs from the Romish, it is equally mysterious and scarcely less incredible; for it demands the impossible belief that the body of Christ is not only present in many places on earth at the same time, but that it is also in Heaven. Surely the body of Christ is not omnipresent.

Episcopalians and Methodists, as well as Romanists and Lutherans, receive kneeling the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper. The posture is an unnatural one, and the custom of kneeling no doubt has an historical connection with Transubstantiation—that is to say, when the dogma was accepted as true, the bread and the wine were considered suitable objects of adoration. Hence the kneeling attitude was assumed by Romanists, transmitted by them to Episcopalians, and from them inherited by Methodists. It is strange, in view of the idolatrous origin of the custom of kneeling, that it is continued by those who adore idolatry.

There is one thing in the service of Episcopalians and Methodists which must ever impress Baptists as very strange: The minister, in delivering the bread to each person, says, “The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.” In giving the cup he says, “The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.” (The Methodists „Discipline” transposes the terms „body” and „soul.”) This may not be, but it seems to be, a prayer offered to the body and the blood of Christ, which are invoked to preserve unto everlasting life the body and the soul of the person addressed. Prayer to Christ is eminently proper, for it is justified by the

example of the dying Stephen; but prayer to the body and the blood of Christ is utterly indefensible.

Presbyterians are nearer right in their views of the Lord's Supper than are the denominations to which I have referred. They do not kneel and they make prominent the commemorative feature of the ordinance. True, they call it a “sealing ordinance;” and these words Baptists vainly try to understand. What is sealed? “The covenant of grace,” they say. How is this? They say also that “baptism seals” it. Has it two seals? Among men covenants are invalid without seals. Is the covenant of grace invalid for purposes of salvation unless the seals of baptism and the Lord's Supper are appended to it? Presbyterians will hardly answer in the affirmative. The truth is the New Testament never refers to baptism and the Lord's Supper as “sealing ordinances,” and for the best reason: It teaches that believers are “sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption.” If the Holy Spirit seals, there is security; and there is something wrong in the theology which makes baptism and the Lord's Supper “sealing ordinances.”

Baptists hold that, as the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance, the supreme prerequisite to it is church-membership. Baptism, it is true, is often referred to as a prerequisite, and so it is, but only in the sense that it is a prerequisite to church-membership. The members of every local church can claim it as a right to come to the Lord's Table in that church, but in no other. . . This is a matter so plain that it is needless to dwell on it. It sometimes creates a smile when it is said that Baptists are more liberal in their views and practice in regard to the Lord's Supper than are any other people; but it is true. It is true in the sense

that they believe that all whom they baptize and receive into church-membership are entitled to seats at the Lord's Table; and it is true in the sense that they welcome to that Table all whom they baptize. They dare not sever from each other the two ordinances of the gospel. Of what other denomination can this be said? I refer to the denominations of Protestant Christendom. Among Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Methodists baptism and the Lord's Supper are put asunder—that is to say, this is true of “baptized children” as distinguished from “communicants.” With Episcopalians and Lutherans these “baptized children,” so called, are kept from the Lord's Table until they receive the rite of “Confirmation.” It is not possible to give a good reason for this practice; for if through “sponsors” they are entitled to baptism, they are also entitled to the Lord's Supper. Presbyterians require in the “baptized children” evidence of personal piety before they are allowed to come to the Lord's Table, and Methodists, to say the least, insist that there shall be “a desire to flee from the wrath to come.” The argument against inviting infants is that infants cannot “discern the body and blood of the Lord Jesus.” This is doubtless true; but it is equally true that they cannot discern the spiritual significance of baptism. If the inability to “discern” is a bar to the Lord's Table, it should also be a bar to the Lord's baptism. There can be no good reason for severing the ordinances of the gospel. Those who are entitled to baptism are entitled to the Lord's Supper. There is an interference with scriptural order whenever the two ordinances are disjoined. The

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interference cannot be justified.

Baptists, therefore, say that the Lord's Supper is not scripturally observed among Pedobaptists. They have neither scriptural baptism nor scriptural church-membership, and there cannot be a scriptural administration of the Lord's Supper. In addition to this, they withhold from a large number—perhaps a majority—of those who, in their judgment, are baptized the Lord's Supper. This is a great inconsistency. It must be said, however, that if the ordinances were not sundered—that is, if all baptized by Pedobaptists were permitted to come to the Lord's Supper—the service would be vitiated by the presence of a majority composed of unbelievers and of those incapable of believing. In view of such considerations as these, it will readily be seen why Baptists believe that Pedobaptists fail to observe the Lord's Supper according to the New Testament, even as they fail to administer New Testament baptism.

On the other hand, it is a distinctive Baptist principle that a scriptural church is a congregation of baptized believers in Christ, whose duty and privilege it is "to eat the Lord's Supper." All the members of such a church are required to commemorate their Lord's death. They are united to Him by faith in His name, and through Him, by spiritual ties, to one another, while their baptism has incorporated them into one body, and their partaking of "**one bread**" (I Cor. 10:17) is a symbol of their unity.

Baptists detach from the Lord's Supper every idea of Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation, ritual efficacy, sealing

virtue, etc., and consider it a memorial of Christ's death. Its commemorative office is that which constitutes its supreme distinction. Everything else connected with it is secondary and incidental. "**This do in remembrance of me,**" said Jesus in instituting the ordinances on the night of the betrayal. In the eating of the broken bread He requires that His crucified body be remembered; in the drinking of the cup He enjoins a remembrance of His blood. That the faculty of memory is specially exercised concerning the death of Christ in the sacred Supper is manifest from I Corinthians 11:26: "**For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.**" We do not show His birth, or baptism, or burial, or resurrection, or ascension, but His death. If ever the tragedy of Calvary should engross the thoughts of the Christian to the exclusion of every other subject, it is when he sits at the Table of the Lord. Then memory must reproduce the scenes of the crucifixion and so hold them up to the mind that Christ is "**evidently set forth crucified.**" Then in the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup the body and the blood of the Lord are "**spiritually discerned,**" and the ordinance, by the presence of the Holy Spirit, becomes a rich blessing to the soul. It becomes the means of strengthening faith in Christ and of increasing love to Him; while memory goes back to His death, and hope looks to His second coming, when His personal presence will supersede the necessity of any symbol to promote a remembrance of Him. (*Distinctive Principles of Baptists*, pp. 174-182, 1882 edition).



# The Only Effectual Cure

By Douglas D. Jones  
(1918 - 2016)

(The following is the substance of a sermon preached at Trinity Baptist Church, Gloucester around 1976).

We read about him in the Bible in II Kings chapter 5. His name was Naaman, army commander of the Syrian king, thought much of by his master, and a national hero on account of his victories. Some people might have been quite envious of such a man, that is, if they had not known of something which cast an ugly shadow over everything else in his life. The trouble was that he was a leper. Leprosy is a loathsome disease, far more widespread in Bible times than it is today, although still found abundantly in some countries. Modern medical science has done much to alleviate the dreadful suffering it brings and sometimes cures are effected. In those days, however, there was no known human cure.

Under the law of God given to Moses for the nation Israel, a leper had to be isolated from other company, not, it seems, necessarily from risk of infection, but because of the loathsomeness of the disease. In some of the Gentile nations, however, this was not the practice. It appears, then, that Naaman continued his duties, but he must have known that he was a doomed man. Ultimately the leprosy would take such a hold on him that he would be too repulsive to look at and he would eventually die from its effects.

What do honors, wealth, and position mean to a man when he knows that his days are numbered?

We live at a time when Man



is making a great name for himself. This is the age of human achievement, yet it is clear that there is something seriously wrong

with humanity. On all sides we see turmoil, confusion, strife, warring, suffering, and unhappiness. What is wrong? It is that Man has been afflicted by something inherent within him which can be likened to the deadly disease of which we have been speaking. It is sin. Man is a sinner in the sight of his Creator. He has a natural and continual tendency to rebel against the God of the universe, rejecting the fact that the earth is the Lord's – not his – and that the world and all that it contains belongs to God. It is because men are not right with Him that they are not right with one another. What is more, as such, Mankind is under the judgment of God. Just as a Jewish leper was cut off from the fellowship of others, because of the vileness of his disease, so the sinner, by nature, is unfitted for fellowship with the holy and pure God Who created him. Sin is abhorrent to God, and it brings separation from Him.

There is a kind of leprosy known as the anaesthetic type, because patches of the affected skin lose all sensation. A person may at first be quite unaware as to what is wrong, since there is an insensibility to injury. For example, a burn on the affected area does not hurt. One of the characteristics of sin is that there are multitudes of people utterly oblivious of the seriousness of their condition in

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# The Only Effectual

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the sight of God and that they are facing an eternity separated from Him, being quite unfitted for His presence. How appropriate then, is leprosy as a picture of sin, that with which every one of us is born, yet the implications of which we may be quite ignorant. Naaman's leprosy, however, was such that he was well aware of it. The fact must have cast a terrible cloud over his whole life. So he might have gone on to the end of his days had not something happened which we see clearly as the over-ruling of a merciful God Whose love is not confined to one nation.

The Syrians had gone out in bands on one of their raiding expeditions into the territory of Israel and had taken captive a little girl. A most terrifying experience it must have been for her, too, wrested from her family who would have been left in deep sorrow. It came about that she was given the task of waiting on Naaman's wife. She might easily have evidenced bitterness and resentment at her lot and acted in a very sullen manner, but it seems that even in one so young there burned a vital faith in the one true God Whom she had come to know in her native land. She learned of her master's condition, of the terrible disease which had taken hold of him and for which he knew no cure. And the love of God in that little girl's heart brought the reaction which caused her to say to her mistress, **"Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."** She was referring to Elisha.

Did he make a practice in his own nation of healing lepers? No, as Jesus said many years later, the

prophet had never done such a thing in Israel. But that little maid, knowing that Elisha was God's prophet and a miracle worker, believed wholeheartedly that he could be used of God to heal her heathen master of this dreaded disease. She not only believed it, but she was ready to say so, too, whatever the reaction of her mistress might be to her claim. What she said obviously made an impression, for Naaman's wife told him about it, and he in turn went to the king to inform him, whereupon the king of Syria sent off Naaman to the king of Israel with gifts of silver, and gold, and costly clothes. The accompanying communication read, "With this letter I have sent Naaman my servant to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

The Syrian king was thinking in terms of a heathen monarch's authority. He expected the king of Israel to order Elisha the prophet to cure Naaman. When he read the letter, this did not occur to the king of Israel. He saw the whole thing as a trick to spark off fresh warfare between the two nations. He was very perturbed. "Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends to me to cure a man of his leprosy?" he said. "Just consider 'and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me.' There were many things he might have done as a king, but he was powerless in this field.

He did at least recognize the fact, which is more than can be said for many rulers and leaders in modern times in relation to the pitiful state of mankind. How long they have asserted their own ability to bring about a golden age of peace and prosperity among the peoples of the world. They have their summit conferences and their great schemes. We have seen the coming into being and

decease of the League of Nations and the equal failure of the United Nations Organization to bring about the conditions it set out to achieve at its formation in 1945. Its headquarters occupies an 18 acre site on Manhattan Island, New York, and millions of dollars are spent yearly with what result? While it is true that considerable material help has been given to those in undeveloped countries, it has to be asked, "Have we seen the peace and security among the nations which it pledged itself to achieve? Is the world really a better place in which to live? Are people any happier and more contented?" The answer to such questions can only be, "No!" The solution to the problem does not lie in the wielding of royal sceptres or in statesmen, politicians, scientists and philosophers. Nor is it to be found in a lifeless religious system.

Naaman was sent to the wrong person and many sin sick souls are being sent to the wrong people today. However, in his case, he was eventually directed to the prophet of God of whom the little maid had spoken. It must have been quite an impressive sight as the Syrian commander arrived at the door of Elisha's house with his horses and chariot. But what do you think? The prophet did not even come out to greet him, let alone show him the anticipated respect for such an important person. Elisha just sent a messenger telling him, **"Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."**

It was such a simple course which Elisha instructed Naaman to take, but it did not suit him one little bit. He had his own preconceived ideas as to the nature of this cure and the one prescribed was most humiliating.

In fact, he was furious, and went away complaining bitterly that he thought Elisha would have waved his hand over the place and cured him. How his pride had been hurt. Did not this Israelite prophet realize who he was? He had not even bothered to come to the door of his house! Instead of an expected display of supernatural power, he had been told to go and wash in the River Jordan seven times. Jordan! That muddy river! Why, there were the Abana and Pharpar rivers which transformed the wilderness around Damascus in his own country. Were they not better than all the waters of Israel? Oh, he was angry. How dare this man tell him, the great Naaman, to do such a thing.

How typical was his reaction to many who are told of God's remedy for their sin. When they hear that they have to come to Him just as they are, as guilty, lost sinners, with nothing to plead of personal merit or achievement, but that they have to repent of their sins and cast themselves on the mercy of God, trusting in the atoning work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ wrought upon the cross of Calvary, then pride is wounded deeply. The natural man despises such a course, because it humbles him to the dust and he does not like being humbled.

Among Naaman's servants were those who saw the folly of his reaction and were prepared to reason with him. **"My father"** they said, **"if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"** They knew that, brave soldier that he was, Naaman would not have flinched from some great task to effect his cure, but Elisha had not told him to

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# The Only Effectual

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do this. In fact he had been told to do something very simple, but here he was rejecting it because his pride had been hurt. As they appealed to him, the great warrior realized what a foolish, arrogant man he had been. He proceeded to the River Jordan and dipped himself seven times according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like that of a little child and he was clean. Then he returned to Elisha with all his attendants and came and stood before him, saying, **“Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.”**

Do I speak to someone who has been unwilling to acknowledge their condition as a guilty sinner in the sight of God? Has there been a refusal to come in true humility to Him in repentance and faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? I tell you, if you come to God on His terms, you will know the cleansing power of His precious blood, and the peace of God which passes all understanding will be your portion as you become reconciled to Him. Like Naaman, you will be able to say, **“Now I know”** with a conviction born of experience.

Oh, the joy of being able to say, ‘I know in Whom I have trusted.’ A due appreciation of what happened at Calvary can only result in the same happening to us. As Isaac Watts puts it in his well-known hymn, “When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.” (*Watching and Waiting*, January-March, 2017).



## The Short Pews



Brief  
Articles  
by Curtis  
Pugh

### LOOKING FOR MY FREE WILL

I keep hearing about this thing they call free will. I can not find mine. True, I have a will, but it is a part of me and my heart – desires and emotions – are evil. The prophet wrote in Jeremiah 17:9, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”** My will is to act according to my heart. I sin because it is my will to sin. If my will was free from my nature I could will to stop sinning and do so, but I cannot.

I have studied the Bible for many years and talked to many people about this thing called free will. None of them have been able to show me even one verse in the Bible that says that we humans have a free will. I cannot find such a verse either. And since I am not the only one who commits sin, I think it must be that everyone has a **“deceitful”** and **“wicked”** heart as the verse quoted above says.

Jesus said to some very religious people, **“O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”** (Matt. 12:34). Another place the Lord said, **“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies”** (Matt. 15:19). So while I may want to do what is right, my will is not free from my heart and I still sin.

Since I cannot remember having a free will, I do not

remember losing it. It seems to me that Adam and Eve had free wills because they were created in untested holiness. So I think Adam must have lost free will for himself and all his posterity in his fall.

Jesus said: **“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life”** (John 5:39-40). The people to whom Jesus spoke these words had a problem. They did not have a will to come to Christ. And not having a free will to enable them to come in a saving way to Him, they could not come because their will was bound to their heart. That is why Jesus said, **“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day”** (John 6:44).

If anyone can tell me how to get a free will, I would be glad to hear from them. If you know of anyone who has a free will, or if you have a free will, please tell me how you know your will is free from your evil heart. A person who has a free will and is therefore sinless should be able to tell me how they got their free will and should no longer sin.

### ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE

Often zeal is a good thing. Zeal, or enthusiasm for good things, is to be commended. Being a “deadhead” on the job or as a parent or in service for the Lord makes life a burden. In the matter of our relationship with Him, Christ said: **“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent”** (Rev. 3:19). Not only do lost sinners need to repent, Christians also are guilty of sins daily. Walking with God is a matter of daily repentance.

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### BEREA BAPTIST BANNER

#### Financial Report

2-1-2017 to 2-28-2017

Beginning Balance ..... \$2,070.63

#### RECEIPTS:

Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX .....	50.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL .....	75.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL .....	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX .....	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV .....	313.45
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL .....	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL .....	25.00
Emmanuel B. C., Oldtown, KY .....	100.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR .....	12.50
Gail Knowles, Portland, ME .....	20.00
Grace B. C., Rual Hall, NC .....	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL .....	50.00
Grace M B. C., Tulsa, OK .....	35.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV .....	100.00
Landmark B. C., Moncks Corner, SC .....	100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC .....	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY .....	35.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH .....	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN .....	50.00
Parkway Landmark B. C., Springfield, OR .....	100.00
Paul Kirkpatrick, Antioch, TN .....	50.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL .....	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR .....	50.00
Ray Crosson, Brandon, FL .....	20.50
Reedy's Creek B. C., Calhoun City, MS .....	100.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS .....	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL .....	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX .....	60.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA .....	25.00
Subscriptions .....	86.00
Anonymous .....	1,220.00
Sub Total .....	\$3,587.45
TOTAL .....	\$5,658.08

#### EXPENDITURES:

Printing .....	490.00
Postage .....	660.54
Wages .....	2,300.00
FICA .....	175.90
Supplies .....	430.48
Bank charge .....	\$13.00
Total Expenditures .....	\$4,069.98
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$1,588.10



### BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST

#### Financial Report

2-1-2017 to 2-28-2017

Beginning Balance ..... \$6,163.50

#### RECEIPTS:

Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....	225.00
Calvary I. B. C., Sumas, WA .....	100.00
.....	325.00
TOTAL .....	6,488.50

#### EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time .....	740.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES .....	740.00
.....	5,748.50
Interest .....	+ .05
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$5,748.55



# The Short Pews

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But zeal, or enthusiasm, is a bad thing when it is coupled with ignorance. Two very young boys wanted to please their father. While he was at work they busied themselves in the garage with house paint, coating the family car a new color. They had zeal for a thing, but in their ignorance their enthusiasm caused them to do something harmful and costly. In religious matters zeal, coupled with ignorance, does much harm. We are well aware that there are religious zealots in this world who in their zeal beat their wives, mutilate their daughters and murder those who do not convert. The thief also may be zealous when he comes to steal and to destroy.

In Paul's day the Jews had great enthusiasm for the Old Testament Law. They had so much zeal for the Law that they missed Christ. Paul wrote of them: **"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"** (Rom. 10:2-4). Paul said that the righteousness which makes one acceptable to God is in Christ. He is the end of the Law for righteousness. Christ taught that the Old Testament Law-system was done away with when John the Baptist began to preach. He said, **"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man [individual people] presseth into it"** (Luke 16:16).

And yet a great many people, some of them claiming to be

following Christ, are busy trying to establish their own righteousness by their attempt at keeping the Law. (Usually they pick and choose what parts of the Old Testament Law they want to keep.) But no man ever kept the Law. It was decided by the apostles and elders long ago that converts to Christ should not have the Law imposed upon them. Peter said regarding the Gentile converts and the Law, **"Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they"** (Acts 15:10-11). **"... By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified"** (Gal. 2:16). Be zealous, but according to truth!



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Berea Baptist Church of Mantachie, MS would like to announce their Spring Fellowship meeting on April 8th. Scheduled speakers are Elders Timothy Works, and Todd Bryant.

Services begin at 10:00 a.m. and a noon meal will be provided by the church.

All are invited to attend.

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The Philadelphia B. C. of Decatur, AL and Pastor Doyal Thomas would like to announce their Summer Revival /Quarterly Fellowship Meeting for June 14th - 18th. Service times are Wednesday thru Friday at 7:00 p.m., Saturday 10:00 a.m., and Sunday 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

The primary speaker will be Elder Nathaniel Hille.

On Saturday Elder Shaun Trescott will be the additional speaker and a noon meal will be provided.

All are invited to attend.

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The Windsor Baptist Church in Windsor, IL is seeking a qualified candidate for pastor. We are a sovereign grace independent Baptist church, small in number but rich in truth. We are seeking a candidate qualified for the position as described in I Timothy 3. Any interested potential candidate please contact Brother John Gregory at windsorbaptist.grace@gmail.com or phone 217-728-8311.

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The Landmark Baptist Church in Moncks Corner, South Carolina, is without a pastor. The members of this local New Testament church would like to make a request to pastors and members of other

New Testament churches: do you have a man in your membership that believes the Lord is calling him to the ministry, and if so, would he consider relocating to this area and work in the church here teaching the truth of God's Word? It is our prayer that the Lord will send as He did in the church at Antioch. Even though we are without a pastor, we would carefully consider the one who the Lord God sends as pastor after the church has observed areas of qualification that are mentioned in First Timothy 3. For answers to questions you may have, please contact Brother Andrew Cook at [acook1947@gmail.com](mailto:acook1947@gmail.com).

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The Lord's Baptist Church in Tacoma Washington is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact Gaylen Russell at 360-879-5565 (home) or 253-495-4567 (cell) or by Email: [gaylenr@rainierconnect.com](mailto:gaylenr@rainierconnect.com).

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The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Caldwell, KS is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact the church in writing at SGBC, 400 N. Main St., Caldwell, KS 67022, or by phone Brother Darin Wiley 620-863-2431.

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The Faith Missionary Baptist Church of Cobbitty, South Wales, Australia is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact David Jackson at 4 Station Street, Thirlmere, NSW 2572, Australia or Email: [shellie45@bigpond.com.au](mailto:shellie45@bigpond.com.au).

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The Victory Baptist Church of Chehalis, Washington is in need of a pastor. Any interested brother may call Gerry Greisen at (360) 985-7975, or Mark Fenison at (360) 751-2929.

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