

The Berea Baptist Banner

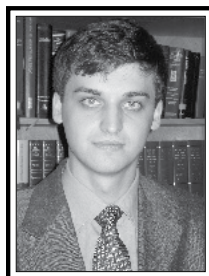
"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" Ps. 60:4

Leaving Christmas

By Raul Enyedi
of Bocsa, Romania

Why I Ceased Observing Christmas: A Personal Testimony

I, too, like many other Christians have been saddened and upset by the increasing secularization of the winter holidays. With every year's passing they become more superficial, losing more and more of their traditional values. Commercial interests seem to swallow up these values and use them only to increase profit. I, too, like many others once had a nostalgia and a longing for the old times when traditions were respected: when Christmas day had



such an emotional charge more than any other day of the year. I was among the voices that cried out: "Let's bring Christ back into Christmas!"

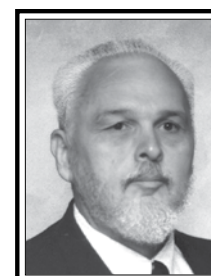
I wanted Christ to be back into the center of the holiday and to receive once again the worship He received from the shepherds and the wise men. And I was even one of those who insisted that Christmas was not about Santa, but about Christ. The carols I chose to sing talked only about Christ. I

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The United States Is Not Israel

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma

It is a fact that unregenerate people cannot understand the Bible in a spiritually profitable way. This is clearly stated in I Corinthians 2:14: **"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."** Therefore it is to be expected that people who have not had an experience of grace will have views foreign to the Bible even though they are religious in some fashion or another. Having the Holy Spirit as guide, even the true children of God do not come



to a correct understanding of the Bible automatically. God's thoughts are not somehow supernaturally injected into the minds and hearts

of born again people. The Preacher wrote: **"much study is a weariness of the flesh,"** (Eccl. 12:12) and every faithful student of God's Word knows that to be so. The Holy Ghost through Paul instructed a younger preacher named Timothy thus: **"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be**

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While We Wait

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

"And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:10-11). I want us to think about the imminent return of Jesus Christ; and, I want us to think about the time that has gone by, and the potentially small amount of time that may remain for us.

The title of my message is "While



We Wait." Obviously, I have in reference the return of the Lord – the Second Coming of Jesus Christ; and our duty to wait for, look for, and expect that coming of the

Lord. Well, what does it mean to wait for the Lord's return? Or, we might say, what does it mean to "wait upon the Lord"?

I think it would be good for us to consider this "waiting" that we are engaged in, as a sort of royal or regal thing. In other words, think about how a servant waits upon his mas-

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Saved or Deceived WHICH?

By Buell H. Kazee
(1900 - 1976)

HAVE YOU BEEN SAVED OR DECEIVED?

Large numbers of people sincerely believe they have been saved, but they are deceived. The Lord tells us that many will come in the last day saying to Him, **"Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works"** (Matt. 7:22)? There will be false prophets, and preachers, and church workers, and many other professing Christians, who actually believed they were saved and doing



God's work, who will hear the Lord say unto them, **"I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"** (Matt. 7:23). So, my friend, you can be

deceived about this matter of your salvation.

You may say, I know I am saved because I feel like I am. You can be mistaken in feeling. Only when feeling is in line with God's Word is it the right feeling. Satan can give you a feeling which may satisfy your understanding, but still it would

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If sin were not deceitful, it would never be delightful.
If it could be seen in all its native deformity, men would loathe it.
"Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat." (Proverbs 23:3).

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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 strengthen His churches in the most holy faith.
5. To motivate God's children to a closer fellowship 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.

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Leaving Christmas

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wanted with all my heart to have a truly Christian Christmas. But I knew that in order to have that, I had to do everything according to the Scriptures and eliminate all that was contrary to it. And so it was that I began my study to find what the Bible really does say about Christmas. Very early I found that the New Testament does not contain any commandment to observe the birth of Christ. This was a bit odd since in the Old Testament when the Lord gave the Law to Israel He gave them specific and detailed commandments to observe certain feasts or celebrations.

Not only have I found no specific commandment in the New Testament about observing the birth of Christ, but I found no exact date of His birth either. After all my inquiry, I was able to find only an approximate period which was sometime late September or early October. There was no way Christ's birth could take place at the end of December because the shepherds did not keep their flocks out on the fields during this month (see Luke 2:8). Besides that a census would have been impossible at that time for traveling conditions in Israel were very difficult in the midst of the rainy season (Luke 2:1-3).

My next discovery troubled me even more. The Bible says nothing about Christmas carols, the tree, the exchange of gifts, the special church programs and the preparing of rich tables in honor of the birth of the Savior. There is no commandment and no example in the Bible for anything that we do at Christmas. I asked myself "how can I have a Christian, scriptural Christmas when nothing that I do is found in the Bible? How did we Christians come to observe a holiday not commanded by the Bible? Why did we choose an obviously wrong date and customs that resemble nothing in the Scripture? And if everything that pertains to Christmas - things that I assumed to be Christian - do not come from the New Testament, where did they come from?" Oh,

how great a surprise was the answer to the latter question...

All the encyclopedias I read showed me that the origin of the holiday is not Biblical but pagan. And they listed for me books about myths and history of religions. The Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic sources openly confessed the pagan origins of Christmas. And so I learned that the ancient pagan nations had a great festival dedicated to the birth of the sun god which had different names in their different languages. The Egyptians called him Osiris, the Babylonians Tammuz, the Persians Mythra and the Romans Saturn. In Latin they gave him the title *Sol Invictis*, the Unconquered Sun. It was the same god everywhere, only the names differed. All these pagan nations celebrated the birth of the sun god in the winter time, just after the solstice (December 21st) because that is when daylight starts increasing again. The Romans celebrated the Saturnalia during this time which is the holiday dedicated to Saturn. During this period there was an excess of eating, drinking and all sorts of orgies: a "merry" time for pagans. And December 25th was the climax of this pagan "spirituality". The Christmas carols are also directly connected to this pagan holiday. The Romans called them *calendae*. Groups of people went from house to house wishing luck, happiness and fertility to their hosts. The Christmas tree is also an ancient pagan symbol. And so is the Christmas exchange of gifts which the pagan Romans called *sigillaria* when the children were given gifts of small figurines of clay or wax.

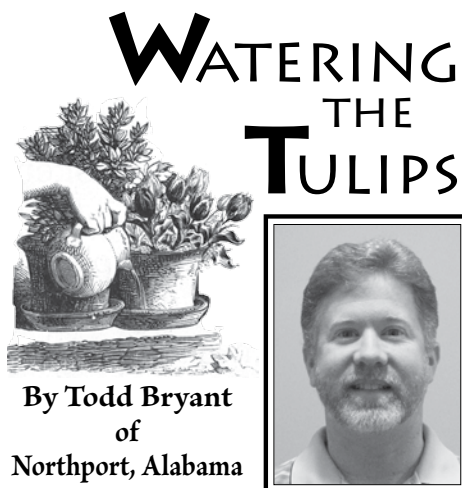
How did we Christians come to observe a holiday not commanded by the Bible: a holiday pagan to its very core? History tells us that Christians decided to celebrate Christmas after they began to depart from the Scriptures and started making their own laws and rules. After the time of Constantine the Great who was ruler of the Roman Empire from AD 306 to 337 Christianity became the official religion of the Empire. In this union the Catholic party made a lethal compromise with the

State. Multitudes of pagans were "Christened" while still devoted to their own gods. Not being able to separate them from their idols the Church decided to keep the pagan date and customs, but give them Christian names. John Chrysostom (AD 347-407), among many others, associated the pagan holiday with the name of Christ. Said he: "But they call it the 'Birthday of the Unconquered'. Who indeed is so unconquered as Our Lord...? Or, if they say that it is the birthday of the Sun, He is the Sun of Justice." Such was the way in which the Christianized pagans were kept satisfied. For it did not matter to them by what name their god was called as long as they could keep their pagan worship customs. They did not worship Jesus Christ, but they worshiped the sun god whom they could also call Jesus Christ.

Upon finding these troubling things, I started asking others why we keep this holiday. Why do we keep Christmas at a pagan date with pagan customs? I was hoping to find some light in their answers. When I asked: "Why do we observe Christmas?", I received many answers. Some were even childish. I will only mention the answers that made me think and ponder.

1. *It is a good thing to set a day or two apart to remember that Jesus was born to bring salvation to mankind.* I was not satisfied by this answer because I asked myself: who decides what is good for me as a Christian? God, or men? I believe that God, my Father, knows better than anyone what is good and what is bad for me. He is a good Father, and wants the best for me. And He told me in the Scriptures what is good. Now if the Bible does not tell me that we need to have a holiday honoring the birth of the Lord, this means that I do not need such a holiday for my spiritual welfare. I ask all those who tell me that it is good to have such a holiday: Do you think that God hid or refused to reveal something good for us? If Christmas is something good and God did not tell us about it that means that He hid something good from us. This monstrous idea is nothing more or less than

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By Todd Bryant
of
Northport, Alabama

The Wrath of God

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them” (Rom. 1:18-19).

The “love of God” is a theme which dominates pulpits across our land. Without doubt, the Gospel reveals to man exactly what true love is (I John 4:9). How incredible, really, that a holy and righteous God would send His Son to die for sinners! Certainly, the “love of God” is a wonderful theme. Yet, without understanding something of the “wrath of God,” we lose some understanding of His love.

God is infinitely holy and righteous. There is no sin in God as He cannot sin. Being a just and righteous Judge, as He is, sin cannot simply be overlooked. Our Creator has a standard and it is strict. A holy and righteous God can only give a standard which reflects His holy and righteous nature. So, God’s requirement of mankind is that we, too, be holy and righteous. Yet, the law quickly reveals to us how impossible this is.

Our text verse says that **“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”** This is a warning, plain and simple. There is coming a time that God will judge mankind. Those that are still **“dead in trespasses and sins”** (Eph. 2:1), must give an account to a righteous God that cannot overlook sin and remain righteous. This should be terrifying to those outside of Christ.

But, from the looks of the daily news, it is not.

On July 8, 1741, Jonathan Edwards preached a famous sermon entitled, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” His theme was simple – sinners will ultimately be judged. They will be found guilty. God is omnipotent and therefore able to carry out this judgment. And, it is certain that this time is quickly approaching. It would serve every reader of this article well to read that sermon as it is readily available (and needful) today.

Knowing and understanding that **“God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day”** (Ps. 7:11), we ought to be that much more thankful for the work of Christ. I Corinthians 1:30 says, **“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”** In ourselves, we remain **“by nature the children of wrath, even as others”** (Eph. 2:3). Yet, Christ became sin for us (II Cor. 5:21). Though we are guilty of sin and deserving of punishment, Jesus willingly laid down His life for His sheep. He bore the penalty of our sins (John 10:11, 28). In Christ, we will never face the wrath of God.

Child of God, take this moment to thank God for saving you from your wretched, miserable condition before Him. Thank Him even this instant for pulling you out of the miry clay and sitting your feet on the Solid Rock, which is Christ (Ps. 40:2).

Modern Day Pharisses

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess” (Matt. 23:23-25).

Are we modern day Pharisees? Seriously, we ought to consider that question. How do we judge one

another? And should we? How do we judge those outside? Do we ever look at a person and believe (in our heart whether we admit it or not) that they are beyond help? Do we sometimes try to convert people’s way of life before we point them to Christ? If we answer “yes” to any of these questions, we have at least a bit of Phariseism looming inside all of us.

The Pharisees saw religion as the way to God. They believed if you conformed to all of the external religious instructions, then you were assured eternal life. Yet, Jesus clearly said that they had **“neglected the weightier matters of the law: judgment and mercy and faith.”** They were doing little more than teaching a salvation by works. And if we are not careful, we will do the same.

Firstly, why do you believe you are going to Heaven? This is not a small question and there are not varied acceptable answers. The only correct answer here is, “I believe that Jesus died for my sins, and that He rose again for my justification, and that He is alive today.” Obviously, the wording can vary. But, the foundation of that answer stands sure and is supported by a plethora of Scripture.

But what is the common answer these days? We may well hear somebody say, “I prayed the sinner’s prayer.” What sinner’s prayer? Surprisingly, we see no example of that in the Bible. Or, “I joined the church.” And yet the Scripture is clear that Judas was part of Christ’s inner group for some 3 ½ years and certainly was a devil from the beginning (John 6:70). And again, one may say, “I was baptized.” But clearly, the house of Cornelius was saved prior to baptism (Acts 10:44-48). Many varied answers could be given, but only one will suffice – “In Christ alone I am saved.”

But, do we often give the lost the wrong idea both by our own words and by our actions? What of this “everybody close their eyes and bow their heads” propaganda today? If the Spirit is at work, do we honestly believe we will stop His movement if eyes are open? And what are we truly teaching Spirit led seekers – that it is OK to be ashamed of

Christ? Jesus warned against such a thing numerous times. What of this “repeat this prayer” normality today? Would we not be better to stick with Scriptural practices? Should we not just point folks to “repent and believe” which is the common theme from both Jesus and the early churches?

Help us get back to the Bible. Help us point people to Jesus and leave the external religion out of it. Help us point people to trust in Christ alone (Eph. 1:13)...not external religion.



Leaving Christmas

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the same seed of doubt planted by Satan in Eve’s heart suggesting to her that God does not want our good. He has kept something good from us. If Christmas really was good, or necessary, our Lord and His apostles would definitely have taught us to observe it. Apostle Paul told the elders of the church in Ephesus: **“I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you... For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”** (Acts 20:20, 27). But Paul does not teach anything about Christmas. Why is that? Because Christmas is not profitable to us. To deny this is to deny the apostle’s sincerity and even worse God’s sincerity.

2. *“We need a special day to remember Christ’s birth. It does not matter what day, and December 25th is just as good as any other day.”* I can not help but wonder then if we are so honest in our desire to pay our homage to the birth of our Savior why did not we choose a date that is closer to the time when He was born (end of September, beginning of October)? Why was December 25th chosen, from all the days of the year, knowing that it is the most pagan of all? Is it just a coincidence? I do not think so!

3. *“What is not explicitly and implicitly forbidden in the Scriptures, is allowed. The Bible neither approves nor disapproves of such a holiday: therefore it is up to us.”* Can we possibly understand the silence of the Scripture as being permissive in such a case? Or rather its silence

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is the strongest argument against observing the holiday? Let us remember that all the Christmas customs that we have today also existed in the time of Christ and the apostles! They were not found with the Christians however, but with the pagans!!! The date, the celebration of the birth, the carols, the tree, the gifts, the rich tables and many other details related to the feast that existed in the time our Lord walked on this earth. Did He identify Himself with any of these? Did He commission His apostles to go to the pagans and teach them that He is the Unconquered Sun celebrated by them? Did He commission His congregations to preach that the Christmas tree represents Him? The answer is an obvious and absolute NO! All the analogies between Christ and this holiday were made much later by "Christians" who thought that they could change and improve the Bible. They were looking for excuses for their desertion from the boundaries of the Scripture!

The feast of the Nativity cannot be dissociated from its pagan origin. The Christian's stubborn persistence in celebrating Christ's birth on December 25th with carols, Christmas tree, gifts, a special service at the church and a festive table at home – just as the pagans celebrated their god – prove that we identified ourselves with the paganism and borrowed from it in our worship to the true God. And in this respect, the Scripture is not silent at all, but repeatedly condemns the association of true with false worship and teaches a complete separation from idols and their worship. Identification with paganism which is the borrowing of pagan gods or pagan models of worship is most certainly expressly condemned in the Bible: both in the Old and in the New Testament.

The Orthodox and the Catholic Churches openly admit their lack of concern in the fact that the holiday and its customs are pagan in origin. They claim these pagan customs were made Christian and

purified by the sanctifying power of the Church. In their opinion the Church has sanctifying power which could be extended even upon paganism. They claim these things, once "christianized" can honor and serve God. This claim is false, unbiblical and illogical. It is rejected by anyone who believes *Sola Scriptura* (The Scriptures as the final and only authority for all we believe and practice)! No one faithful to the Scriptures can allow for the arrogance of such a claim. How can we give an honest and truthful answer to the fact that we try to dress up a pagan holiday in Christian clothes: changing only the name of the person adored? The association with paganism in worship is not at all part of those things which the Bible neither approves nor condemns, but leaves to us as some claim. The Bible says: **"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you"** (II Cor. 6:16-17). This is totally true for Christmas!

4. *"It is good to take advantage of the fact that the lost world is thinking about Christ and His birth in this time*

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of year and preach Christ to them." But what kind of Christ do these people have and desire? Is not it strange that the world hates Christ but loves Christmas? Why is that? Because they do not worship Christ! They really worship the sun god which they have become accustomed to call Jesus Christ and whom they called by lots of names before the fifth century. But the world is not willing to accept the true Jesus Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth! Our identification with them in this holiday does not help us to show them the true Jesus Christ, but rather it strengthens their conviction that we worship the same god as them, the one they falsely call Jesus.

5. *"We should not judge anyone that observes Christmas, because 'One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it'"* (Rom. 14:5-6). The attempt to justify the adoption of a pagan holiday with this text is childish. Such an attempt shows that people love this holiday so much that they will twist the Holy Scripture in order to excuse Christmas. The text in Romans 14 does not speak about pagan holidays, but about the Old Testament feasts which were commanded by the Lord to Israel.

6. Finally, when those whom I have asked admitted that there is no Biblical foundation for Christmas they usually asked in return: *"But what is wrong with celebrating the birth of the Lord, because we worship the true Jesus and it is Him we adore in our carols? Even though the customs are pagan in origin we changed them so that now Christ is in the center of the holiday."* I asked myself the same thing. When I ran out of arguments, this was the last question thrown in the battle: my last line of defense for Christmas. My heart was desperately trying to hold fast to the feast, while upon my mind were working the convincing arguments of Scripture, logic and common sense. And this is the conclusion I reached:

Observing this holiday is wrong and harmful because:

It requires us to go beyond the Scriptures, to deny their authority, to doubt that God revealed in it everything that is good for me. It means rejecting the *Sola Scriptura*!

It identifies me with the lost world and not vice versa. The nature of Christianity is such that when it is combined with paganism the latter will never become Christian, but Christianity will always end up being pagan.

True worship is **"in spirit and in truth"** (John 4:24). False worship is in the flesh and in error. Is Christmas worship **"in truth"** when we sing and say and preach that Christ was born on December 25th knowing He was not? We lie in everything we do or say that associates the birth of Jesus Christ, directly or indirectly, with Christmas. The Christ of the Bible was not born on December 25th! Will God accept our worship if it is not in the truth, but is founded on a pagan lie?

I eventually surrendered to these arguments: they overwhelmed me. More than 10 years have passed since I quit celebrating Christmas. Some call me fanatic and narrow minded. Others doubt that I am a good Christian or a Christian at all because I do not observe Christmas. However, I felt like I was set free. I have not missed any spiritual blessings since I do not believe in Christmas any more: quite the contrary. Serving God far from paganism in freedom and within the boundaries of the Scripture is a far better experience than trying to serve Him as men see fit.

Christmas is a pagan holiday. Everything done at Christmas time is rooted in paganism. Paganism is drastically condemned by the Bible. Pagan worship is an abomination before the Lord. But men want to keep it thinking that they can get something good for us and pleasing to God from this pagan holiday. They judge me for not observing Christmas and for testifying against it. But judge for yourself whether it is right before God to obey men rather than God!



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ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). Country people who were raised on a diet of King James English in the mountains of Southeastern Oklahoma used to admonish us children to exercise diligence in performing a task by saying, "you study to do it." They meant that we were to pay attention and expend effort or "elbow grease," as we called it, in getting something done. They meant we should devote all our faculties both mental and physical to see that the assigned task was properly completed. That is Paul's meaning in his counsel to Timothy. A mere intellectual apprehension of the bare facts of the Bible is not what is meant here. Furthermore Timothy was to rightly divide the Word. Carelessness and a haphazard approach were not to be allowed. He was not to have a crazy-quilt exegesis of the Word and neither should we. Did you ever play "pick up sticks" or "Jack Straws?" Some people play a kind of "Jack Straws" with the Bible. The object in Jack Straws was to selectively lift individual sticks out of a pile without disturbing the others. Some people seem to select Bible verses that suit their ideas without considering all the verses which bear upon a subject. Or they may quote only part of a verse and by doing so give a distorted meaning to the Bible.

Miles Coverdale (c. 1488 – 1569) made use of William Tyndale's translation of the Bible and produced the first complete Bible in the English language. The importance of this to us is that more than seventy-five percent of our King James Bible is taken verbatim from Tyndale's translation. Anyone who will bother to compare the two will see this. Coverdale gave what we think is the best brief advice to readers of the Bible who wish to really understand it. Here is his advice: "It shall greatly help you to understand Scripture if you mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and by whom, with what words, where, at what time, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goes before and what follows." How good it would be if all who study the Bible

followed this wise and thoughtful advice! Following this advice has made many persons sound Baptists!

Today it seems that some Baptists have adopted the idea that the United States has somehow replaced Israel. Others seem to think that the unscriptural and mystical "something" that they call "the church" has replaced Israel. Some have called this last view "replacement theology." They think that Christians in the U. S. can claim the promises of God made to Israel. This is not "rightly dividing the word of truth." The Lord Jesus said He would build His congregation and He did so. This was something new. What Christ built was not and is not "Israel warmed over." It is neither legal, logical or Biblical to say that an agreement or promise made to a specific entity is an obligation to another and different entity. But this kind of promise-mangling takes place far too often among professing Christians. Before we look at some examples of this kind of misappropriation of Bible verses, perhaps we need to consider how people tend to look at the past since the two are intertwined in some regard. Sometimes mere antiquity produces romantic notions about things. We talk about the "good old days," but really they were the days so long ago that we have forgotten how bad they really were. The Bible says, **"Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this"** (Ecc. 7:10). The plain meaning is that the "former days" were not "better than these!"

Some folk seem to want us to believe that at one time – "back in the good old days" – these United States was a morally upright, Christian nation and therefore blessed by God. This preacher is not lacking in appreciation for the Biblical principles upon which the legal system of the United States was founded. But – and here is where the rub comes in – most of the United States government officials and most of her citizens are now what they always have been: reprobates. God's remnant is just that: a remnant! The officials of the United States have never lived up to the laws and principles upon which this nation was founded, let alone to the Word

of God. Space forbids going into the histories of the many and varied groups who suffered unjustly at the hand of this nation. Suffice it to say that I know the history of some of my own ancestors. They were Choctaw "Indians." Anyone who knows even a little about the treatment meted out by the U. S. government to "Indians" will not dare say these things were the actions of a righteous or Christian nation. Neither have we space to deal with the lies, corruption, crooked dealings, etc., etc., that this country's government has perpetuated from her beginning. So why do we have romantic notions about how this nation was once a godly one? Or that it was founded by godly men? Or that the promises of God to Israel are ours because we once were or are now a godly people? We grant that the founding fathers of this nation were smart men. We rejoice that they founded this nation on Bible principles! But this nation cannot be called God's people anymore than any other Gentile nation can. God chose the twelve tribes of Israel to be His people! And God said to them: **"You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities"** (Amos 3:2). Did you get that? God said **"you only!"** The Jews are the only nation God knows in this way! They are the only nation with which God has made a covenant! God said so!

In spite of the many evils perpetuated by the U. S. government some people seem to think that God has blessed these United States because the people have been Christian or good, or Bible believing. Folks, it just ain't so! Some people quote II Chronicles 7:14 as if it applies to the United States. That verse says: **"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."**

This preacher believes every word of that verse, but it is not a promise to these United States! It is not a promise to her Christian citizens! In Isaiah 65:1 God said these words: **"I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name."** This verse speaks of a Gentile

nation. God said that Gentile nations were **"not called by my name."** It is the Jews who were and are called by God's name. Furthermore, the context proves that this promise of healing of the land is to and for Israel. Here is this verse in its context: **"And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place"** (II Chron. 7:12-15). Any candid reader of that passage must say that it pertains to Israel! The United States is not Israel and that promise is to God's elect nation, Israel. The promise is not to Christians. Christians were not promised land or prosperity. In fact, Christians do not have a land. They are not a national people. Often they have wandered about from country to country fleeing persecution. Jesus said to His disciples: **"In the world ye shall have tribulation"** (John 16:33). Paul wrote: **"That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know"** (I Thess. 3:3-4). Again Paul wrote: **"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"** (II Tim. 3:12). And yet many in America are thinking and saying that God wants to bless this nation with ease, prosperity, safety and comforts in their natural lives when God says His children are to suffer in this life. The Bible says we are **"appointed thereunto!"**

The verse that says: **"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD"** is often only partially quoted, in an effort to apply it in some way as a conditional promise to Christians

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U.S. Is Not Israel

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in the United States. A partial quote is often a misleading quote. The rest of that verse says, **“and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance”** (Ps. 33:12). The complete statement makes it obvious that it is speaking of Israel! Israel is the people whom God chose for His own inheritance! That verse is a statement of fact about Israel. It is not conditional in any way whatsoever. It does not say that if a nation will make God their Lord they will be blessed. It does not say that at all! It has absolutely nothing to do with any nation or people other than those **“whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance”** - the Jews! (Psalm 144:15 says substantially the same thing and the context has to do with David, king of Israel, and his sons and daughters). Leave it to the Roman Church and her Protestant daughters to take Old Testament promises that were made to Israel and apply them to other than the nation Israel. It is neither Baptist nor Biblical to think that way. Search the Bible! Americans are not God’s chosen people! They never were and never shall be! And it is contrary to consistent and honest Bible interpretation to make the Bible speak to Christian Americans. It is also contrary to old Coverdale’s sound advice to do such things. More importantly it is not rightly dividing the Word! It results in confusion! When this haphazard, willy-nilly practice of interpretation is used, the authority of the Scripture is broken. Each man may chose what verses he will apply to whatever group or situation he chooses: thus man become the authority and not God’s Book.

Some would have us believe that the reason the United States has prospered is because God has blessed the obedience and goodness of her citizens and government. In other words, U. S. citizens have earned or somehow qualified for God’s favor. That stinks of Arminianism! Are we to think that God looked down from eternity and saw that U. S. citizens would be good and so planned to bless them? Or shall we say that God waited until He saw that the

U. S. citizens were good and so He decided then to bless them? Do we not understand the impossibility of mingling law-keeping (works) and grace? (see Romans 11:6). The Bible teaches that God has decreed all things that shall be from eternity. His plan is not subject to the actions of men either good or bad. **“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world”** are the words of Acts 15:18. **“For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”** are the words of Isaiah 14:27. God has a purpose according to Ephesians 1:11: that verse says that the children of God were predestinated **“according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”** God has blessed the United States for a purpose and that purpose is just about fulfilled if this preacher is thinking right. It is about over and done. That purpose was twofold. One purpose was to be a friend to little Israel and our national government is about to throw her under the bus. In addition, the United States was once a great repository of truth. Sound Baptists were here. Sound preachers went as missionaries spreading the truth. Overall, that is no longer true: most Baptists are apostate! And so we must ask: what purpose does the United States of America serve now? Few preachers know and preach the truth and few of them are going abroad as missionaries. Step by step our government is moving away from being a blessing and a help to Israel (see Genesis 12:3). How can we expect God’s blessing upon such a nation that sanctions and openly approves of baby-murderers, sodomites, blasphemers, apostates, adulterers, fornicators, Bible-deniers and such like? May God bless American by blessing Americans with **“godly sorrow:”** the godly sorrow that **“worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of”** (II Cor. 7:10).

In closing we must ask this question: why is the United States not mentioned in end-time prophecies? Other nations are mentioned: some by name. From the silence of Scripture on this subject are we able

to arrive at any probable conclusion? Probably the reason the United States is not mentioned in the Bible as a player in end-time events is this: she will not have a significant place in those things that are to come to pass. Can it be that this government will either cease to exist or shall be reduced to the status of a third-rate nation with little or no power and no significant role in end time events? That seems likely. One thing is sure: the Bible, as always, is true and God says, **“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God”** (Ps. 9:17). The United States is not Israel! But it seems she fits into the category as a nation that has forgotten God – willfully and purposely! We as Christians can rightly say this: may God be pleased to continue to do what He has been doing among the Gentiles since apostolic days: may He continue to visit the people of the U. S. **“to take out of them a people for his name”** (Acts 15:14).



While We Wait

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ter. **“Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us”** (Ps. 123:2). Or, think about how an order of priests (in Israel, or even in some earthly religion) will wait upon their god. **“But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests, which minister unto the LORD, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business: And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him”** (II Chro. 13:10-11). Or, think about how a child will wait upon the return of a father that has gone away upon business or gone away to war. **“Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:**

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:30-31). I think some of these illustrations ought to give us some idea of what our behavior and attitude ought to be “while we wait” for our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

So, to “wait” upon the Lord does not imply only some passive attitude or behavior; rather, to “wait” upon the Lord requires some action and some duty, and some performance on our part. In fact, to “wait” upon the Lord does not mean that we are simply biding our time anticipating the return of the Lord. Rather, as servants that “wait” upon the Lord, we should be doing His bidding, and performing His will and purpose – just as any servant should be waiting upon his master’s will and doing the bidding of his master. When our Master calls us, we should be ready to come to Him. When our Master sends us, we should be ready to go. When our Master commands us, we should be ready to obey His command. This is what I would call “waiting upon the Lord.”

Yes, to “wait” upon the Lord does require patience. (See Rom. 8:25; II Thess. 3:5; James 5:7). And, there is no doubt that our Lord expects us to be patient, and endure the times that lie between us and His return. Surely, we must demonstrate an attitude of “patient waiting” when it comes to our Lord and the accomplishment of His will and purpose. However, sometimes we tend to focus on this inactive or rudimentary idea of “waiting.” And, we grow inactive and despondent because we are simply “waiting for the end to come,” or “waiting for the Lord to perform His Purpose.” It even seems that we sometimes will devolve into an attitude and a demonstration of spiritual patience, by merely adopting an attitude of long-suffering, and watching the world spiral down into Hell.

However, this ought not be our attitude! This idle and impatient and “better than everyone else – but I am willing to bear it” attitude is not what God expects of those who are waiting upon the Lord. Remember, we are waiting “upon” Him – just as a servant will wait upon and serve his Master.

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While We Wait

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To “wait” upon the Lord does require action, obedience, and discipleship on our part. (See Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 12:35-38).

Yes, patient waiting is a part of our service: **“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry”** (Heb. 10:36-37). But, the very next verse says, **“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him”** (Heb. 10:38). Our God intends that we should **“live!”** Our Master and Saviour intends that we should not **“draw back,”** but we must move onward in our service unto God!

To bring my introduction to a close, I want to let you know that I am emphasizing the churches of Jesus Christ, and the place of the individual Christian in that church. In other words, as I talk about “waiting” on the Lord, I want to mainly speak in reference to the churches of Jesus Christ, as we wait for the soon coming of our Lord.

So, what are you, and the church of which you are a member, doing “while we wait” for the Lord?

PROCLAIM

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:18-20). The Great Commission makes it plain, that one of the first duties of the church of Jesus Christ – after the Lord has ascended into Heaven – is that we are to proclaim (or preach) the Gospel unto the world. This is plain from the Scriptures, and this is obviously the duty of the churches of Jesus Christ. So, if you are reading this, and you are a member of one of the churches of Jesus Christ; and, if you are wondering what you should be doing “while we wait” on the coming of the Lord; I tell you now, that the Lord expects you to be preaching and proclaiming

the Gospel of Jesus Christ. After all, it is the preaching and proclamation of this Gospel through which souls will be saved – the very souls that are ordained unto salvation, and the very souls the Lord is returning to catch away with Him.

King David said, **“Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence. They only consult to cast him down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah. My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah”** (Ps. 62:1-8). David spent much of his time informing others about the wonderful, awesome, glorious, beautiful, and demanding God that he served. We should do the same. David spent much time proclaiming God’s glory and will. We should do the same.

A simple way to consider our duty is this way: Are you waiting upon the Lord? Are you expecting His Return? If you are, then tell others about your expectations! Tell others about what the Lord has done for you to put you in this attitude and place of “waiting upon the Lord”!

The early churches took very seriously their desire to proclaim the Word and the teachings and the expectations of Jesus Christ. Peter told those in the house of Cornelius, that God had commanded them to preach

the Gospel. **“And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead”** (Acts 10:42). Jesus Christ commanded them to **“preach unto the people.”** And, the Lord Jesus Christ commanded them to let the world know that Jesus is ordained and destined to be the **“Judge of quick and dead.”** In other words, He is coming back! Let us proclaim this message to the world around us! The world has a great need of being informed of this destiny and fate that awaits them!

Paul told Timothy: **“But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry”** (II Tim. 4:5). While we are watching and waiting, we need to do what an “evangelist” would do. What should an evangelist do? Well, among the several definitions that men might apply to the title “evangelist”; nearly all of the definitions would have in common that an evangelist will “proclaim.” Speak to others. Inform others. Teach and preach to others. If Timothy were going to properly heed Paul’s request, then he would not be able to sit at home and watch the world go by. He must be actively engaged in the unfolding events around him! He must be intimately involved in the dispensation of the Gospel, and in the preaching and teaching of the Word of God! Remember, the Great Commission commands us that we should be teaching the saved, edifying the saints, and growing in spirit and in truth, until such time as the Lord Jesus will return.

The final words that we have concerning the life of the Apostle Paul read this way: **“And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with**

all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:30-31). Anybody that visited Paul in this house, could not have escaped the house without hearing the preaching and teaching that Paul conveyed from God and His Word. In reality, very nearly everyone that encountered the Apostle Paul – even before he was put in this **“hired house”** – would have been impressed with Paul’s love for Christ, and his desire to proclaim Jesus Christ and His Word. His life was centered upon Jesus Christ, and he waited upon the Lord.

Your life (if you are saved), and my life, is centered around the Lord Jesus Christ as well. Why should we then be hesitant to proclaim this simple (yet glorious) fact? Jesus Christ is All! While we are waiting upon Him – and while He is absent from us in the flesh – should we not be proclaiming His virtues and His glories? Should we not be proclaiming His grace and His salvation that He has accomplished? Should we not be proclaiming His power and His coming judgment to be poured out upon men?

Just as in the days of Israel, it seems that our Nation has gone without proper “teaching” for a long time. **“Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.”** (II Chron. 15:3). As children of God, and as churches of Jesus Christ, we should be ready and willing to preach and to teach. We desire to see souls saved, and we desire to see the people of God edified. This is what we do “While We Wait” on the Lord.

PRODUCE

“And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (II Thess. 3:4-5). While we are patiently waiting for the coming of Christ, I believe the Apostle Paul (and the Lord Jesus) would expect that we would **“do the things which we command you.”** In other words, we ought to be producing fruit and expending effort in the “Cause of Christ.”

An Old Testament prophet tells us this: **“Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually”** (Hosea

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While We Wait

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12:6). We should never stop waiting on God. And we should always **“keep mercy and judgment.”** I am not saying that we, in the New Testament, are required to keep the law of Moses in its literal form. However, the moral aspects of that Law are still applicable to us in the New Testament. God expects you and me to behave in a godly, righteous, and upright fashion. While we are waiting for our Lord Jesus to return, we must not bring shame upon Him in this life! I know it seems redundant for me to remind you again: but, you and I must live exemplary lives before the world. We should be merciful, kind, fair, and upright in our dealings with the world. We ought not think that we can act like the world during the week, and then show up at church on Sunday and expect the Lord to look favorably upon us and our service.

The Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples, **“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another”** (John 15:14-17). Oh, how many problems would be solved in our families and in our churches, if we would only act in “love” towards one another! Oh, how much better would be our witness in the world, if we would act in compassion and mercy towards the sinners that we preach to!

Sometimes, it seems that God’s people are more intent on pointing out the problems in the world, then they are careful to make sure they themselves live beyond reproach. John the Baptist refused to baptize sinners did not bring forth **“fruits meet for repentance”** (Matt. 3:8). I believe the world (often times, quite rightly) rejects the preaching and the proclaiming of those persons (and churches) that

do not produce and bring forth fruits which would lend credence to their proclamations and preaching. The Lord does not just expect His people and His churches to produce fruit, He requires it. And, if churches fail at this responsibility, eventually the Lord will remove their candlestick – just as He threatens to do to some of the churches of Asia.

PREPARE

So, “while we wait” we “preach” and we “produce.” Finally, let us think about the churches of Jesus Christ (and the people of God) and how that we ought to “prepare” for the soon coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. When I pray, I will often times ask the Lord to help us prepare ourselves, our families, and our churches for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe we need to get ready! I believe the Lord’s return is upon us! So, let us remind ourselves of these things.

Firstly, I think we need to prepare ourselves for Christ’s return. Through much study, much prayer, and much devotion, we can arrange our thoughts and our attitudes in such a way that would manifest that we are looking for, and ready for, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”** (II Tim. 2:15). I want to be **“approved unto God.”** I do not want to be a **“workman”** that is **“ashamed”** at the coming of the Lord. Sadly, I fear that too often this is the case. But, do not despair! The more you study the Word of God, the more you will be conformed to the image of the Living Word, Jesus Christ! Take advantage of this Word of God and the leadership of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of prayer. Surely, these are not idle gifts; but these are gifts we ought to actively take hold of.

Secondly, we must prepare our families for the return of the Lord. Of course, the Word of God and the study we have just referenced, ought to be applied to our family lives, as well as to our personal lives. But, the Word of God has many encouragements for us to live as families before God – waiting upon Him. We read of God’s estimation of Abraham’s family and household this way: **“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him,**

and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Gen. 18:19). Oh, that we could be like Abraham, in the way in which we lead our families! I hope and pray that all of the families who are represented here would be known as godly families – families that **“do justice and judgment.”** I tell you now, this is what Jesus Christ expects of you and your family! He has gone away, but He is coming again. And, when He comes again, He expects you and your family to be ready for Him.

Thirdly, the churches of Jesus Christ need to be ready for the Lord to return. Of course, if we will do a proper job of preparing ourselves and our families; then I believe our churches will benefit as well. After all, a church is made up of individuals and families. I pray that God would bless His churches in these last days. Surely, these are the last days! **“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”** (Heb. 10:22-25). Shared love, and shared exhortation, these are blessings that cannot be obtained outside of the church of Jesus Christ. The further we will indulge in these, the more we will be ready for Jesus Christ and His return.

I fear, sometimes, that the growing evil in the world today is not so much a product of the growth of evil, as it is a product of the deterioration of faith. **“I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth”** (Luke 18:8)? Probably, we mostly like to consider this question which the Lord asks in a rhetorical way, and we will answer, “Yes. The Lord will find faith.” But, sometimes, I wonder, “Will there be any relevant number of faithful men and women left, when the Lord returns? Is not

the “salt” slowly losing its savor? Will there be any real restraint on the evil of this world left, when the Son of Man returns?

In desiring the soon return of the Lord, Horatius Bonar wrote in the 19th century,

*Come, for love waxes cold,
Its steps are faint and slow;
Faith now is lost in unbelief,
Hope’s lamp burns dim and low.*

If Horatius Bonar wondered about the existence of faith, hope, and love in his day and time, I wonder what he would say now? Maybe the propagation of evil in our society today is more the result of the lack of faith and the lack of diligence on the part of God’s people and God’s churches, than it is the inherent successes of evil and Satan. For too many generations we have stood by and let evil prosper! For too many generations we have neglected to remind the world that Jesus Christ is coming again, and He is coming to judge the world!

CONCLUSION

So, what are you doing “while we wait”? You and I do not know how much longer we will wait for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, we do not know what day may be our last on this earth, since we may die at any moment and go to our Lord in that way. I will suggest to you that, perhaps, the best that you can do is to gather together with the people of the Lord in the churches of Jesus Christ. And, the best you can do is share the Gospel with the world at large. And, the best you can do is to partake in preaching, working, and preparing for the “return of the Lord.” In this way, we will be happy and rejoicing at the return of the Lord. If only we know that we are living in obedience unto Him, then we will have no dread of His coming, and we will work and labor and eagerly anticipate His return. **“And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him”** (Luke 8:40). **“And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation”** (Isa. 25:9).



Saved or Deceived

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be fake. "But," you say, "I believe I am saved." Well you may be, but you can be mistaken in your belief, too. Only when faith is in line with God's Word is it right. It must BE right, not just seem to be right.

SATAN IS THE GREAT DECEIVER. He is out to give you faith and experience which seem to be exactly those which God gives, but which are actually false. Counterfeit is his method. Satan has many preachers, who themselves are deceived, and who sincerely believe they are preaching the truth of God. They mean well, but they have not followed closely the Word of God. Thus they may, in their preaching, deceive many. You may be one of those who have conscientiously followed what you heard, and felt something which you took to be the true salvation, but you may be deceived. The following study is to help you see the truth.

FIRST, SATAN DECEIVES IN CONVICTION

He gets preachers to preach on sins instead of sin. They preach about your conduct instead of your condition. They emphasize the sores on the body instead of the disease within. They preach about what you do instead of what you are. They preach about your sins of lying, stealing, cheating, cursing, drunkenness, sinful habits, adultery, wife-beating, breaking the Sabbath, and other like sins. By emphasizing these, all of which are wrong, they make the sinner feel condemned and bad, because of what he has done. This brings morbid regret to the sinner, a feeling which he thinks is conviction. He is embarrassed before his sins; but he is not embarrassed before God.

Holy Spirit conviction makes a man look, not so much upon his sins outwardly, but upon himself inwardly. He sees himself as a sinner against God; a Christ-rejecting, hell-bent rebel against God's will. This comes from preaching on what a man is rather than what he does. Holy Spirit preaching emphasizes the disease rather than the sores.

This brings to the sinner a feeling that he is LOST. "Undone" is the word we used to use in describing this feeling. Yes, we knew we had done wrong, but more than that, we knew we were hopelessly doomed because we were afflicted with the disease of sin, and that there was no remedy except Christ. THIS IS HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTION.

The conviction of depression because of our sins, which Satan gives, is a conviction of the "flesh" (fleshly mind); but the conviction which the Holy Spirit gives is of the Spirit, and is based on the truth of what we are rather than on what we have done.

SECOND, SATAN DECEIVES IN REPENTANCE

Remember, Satan would keep your mind on your sins instead of on Christ. So, he has the preacher bring before you a list of your sins, thereby producing a feeling of morbid sadness in you, and causing a feeling of embarrassment before your awful record. Under the spell of great "religious" fervor (and Satan is a master in producing this exciting fervor which outwardly resembles Pentecost, but which is really of the "flesh") you are driven by this depression to do something about your sins. Now, what can you do about your sins? The only thing YOU can do is to be sorry for them. And Satan says, "That is it; be sorry for them." But being "sorry" for sin is not repentance. That is all the flesh can do, but that is not repentance. Repentance is changing your attitude toward God, and agreeing that He is right in condemning you to hell because of what you are, not just what you have done. Repentance is taking a sinner's place under the sentence of death, and submitting your case to the mercy of God. Being sorry for sin will not remove it. Only what Christ has done can do that.

But Satan says, "Now go on down to the mourner's bench, and pray and cry and mourn, and let God know how sorry you are for what you have done, and when you have done enough to make God believe that you are really sorry for your sins, you will feel better." So goes the deceived sinner to the place of

mourning for his sins instead of to the Cross for salvation. Finally, when he has cried and prayed and let out his depressed feelings, emotional relief comes. Like a woman who cries out her burden and then feels relieved, the depressed and embarrassed sinner does all the flesh can do in being "sorry" for sins, and seeks that emotional release which he mistakes for forgiveness.

THIRD, SATAN DECEIVES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

By the wrong kind of preaching the sinner is led to believe that when "he feels better" he has been saved. He goes entirely on feeling and Satan goes with him. By encouragement from those who ask, "Now do you not feel better?" and who admonish him to "trust the Lord and claim the blessing," he feels at last that he has "prayed through" and arises to proclaim, "I feel better! I've got the blessing!" And Satan whispers, "That is salvation. That is what the others got. Now you have it, and you are saved." Under the spell of fleshly religious fervor, it is easy to do, once the sinner has gone through what we have described. And, he is sincere, but may be deceived.

The Holy Spirit, through the right kind of gospel preaching, would direct the sinner not to try to do anything about his sins. He would tell the sinner to look to Christ who has already done all that can be done, or that is necessary, about his sins. He would tell the sinner to take his place before God as a sinner, submitting to God's judgment of him (which is repentance), and then look to Christ as the one who has satisfied the Father about his sin, and who, by His death, has redeemed him. Then the sinner can say: "Because I have taken a sinner's place and have looked to Christ to save me, on the authority of God's Word I can declare I am saved. I know it is true because God says so, and I feel it because I believe His Word." This is the true salvation; none other is.

FOURTH, SATAN DECEIVES IN LIVING A CHRISTIAN LIFE

The man who is "saved" by

feeling, or "getting the blessing" is dependent on that feeling to keep saved. He is saved as long as he feels like it, according to him. But faith has to walk many a mile without feeling. So, the days of depression come, and he loses a sense of that presence which he thought he felt. He is trusting his feeling, and his feeling has gone. He no longer has that assurance, the temptations of the former life come back to him, and he has no one to sustain him, he falls into sin, and is embarrassed again. At least he concludes he has "fallen from grace," and either goes on in sin again, or seeks to be saved again.

But the man who has been really saved, through genuine repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, stands on the solid rock of God's Word. That Word declares that we are justified by faith, not by feeling, and that **"though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand"** (Ps. 37:24). He knows that sin is not charged against him any more (Rom. 4:8), and that when he sins he has an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous. (I John 2:1-2). He finds relief in hearing John say, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"** (I John 1:9). Thus he concludes with Paul in Romans 6:14, **"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace."**

With a salvation that depends on Jesus rather than on our feeling, we can "go on unto perfection (maturity)" with the blessings of God upon us, singing,

*"On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."*

If you are in doubt about your salvation, dear friend, study this tract and seek saving faith through the Word and the Spirit, not through feeling. And when you have found that you are free because the truth has made you free, then you will have that feeling which the true salvation alone can bring.



The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Why do Sovereign Grace Baptists (landmarkers) not recognize baptisms performed at other churches, even other Baptist Churches? - West Virginia

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Parkway Landmark Baptist Church, the church I was called to pastor, will not accept a baptism from religious organizations that have their origin from a man or woman. We will not accept a baptism from the Catholic church, for obvious reasons.

We have accepted baptisms from other Baptist churches and we are sovereign grace landmarkers. We have also not accepted baptisms from Baptist churches for the simple reasons that either they are Freewill Baptists or the church they are a member of was started from someone, because they thought they needed to start a church without authority from a sponsoring church.

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There are four simple requirements that must be met for baptism to be considered valid and scriptural among true Baptists:

- 1) Baptism must be by immersion in water which is the proper mode.
- 2) Baptism must be administered for the proper reason, symbolic only with no saving qualities whatsoever.
- 3) Baptism must be performed upon the proper subject, a believer only.
- 4) Baptism must have a proper authority, a New Testament Baptist Church of like faith and order.

If any one of the above

requirements are not met after a thorough investigation, the pseudo baptism must be considered null and void. Thus, baptism must be administered scripturally by the authority of a true New Testament Baptist Church.

The reason why there are times that Baptists do not recognize the baptisms of other Baptists in name only is usually because they have willfully received "alien baptism." Many baptisms in name only over the last 100 years have received the immersions of religious organizations that are not of like faith and order who trace their authority to exist back to the Roman Catholic Church or a Protestant denomination. The Church of Christ, church of God, Pentecostal, some Reformed, some Methodists do immerse but we do not recognize their baptism as valid because it is done without authority and often without a true demonstration of the symbolism of the ordinance. For example, the Church of Christ immerses, but they believe baptism actually confers some form of saving grace. No true Baptist believes that. When a Baptist church knowingly receives Church of Christ baptism they have in effect put their stamp of approval on the false doctrine of water and works salvation. For this reason we will not receive the baptisms of the Baptists who have polluted the ordinance by obvious agreement with heresy. Amos 3:3 asks a pertinent question that may be applied to baptism: **"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"**

I Corinthians 11:2 declares: **"Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you."** There is only one kind of baptism that is directly connected to the faith once delivered unto the saints and to the unity of the local church, and it is Baptist baptism. Ephesians 4:3-5 states: **"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond**

of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Jude 3 commands: **"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."** Any Baptist church in name only that receives any form of alien baptism is openly defying the above Scriptures.

For a more detailed examination of baptism I urge the reader to read the booklet *Resetting an Old Landmark* by yours truly. The Bryan Station Baptist Church of Lexington, KY has printed it in hard copy and it may be accessed online at www.bryanstation.com.

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The question is quite simple, even though it is a major point of disagreement with Protestant churches. Let me first say there are, as far as we are concerned, three Christian religions, Catholic, Protestant, and TRUE New Testament Landmark Missionary Baptist Churches. And yes, other Baptist churches if they are not TRUE churches, they are as Protestant as the Lutherans and Methodist; these were started by some man not Jesus. Here is a short but precise definition of a Protestant church: "a member or adherent of any denomination of the Western Christian church that rejects papal authority and some fundamental Roman Catholic doctrines, and believes in justification by faith. The formulation of Protestants' beliefs began with the Reformation in the 16th century." Notice, they reject some, not all, which should tell you something.

True Baptists, were in existence before the 16th century and of course some three hundred years before the Catholic Church. And

we never protested anything, we always believed in justification by faith, among many other doctrines whereby we were persecuted for.

So the main reason we do not recognize baptisms performed by other churches, even other Baptist churches is because they never had and still do not have the "authority" to baptize.

When we stated that this question was an easy (simple) question is because Jesus Christ is our example for everything. Follow His example and you can not go wrong. Let the reader and the questioner ask themselves, why do you suppose Jesus went some 60 miles to be baptized of John? (Mathew 3:13; Mark 1:9). Study carefully Matthew 3 and Mark 1 and you will find that when Jesus came of age (30) the very first thing that He did was to be baptized by the only person on earth who had the "Authority" to do so. That, of course, was John, **"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John"** (John 1:6). No one else could do it because no one else had the "Authority" to do it!

The next thing we see in Matthew 3 and Mark 1 is Jesus being tempted in the wilderness. Pay close attention; He has not preached or started His church as of yet, not until He comes out of the wilderness and then He called His first disciples starting His church, the first and only. If you wanted to join a church it would have been this one, there were no Catholic or Protestant churches around. From that time everything has been in order until this day. Jesus started His church and gave only His church the "authority" to baptize (Matthew 28:18-20).

True Baptists believe in chain-link succession meaning Christ started His church and gave "authority" to that church to start other churches and so on and that chain has never been broken. Thus saith the Lord, **"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"** (Matt. 16:18). Christ is the Rock, NOT Peter!

So if a church, even if it has the Baptist name, does not have the

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Does Matthew 18:15-17 apply to the local church only, or does it apply openly to all believers? Also, do these verses apply to members of one church who have differences with members of a sister church? - Tennessee

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It applies only to that local church. It would be pretty difficult for a believer of any church and/or sister church to take two or three and then take it to the church if they would neglect to hear. Which church would you take it to?

We could use these verses as an example we suppose to try and make restitution with or show someone the error of their ways that has committed sin against us or others. But Jesus here is laying out the foundation of dealing with a trespass or sin that one has committed against another in the same church.

We are not sure what is meant by differences. Differences are not necessarily trespasses, which in this case a trespass is a sin committed against another. So, differences with a member of a sister church would not be the same as a sin (trespass) committed by a fellow church member.

We have differences with our next door neighbor at times. If we would go to him and he would not hear us, to whom should we go (the one or two) and get to tell him he is wrong and then what church should we go to because he did not hear us? Our church has no authority over him, and we are not a member of his church. I hope the questioner can see the dilemma in this.

Etiquette would dictate that anytime we have a problem with a person; we should go to that person alone and talk to them. But Jesus wants church matters to stay just that, church matters, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). God Bless!

ROGER REED

The pattern is scriptural and I believe the first two stages to be pertinent to all believers. That the third and highest level is not applicable to all is not the fault of Christ or Scripture, but the continual rebellion of men/women in refusing to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ's Baptist assemblies around this globe. Selah! Think about it!

"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 first stage of personal reconciliation is a wonder of mercy and grace. That two might be ONE in Spirit is a blessed gift of God's wisdom! No Christian should ever reject another coming for the purpose of reconciliation. Forgiveness and peace are hallmarks of God's people.

"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matt. 18:16). The second stage is a practical application of God's longsuffering toward depraved men/women. God's mercy flows freely and offers second and third chances for righteousness and truth to be recognized and submitted unto. Christians, let us LOVE one another! **"Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren"** (I Cor. 6:7-8). We need to forgive and love, even if it costs us sacrifice of

pride, position or money.

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matt. 18:17). But of course it is not gracious to cast our pearls before swine...! And if we continue to piggishly and stubbornly reject the wise counsel of our Christian peers, then the third and final level of discipline must be exercised for the good and purity of both the offendant and the church body.

A not so unique circumstance where members of separate bodies might have a difference will fall under this Scriptural pattern also, at least to a degree. These Baptists should be able to find a resolution one-on-one, following the first level of this passage. But if not, then yes, I believe a balanced contingent from each church should counsel both protagonists to patch up their disagreement. Two or three heads should be able to see more options and if necessary give their judgments, LORD willing, as a consensus.

As in any case, if one Christian is determined to be in the wrong, it is their inherent responsibility to repent and even make restitution, if necessary. If the offender continues to refuse and reject the counsel of the brethren, then only that member's church has the authority to act in the matter of discipline. Regardless of any desire or recommendation from the second church, they must recognize the untouchable ecclesiastical authority of every independent Baptist church!

In the case where the findings of the two or three from each church are not in harmony with each other, then each contingent should take their conclusions to their home churches. Each church has the responsibility to take the matter up, not neglecting their duty to edify and build up their individual members and collective body in the perfection of Christ! **"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith,**

and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:11-16). Do not stand up for him just because he is your member, but judge righteous judgment to the glory of God! Selah! Think about it!

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First, can you imagine two members of a church treating each other as a heathen and a publican? Second, can you imagine members of two different churches being brought before a church they are not a member of, and that church having any power at all over the offending brother's membership?

The situation the Lord is teaching is between two members of the same church. The command to let him be as an heathen and a publican is the result of the offending brother's lack of repentance. The lack of repentance leads to the dis-membership of the brother who fails to resolve the conflict.

I will say that at anytime anyone who has offended you, you should go to that person and explain to them what has happened and how you feel. The children of God are to be peacemakers and to display love and mercy towards the Lord's people. Those who fail to respond in love and show grace in these situations are most times to be dealt with in a

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Forum #1

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same faith, practice and doctrine that Christ taught they are not one of His true churches and we can not accept their baptism.

One final note: many of our true New Testament Baptist churches (landmarkers) have received baptism (alien immersion) from some of these non-churches causing the true churches to break fellowship with them. There is a decorum that needs and must be maintained. God Bless!

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Because scriptural baptism is the single most important thing to guarantee that churches will continue to have the authority of Jesus Christ to congregate and worship Him in the New Testament house of God! **“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”** (I Tim. 3:15). More Baptists have shed their life-blood down thru the centuries for this sacred principle than any other! If baptism in a church becomes impure or insignificant, then the church becomes impure and insignificant! Selah! Think about it!

Christ Jesus made a difference between assemblies in Matthew 16:18, **“And I say also unto thee, ...upon this rock I will build MY church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”** The emphasis is mine in the typing, but the emphasis is Jesus Christ, the Son of God in the speaking! MY church, He declares! Thereby signifying and acknowledging that other churches may exist (or come into existence); but let there be no mistake about MY church- the gates of hell shall not prevail against MY church!

An example of other churches in the New Testament? Again, the words of Christ- **“Not every one that**

saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:21-23). **“I never knew you!”** the Founder of MY church proclaims! **“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee”** (Rev. 3:9). Jesus loves HIS church, and all the liars (and deceived) out there will one day recognize that the blood that was shed down through the centuries of her blessed existence was because they kept their churches pure of alien or unscriptural baptisms.

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (I Tim. 4:1). Apostate churches have wandered off even from the first centuries, by embracing the world and departing from the commandments of God! Our LORD also marked these folk as one of the 10 signs of the latter days in Matthew 24:4-5, **“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”** Many churches (even by the name Baptist) are teaching works for salvation (Arminian/Free Will Baptists), rejecting the gospel of Christ (Primitive Baptists) and denying the chain link succession (Reformed Baptists) of His perpetuated and persevering TRUE BAPTIST churches! Beloved, just because they put the name Baptist above the door, does not mean that they are descended from the first Baptist church in Jerusalem in AD 27-30! Selah! Think about it!

Therefore it is incumbent upon EACH of us to ascertain whether OUR assemblies are HIS assembly! How do we do that? Ask questions!

1) Where did our assembly come from? 2) What authority do we have? 3) Who gave us this authority? Not the first time these questions have been asked! **And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him”** (Matt. 21:23-25)? Beloved reader, believe the Bible! If your church was started by a man- you are not a member of Christ's church. If your church was founded outside of Palestine and after the first century AD- it is not the LORD's true church. And if you want to become a member of HIS church- be prepared to be baptized (not for the second time; the first time you merely took a bath) with scriptural authority that only the true New Testament Landmark Baptist churches have. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



Forum #2

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way you would those outside of the household of faith, and that is to treat them as you would want to be treated.

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The context definitely applies to the discipline of the local church with regard to the manner in which personal offenses are to be handled. The local church only has

authority to discipline those within its own membership as I Corinthians 5 clearly sets forth. However, the basic principles set forth in Matthew 18 could certainly apply to the way in which individual believers may deal with personal offenses outside of the membership of the local church.

With regards to the second question it has generally been accepted that sister churches recognize the disciplinary action of other churches as a matter of Christian ethics. However Baptist church A cannot discipline the members of Baptist church B. They have no authority to discipline the members of another church (read I Corinthians 5:11-13). Each New Testament Baptist Church is independent and autonomous. If there are differences between a member of Baptist church A and a member of Baptist church B, they would have to work it out on a personal level.

TOM ROSS



The Results of Revival

By Tom Ross
of South Point, Ohio

(Continued from last issue)

RECHARGED INTEREST IN THE WORD OF GOD

“My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:11-12).

1. When genuine personal revival sweeps over the soul there will be a recharged interest in the Word of the Living God. I fear that we live in an age where there is little desire for the Word of God and even less application of its principles in daily life. We have allowed the world and all of its allurements to dull our spiritual taste buds for the bread of life. So many professing Christians are drinking from the polluted streams of carnal entertainment, they have lost their

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Results of Revival

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thirst for the sincere milk of the Word. It is not difficult to figure out why Christians and churches are departing from the faith once delivered to the saints. Doctrinal error, moral laxity, and mental laziness are sadly characteristic of many churches due to a lack of love for the Word of God.

2. It would be good for every person reading this to take a spiritual inventory to determine how much actual time and attention is devoted to the Scriptures from day to day. How many chapters do you read on average a day or week? How much time is devoted to personal study of a particular doctrine or practical teaching throughout the week? How many minutes do you actually spend reading the Bible in a day? Do you have a definite time set aside to feed on the Word each day? Do you devote any time at all to Scripture memorization throughout the week? How attentive are you to the preaching of the Word each Lord's Day? Can you remember enough of what is preached to meditate upon the doctrinal or practical teachings throughout the week? Do you read the Bible and apply Scripture with your children and grandchildren on a daily basis? Do you strive to make a conscious application of Scripture by way of practical obedience each day? We need a revival to recharge our interest in God's Word!

3. God has always been pleased to use His Word to accomplish great things and bring glory unto Himself. The powerful work of real revival among God's people is no exception. Psalm 138:2 declares: **"I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."** When personal revival breaks over the soul the importance of God's Word is magnified and exalted. Saints of God will show a keen interest in the study of the Word and will cheerfully obey II Timothy 2:15: **"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."** When God's people begin to study the Word and apply it to daily

life it will have the practical effect of fruitful sanctification just as Jesus prayed: **"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"** (John 17:17). There will be cleansing, consecration, and fruit bearing as John 15:3-5 reveals: **"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."** As the Word becomes more precious and powerful to God's saints they will begin to hide its contents in their hearts to repel temptation and sin: **"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word...Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee"** (Pa. 119:9, 11). God's Word will be viewed as spiritual food that nourishes the soul as Jesus intimated: **"..It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God"** (Matt. 4:4). As such God's children will daily feast on its contents for sustenance, strength, and spiritual growth: **"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious"** (I Pet. 2:2-3).

4. Where revival is evident the Word will be preached in power, faith will increase, and precious souls will be converted (Rom. 10:17). People will take a keen interest in the preaching and teaching of the Word. Doctrinal and practical heresies will be exposed and purged from our homes and churches (Rom. 10:17-18; Titus 1:9-11). Parents will be careful to impart and instill the principles of the Word in their homes by obeying Deuteronomy 6:6-7: **"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."** Transformation by the Word will

be experienced in our personal lives, our families, and our churches when revival fires are burning!

We are kidding ourselves if we think God will send the power of revival apart from His Holy Word. Real revival is much more than emotional excitement that wanes over time. It is marked by a sincere devotion to God's Word that is evident by practical application on a consistent basis.

RENUNCIATION OF THE WORLD

"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...Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:4, 7-10).

1. In my 33 years of Gospel ministry I have sadly observed a measurable increase of worldliness among God's people and in the Lord's churches. Friendship with the world and the adoption of its philosophies, fashions, and ideals has accelerated with great rapidity. Worldliness, self-indulgence, and pride have had a deadening effect upon our lives and churches. Worldliness is manifested in our attitudes about sin, music, styles of dress, language, and entertainment. Many professing Christians freely embrace the ways of the world with little or no conviction or shame. As long as we are wallowing in worldliness we cannot expect the showers of revival as Jeremiah the prophet warned long ago: **"Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed"** (Jer. 3:3). God hates worldliness among His people so much that He calls it spiritual adultery.

I have a small volume entitled *The Best of A.W. Tozer* that I keep on my desk and refer to from time

to time. Tozer wrote an article entitled "The World: Playground or Battleground?" back in the mid 1900's. In it he shows the changing attitude towards worldliness among professing Christians:

"Men think of the world, not as a battleground but as a playground. We are not here to fight, we are here to frolic. We are not in a foreign land, we are at home. We are not getting ready to live, we are already living, and the best we can do is rid ourselves of our inhibitions and our frustrations and live this life to the full. This, we believe, is a fair summary of the religious philosophy of modern man, openly professed by millions and tacitly held by more multiplied millions who live out that philosophy without having given verbal expression to it.

This changed attitude toward the world has had and is having its effect upon Christians, even Gospel Christians who profess the faith of the Bible...That this world is a playground instead of a battleground has now been accepted in practice by the vast majority of evangelical Christians. They might hedge around the question if they were asked bluntly to declare their position, but their conduct gives them away. They are facing both ways, enjoying Christ and the world too, and gleefully telling everyone that accepting Jesus does not require them to give up their fun, and that Christianity is just the jolliest thing imaginable.

The 'worship' growing out of such a view of life is as far off center as the view itself, a sort of sanctified night clubbing without the champagne and the dressed up drunks.

This whole thing has grown to be so serious of late that it now becomes the bounden duty of every Christian to reexamine his spiritual philosophy in the light of the Bible, and having discovered the scriptural way to follow it, even if to do so he must separate himself from much that he formerly accepted as real but which now in the light of truth he knows to be false.

A right view of God and the world to come requires that we have also a right view of the world in which we

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live and our relation to it. So much depends upon this that we cannot afford to be careless about it" (pp. 85-86).

2. Personal revival produces a sincere renunciation of worldliness in our attitudes, speech, and way of life. There will be a new quest for holiness and a greater hatred for sin in all its forms. Heeding the command of I John 2:15-17 will be a daily exercise of spiritual diligence: **"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."** This renunciation of the world will be so transformative that the application of Romans 12:1-2 will be a spiritual reality: **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."**

3. It is not hard to discern why we experience so little of the power of personal revival in our lives and in our churches. We are enamored by the trinkets and baubles of the world. We gladly spend our spiritual currency on trifling things that do nothing to enhance our relationship with Almighty God. When the thunderbolt of real revival strikes it will produce dramatic results. II Corinthians 5:14-18 will no longer just be quoted in sermons, it will be obeyed and practiced: **"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what**

part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

I end this section with another searching quote from the book *Heart-Cry for Revival* by Stephen Olford:

"If there is to be a revival of spiritual life and power, it must originate with the individual believer, and there is a great need for a personal searching of heart and exercise of soul in this matter. The sin, which is spoiling the life of the Christian, must be judged, and put away. The selfishness, which is robbing Christ of the love and devotion which are His due, must be confessed and removed. The ambitions and desires, which are hindering the work of God, must be uprooted and thrown on the refuse heap. A renewal of blessing is dependent upon the restoration of communion and the reconsecrating of heart and life" (p. 16).

REACHING OUT TO SOULS

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11:31).

1. When God sends personal revival it will spur an increased effort to reach the souls of men with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Every great movement of revival among God's people results in the conversion of sinners. During times of revival there is a greater burden to see sinners of all walks of life saved by the grace of God. When the saints of God are found repenting of sin, renewing their focus, experiencing a resurgence of love for God, rejuvenating their prayer life, recharging their interest in the Word of God, and renouncing the world the spiritual result will be a passion to see souls saved. Genuine revival clears the way for God's children to see what is most important in light

of eternity. Psalm 12:5-6 declares: **"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."**

2. Where is our concern for souls? How often do we really witness to people with a sincere desire to see them converted to Jesus Christ? When was the last time we actually wept over the souls of our children, grandchildren, friends, neighbors, and coworkers? How much time do we spend in prayer earnestly offering up fervent supplication for souls in particular, praying for people by name? Do we have the same kind of concern for souls as the apostle Paul had? **"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh... Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved...For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!...To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some...Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"** (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1; I Cor. 9:16, 22; II Tim. 2:10).

3. It is my fear that we sometimes have a greater concern for numbers, money, and larger facilities than we do the souls of men. We want to fill our pews with people so that we may appear successful in the eyes of our brethren. When marketing campaigns, programs, entertainment, and worldly business methods replace old fashioned efforts to win souls through witnessing, preaching, and praying our motives are corrupt. Our concern should be for souls, souls, souls! Oh that our attitudes and actions would resemble the early church of whom it is written: **"... and**

behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine...And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ... These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 5:28, 41-42; 17:6).

H. C. Fish in his book *Handbook of Revivals* wrote:

"Do we know an engrossment in the Master's business like that of Brainard?--who could say of himself, on more than one occasion, 'I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so I could but gain souls to Christ. While I was asleep, I dreamed of these things; and when I waked, the first thing I thought of was this great work."

Do we know a singleness of purpose like that to which the sainted Brown, of Haddington, exhorted his sons?--'O labor, labor to win souls to Christ!' Can we satisfactorily answer the question, 'Is this my aim in every sermon I preach, in every visit I pay? Is it under the influence of this feeling that I continually live and walk and speak? Is it for this I pray and toil and fast and weep? Is it for this I spend and am spent, counting it, next to the salvation of my own soul, my chiefest joy to be the instrument of saving others? Is it for this that I exist? And to accomplish this would I gladly die?'" (pp. 412-413).

CORPORATE REVIVAL AMONG THE LORD'S CHURCHES

"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

Having labored long on the results of personal revival, I will write only a brief synopsis regarding the results of revival on a larger scale in and among the Lord's churches. Every great revival has started in individuals and homes, then it spreads throughout churches according to God's good pleasure. All that was written regarding personal revival would

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also apply to revival among the Lord's churches, only it would be observed on a larger and broader scale with a wider sphere of influence.

I want to start this section with an insightful quote from Stephen Olford:

"It is my conviction that we will never have revival until God has brought the Church of Jesus Christ to a point of desperation. As long as Christian people can trust religious organization, material wealth, popular preaching, shallow evangelism, and promotional drives, there will never be revival. But when confidence in the flesh is smashed, and the church comes to the realization of her desperate wretchedness, blindness, and nakedness before God, then and only then will God break in." (pp. 70-71, *Heart-Cry for Revival*).

1. When revival spreads to a church there will be a noticeable increase in conversions and baptisms. When God's people are revived the Word of God spreads in homes and throughout the community at an accelerated rate. More people are saved by the grace of God and they publicly profess their loyalty to the Lord by submitting to scriptural baptism. There is nothing more exciting in the Lord's churches than seeing people professing Christ and following Him in the waters of baptism. After the Lord revived the church at Jerusalem souls were saved and added to the church. **"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls...Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand"** (Acts 2:41; 4:4).

H. C. Fish commented on the revival of 1858:

"Statistics from other states need not be given, as these are but examples. It is estimated that 100,000 conversions occurred in the short space of four months; and that during a year from the commencement of the work, not less than 400,000 souls were brought

to Christ. Some writers have added one quarter to the above numbers. Thus much for the United States" (p. 73, *Handbook of Revivals*).

As I was reading the biography of J. R. Graves by O. L. Hailey I learned that the Old Landmarker was greatly used as a revival preacher. Two excerpts illustrate how the power of God was manifested among the Lord's churches under the preaching ministry of Graves:

"...He conducted evangelistic meetings here and there with blessed results. Joseph H. Borum wrote for Cathcart's Encyclopedia: 'The writer was with him on one occasion in Brownsville, Tennessee, in 1849, where more than seventy persons, including the first men and women in the town, found the Saviour. His arguments, illustrations, and appeals were the most powerful I ever heard. Before he was thirty years of age, over 1,300 persons had professed religion in special meetings which he held.'

"...For some time after he came to Nashville Dr. Graves and Dr. Pendleton were but little acquainted, though the latter lived at Bowling Green, Kentucky, not very far from Nashville. He had never sought Dr. Graves's acquaintance. The church at Bowling Green was small; the house was unsightly and incommodious, and the great theologian and deeply pious man lamented the meager fruits of his ministry. But he was sowing the seed, drilling it into the very hearts of the community.

This calm, logical, slow moving man, influenced by his deacons, invited the fiery controversialist to assist him in a protracted meeting. Graves came.

The church awakened. The whole community was aroused. New born souls lifted up their voices in joyous gratitude. Nearly one hundred were added to the church and about as many to the other denominations in the town. Dr. Graves followed this up by visits to other places in that part of Kentucky, sometimes preaching on the distinctive doctrines held by the Baptists then to the sleeping church members, and appealing to sinners, and in every case with success. 'The fact is,' said the venerable Dr. B. T. Blewett, 'it was like a cyclone. His

influence among the churches swept all before it." (pp. 73-74, *J. R. Graves: Life, Times, and Teachings*).

What makes the above comments about the revival ministry of J. R. Graves even more interesting is that he often preached for two to three hours at a time with great earnestness and fervency. Many churches in our day and time wouldn't tolerate an evangelist preaching for that long, especially if he didn't have lots of jokes and stories in his message. Remember, this was before air conditioning, padded pews, and wireless microphones!

2. When revival comes to the Lord's churches there will be an increased interest in the worship of the Lord and meetings for prayer. People who are revived will say with the Psalmist: **"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD"** (Ps. 122:1). When folks are revived they will consistently and cheerfully attend the worship services of the church, taking heed to the command of Hebrews 10:23-25: **"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."** When churches are revived pastors need not fret about members not heeding the call to be faithful in their attendance. The members will consistently come and bring people with them! There will be an eagerness to hear the Word of God and apply the truth learned. The congregational singing of the old hymns of the faith will be spirited and joyful. Prayers will be lifted up with great power as hearts join to magnify the name of the Lord. As new converts are added to the body, the members of the church will recognize their responsibility to provide a good example to the babes in Christ. Churches that have downsized to one service a week for whatever reason will see the need to have Sunday evening and mid-week prayer meetings. When God moves upon a church it causes people to

change their schedule and priorities for Him! We live in a day and age where there is little conviction about being faithful to the Lord's church. Our prayer meetings are sparsely attended and we often go through the motions of religiosity. Old habits of unfaithfulness and apathy are repented of, and a desire for preaching, prayer, and worship is renewed.

H. C. Fish wrote:

"The praying meeting will improve when a revival commences. The two or three are pressed in the spirit and speak often one to another about it. A passion to see the church revived rules them. By degrees, individuals are drawn together by sacred affinity, and the prayer meetings become very different...And not only this, but little knots here and there come together in their cottages, and in their quiet rooms cry mightily to God..."

"A thirst for the preached word and a deep interest in it, is a revival indication. In a declension there is nothing resembling an appetite, a thirst for the Word; there is no deep, soul-penetrating, soul-subduing interest felt in hearing it. The whole of this is reversed in a revived, living church...In an account from the island of Arran, dated 1812, we read: 'For some months after the commencement of the awakening, the subjects of it manifested an uncommon thirst after the means of grace. Both old and young flocked in multitudes to hear the Word of God. The house, and the place employed for private meetings, were frequently so crowded that the people, as it were, trod one upon another. To travel ten or fifteen miles to hear a sermon was considered as a very small matter.'" (pp. 200-201).

3. When revival comes to a church there will be a greater passion for souls and the work of missions at home and abroad. Individual members will diligently witness to their lost family members, friends, and coworkers. The church will step up its efforts to support sound mission works. Church members will faithfully pay their tithes and cheerfully give offerings so that more missionaries can be supported and

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sent out. Many churches are cutting back on their mission giving in our day. When people are revived they will see the work of missions as a top priority. They will be willing to be sacrificial in their giving so that the Word may go forth. When revival comes spiritual wealth will take precedent over the accumulation of personal wealth and possessions. **“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves...And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God... But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”** (II Cor. 8:1-3, 5; 9:6-7). A spirit of stinginess and covetousness will be replaced by generosity and sacrifice of time, money, and resources in an effort to spread the Gospel far and wide.

4. When revival comes to a church the unholy spirits of bitterness, wrath, anger, jealousy, envy, gossip, tale bearing, revenge, emulation, pride, and pettiness will be driven out. There will be no clamoring cliques, prideful power struggles, or political maneuvering. Rather, there will be a united desire to please the Lord Jesus Christ and follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Joyful worship and a pleasant spirit of love for God and one another will prevail. Psalm 133:1 declares: **“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”** The command of Ephesians 4:2-3 will be cheerfully obeyed: **“With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the**

bond of peace.”

5. Revival brings a renewed desire for holiness and purity in the church. The Word will be preached in power, Christ will be exalted, and the church will experience cleansing and sanctification as Ephesians 5:26-27 states: **“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”** Church discipline will be taken seriously as immorality, drunkenness, drug abuse, extortion, and railing are exposed and purged according to the directive of I Corinthians 5:7-8: **“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”**

Renewed power and a holy fear of God will characterize the Lord's church. After Ananias and Sapphira were purged from the church for dishonesty and covetousness the results are recording in Acts 5:11-12, 14: **“And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people...And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.”**

6. When revival sweeps over the Lord's church the exaltation of Christ and the truth of God's Word will prevail. People will embrace the truth rather than reject it. A sincere spirit of worship and reverence will permeate the congregation. Gone will be the modern day tendency for church's to market their services with gimmicks, gadgets, frills, and worldly entertainment aimed at pleasing the flesh. Church services will no longer resemble extravagant television productions. Instead, the simplicity of Christ will prevail as God's people join together to worship, pray, sing, exhort one another, and receive instruction

from the preached Word. Acts 10:33 could very well describe the expectant congregants in a church experiencing the power of revival: **“..Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.”**

THE RESULTS OF COMMUNAL REVIVAL WHERE CULTURE AND SOCIETY AT LARGE ARE INFLUENCED

“Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded. The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard... Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 13:13-15; 14:34).

Wherever the tenets of Christianity have been spread by the power of the Holy Spirit sweeping changes impact society at large. This is especially true in times of spiritual revival. Christian revivals have broken the bonds of tyranny and oppression. Sexual immorality and profligacy have been checked and replaced with virtue and purity. Sloth, laziness, and dishonesty in society give way to diligence, discipline, and moral character wherever revival fires are burning brightly. Broken homes are repaired, marriage vows are honored, children are valued and taught the precious truths of the Word of God. Music, literature, education, and politics will be permeated with the spirit of Christian ethics. In days gone by Africa, Europe, Great Britain, and the United States have had seasons of revival that greatly influenced their culture for good.

There was a time in the United States when our educational system exalted and respected God's Word and Christian principles. All of the Ivy League universities were originally founded to train ministers of the Gospel. The Lord's Day was considered sacred and reserved entirely for worship and rest. Pastors were respected in the community for their godly influence and scriptural wisdom. Federal, state,

and local laws reflected a respect for the principles contained in the Ten Commandments. Elected officials were not mere politicians but were statesmen who desired to lead the country in a righteous path. Any remnants of goodness and morality that remain in our culture today, we owe to the influence of Christianity and seasons of revival God was pleased to send our way.

Our nation and our culture has fallen hard and fast to the progressive vision of godless secular humanism combined with social engineering by the self-proclaimed elite. The teachings of the Bible are ridiculed and mocked. The heretical tenets of evolution are taught as facts. The sacred institutions of marriage and the home have been undermined by the promotion of immorality and perversion. Fornication, adultery, and homosexuality are being touted as normal expressions of sexuality. Living in sin and divorce rates are on the rise. Pornography, the exploitation and disrespect of women, child abuse, violence, drunkenness, drug abuse and racial turmoil abound. The legal extermination of children in the womb is promoted as a “woman's reproductive right”. Our schools are hotbeds of liberalism, atheism, anarchy, and infidelity. Our government is rife with corruption, greed, and dishonesty.

Christianity is no longer influencing our country as it once did. There is no longer a “Christian ethic” that guides our nation. We desperately need a spiritual revival in individual hearts that spreads to our churches and then to our communities if there is any hope for our beloved America. Let us fervently pray for revival as the Psalmist did: **“Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation. I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land”** (Ps. 85:6-9).



CELLBLOCK TO CELLBLOCK

By David G. Hoffman

Encouragement and thoughts from a prisoner to other prisoners and readers.

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried” (Rev. 2:10).



T. U. L. I. P.

Greetings, grace, and peace to you, dear reader. I hope this finds you basking in the everlasting grace of our Lord and Savior, Yeahua haMashiach (Jesus the Messiah; the Christ). May His grace be upon you always.

This is the second in a series of columns about the Doctrines of Grace. This month I will be talking about the doctrine of Unconditional Election, the “U” in the acronym T.U.L.I.P. ---may the following be a blessing unto you.

Unconditional Election is the selection of individuals to eternal life based entirely on God’s sovereign choice, and not influenced by man in any form or fashion.

This doctrine is called many things in the Scriptures: “(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to ELECTION might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)” (Rom. 9:11) (emph. DH).

“According as he hath CHOSEN us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph. 1:4) (emph. DH).

“No man can come to me (Jesus), except the Father which hath sent me DRAW him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44) (emph. DH).

“Who hath saved us, and CALLED us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (II Tim. 1:9) (emph. DH).

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did PREDESTINATE to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29) (emph. DH).

The word “foreknow” in this verse is hotly debated in theological circles.

Once I complete this current series of columns, I will do a full blown word study on it, but for now, please know it does not mean God looked down through history and saw who would believe and then elected those people. That would put the causation of election in the person being elected. Scripture clearly shows God is the only causation of election, and that, in His sovereign choice not influenced in any way by the elected.

This doctrine is unconditional. We saw last time that man is totally depraved and cannot do anything acceptable or good in the sight of God. So if we, in our unsaved state, cannot do anything good in God’s sight, what condition could there be? Let us look at an example from the Scriptures “(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)” “It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he sayeth to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will be hardeneth” (Rom. 9:11-18).

This doctrine was performed before the world was even made, before any human being had the chance to do anything good or evil: “According as he hath chosen us in him BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, that we should be holy

and without blame before him in love” (Eph. 1:4) (emph. DH).

This doctrine does not harm those not elected for salvation: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

Every last human being is born a sinner, conceived in iniquity and deserving of the everlasting punishment of hell. And God would have been just as righteous and just as glorified if He had not elected to save any of us worthless, vile human beings. But all glory be to God who decided, of His own free choice, to show His mercy and grace to the elect. Why did He choose some and not others, or all? That is not for us to question:

“Thou wilt then say unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (Rom. 9:19-20).

This election is not a small number: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29).

“. . .redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every KINDRED, and TONGUE, and PEOPLE, and NATION” (Rev. 5:9) (emph. DH).

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a GREAT MULTITUDE, which no man could number, of ALL NATIONS, and KINDREDS, and PEOPLE, and TONGUES, stood before the throne. . .” (Rev. 7:9) (emph. DH).

The unconditional election by God of unworthy sinners, dear reader, should make us fall on our faces before the Almighty. Who is worthy but He of our praise and worship?

Until next time, dear reader, “give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, ye shall never fall” (II Pet. 1:10). (See II Peter 1:3-13).



A Dose of Reality

“Common Sense Comments”

by Joseph Harris

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Where Is the Fight?

Pacifism rules! Where is the will and desire to fight that which is wrong, sinful and ungodly? What has happened to the fight in the average American? The “rollover and play dead” philosophy abounds, therefore iniquity abounds. The family, church and this nation are under a severe attack by unseen and seen forces and yet we are told to accommodate, open a dialogue, tolerate and understand and accept the enemy. When the average patriotic Christian American does stand for truth and righteousness, they are often accused of having no love. Billy Sunday, famous evangelist of yesteryear used to say, “I love flowers, but I hate weeds.” Loving flowers produces a hate for weeds. It is possible to love right and hate wrong, yet love the wrong doer.

Where is the fight against abortion, homosexuality, pornography, pedophilia, and alcohol? Where is the fight for God to remain in the public square, for public prayers at state sponsored events in the name of Jesus, and where is the fight against ungodly humanism manifested in evolutionary teaching and philosophy? Where is the fight against radical Islam, which threatens individual liberty through Sharia law? What happened to the fight for Godliness in the church, striving for purity among the membership, establishing standards and conduct that are decent and God honoring?

Concerning this nation, why have the borders not been sealed and a wall built to keep out the invaders? Immigration and naturalization laws mean nothing. Why are lawbreakers allowed to remain in this country and not be deported back to Mexico or their homeland? Liberal politicians, both Democrat and Republican, are

◊ (Continued on page 238)

A Dose of Reality

(Continued from page 237) ♦

leading the way for the downfall of truth, justice and the American way, at a breakneck speed. "Americo" is in the making and the powers that be who could do something are not just asleep at the wheel...they are in a coma. The House and Senate both need purging by "We the People" if it is not already too late. The Jimmy Carter philosophy of ignore-it-and-it-will-go-away has prevailed. Where is the will to fight for our vanishing liberties as they are challenged by the ACLU and other "freedom loving" entities?

Concerning the church, where are the pastors who used to follow the admonition of Isaiah 58:1, "**Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.**" Oh, that was in the Old Testament some will say. Today in the church age, we follow the New Testament. Does a New Testament pastor have any less responsibility of warning against the danger of sin as an Old Testament prophet? Use a little common sense and decide. A rattlesnake in the path is a danger to anyone approaching it and whoever does not warn of imminent danger is guilty of neglect. Adultery, the sale and use of alcohol among church members, homosexuality and other sins can be found alive and well in the

average Christian church of today. Pastors and parents have chosen the path of least resistance and have sacrificed the future of the church on the altar of accommodation and tolerance. Preaching the Gospel includes preaching the whole Bible which includes the bitter and the sweet of the two edged sword. Being instant in season and out of season means some teaching will be in season with the people and sweet to accept. Other teachings will be out of season, but like a bitter medicine, will produce healing and that which is good. So preacher, preach the word!

Concerning the home, most parents have delegated the instruction of their children totally to the government schools and their churches. Home education and real Christian schools are available for readin', writin', and 'rithmetic, taught from a Biblical worldview. Primary instruction in Scripture should come from the home, and then be strengthened by the church. Do not give up and give in to the world's philosophy that will indoctrinate children with an anti-God philosophy. Where is the fight for the minds and souls of today's children?

It is high time we got a dose of reality and realized the seriousness of the hour and the importance of standing for right against wrong. After all, things are still either right or wrong.



Amendment's prohibition against warrantless searches.

STUDY: GROWING UP IN GAY FAMILIES HAMSTRINGS KIDS IN SCHOOL

(WNS)--A new Canadian study challenges the mainstream insistence that children living with same-sex couples are "no different" than children living with married, heterosexual couples. Using a large, nationally representative dataset, Canadian economist Douglas Allen found that young adult children of same-sex couples are 35 percent less likely to graduate from high school as young adult children of heterosexual married couples. The study, published this month in the *Review of the Economics of the Household*, looked at a 20 percent sample of the 2006 Canadian census, which asked respondents to note whether they were raised by a lesbian couple, a gay couple, a married opposite-sex couple, a common law couple, a single mother, or a single father. The Canadian data is easier to interpret than similar U.S.-based studies because Canadian respondents self-report the information. Allen then compared high school graduation rates of male and female young adults raised in each of those households.

ABORTION FACILITY SHUTDOWNS CONTINUE

(WNS)--While most Americans focused on the government shutdown, shutdowns of another kind were making news. According to the *Columbus Dispatch*: "With the closure of one abortion clinic and two more on the brink of shutting down, Ohio women will have fewer places to terminate pregnancies than perhaps any time since the immediate years after the Roe v. Wade ruling in 1973." According to the Family Research Council, "since 2011, 58 of America's abortion clinics -- almost one in 10 -- have either pulled the plug on their abortion services or folded altogether."

NEW CREATION MUSEUM FOSSIL POINTS TO GLOBAL FLOOD

(WNS)--A Christian foundation recently gave the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Ky., the fossil of a large predatory dinosaur similar to a Tyrannosaurus rex, which offers evidence of the Old Testament global

flood. The fossil is believed to be one of the four best-preserved Allosaurus skulls ever discovered, according to a Creation Museum press release. The museum's new dinosaur, affectionately called Ebenezer, probably stood 10-feet high and 30-feet long and had teeth averaging over four inches. Fifty-three of those teeth are still in place. Unearthed in Colorado, the fossil's well-preserved condition and the position of the skull and spine suggests it was killed under sudden, catastrophic conditions. It was on its side as though it had been knocked over and rapidly buried in mud.

HAWAII FALLS TO HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGE MOVEMENT

(WNS)--Hawaii became 15th state to allow same sex marriage (SSM) this week. Hawaii started this current battle over same sex marriage in 1990 when a lesbian couple tried to get married there and could not. That case went to the Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of the lesbians. Since then (1993) states one by one have been passing SSM laws. The vast majority of the country still prohibits homosexual marriage, and those states that do allow are mostly bunched on the east and west coasts.

MILITARY HOMESCHOOLING GROWS

(WNS)--Homeschooling continues to grow. In 1985, only about 50,000 children in America were homeschooled. Today, most estimates put that number above 2-million. One area of growth: military families. According to homeschooling mother Nicole McGhee: "If there's a military installation, there's very likely home-schoolers there." McGhee, 31, has three kids and a husband stationed at North Carolina's Fort Bragg. She runs a Facebook page site on military home schooling. The Associated Press story featuring McGhee says the military is slowly realizing that many of its families are homeschoolers, and its making adjustments to accommodate them. For example, "at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia, the library sported special presentations for home-schoolers on Benjamin Franklin and static electricity. Fort Bragg offers daytime taekwondo classes. At Fort Belvoir, Va., there are athletic events and a parent-led chemistry lab."

♦ (Continued on page 239)

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.

NORTH CAROLINA HOMESCHOOLERS BEAT BACK PROPOSED HOME INSPECTIONS

(WNS)--North Carolina Lt. Gov. Dan Forest warned the state's homeschoolers in mid-October to look out for—and oppose—"random homeschool searches" by state officials. Forest's statement caused a stir among the homeschool community because it brought to light

a longstanding practice of inspections the Division of Non-Public Education's (DNPE) left dormant for 20 years. In North Carolina, homeschool parents must make attendance, immunization, and standardized test records available to state inspectors. Many homeschooling families believe that regulation, and the state's plan to visit parents and children at home, conflicts with the Fourth

Bible & the Newspaper

(Continued from page 238) ♦

SUPREME COURT TAKES UP PUBLIC PRAYER QUESTION

(WNS)--The U.S. Supreme Court justices took what appeared to be a relatively simple case on legislative prayer, and turned it into a wide-ranging discussion on the Establishment Clause, with justices wondering aloud about how government could treat religion in any context. The case itself is not hugely complicated. The town of Greece, N.Y., has opened its town council meetings with prayers for years. Anyone could lead the prayers but most of the religious leaders in the town were Christian, so most of the prayers were Christian. Two residents objected and filed suit. A district court sided with the town, but the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against Greece, saying that "the town's prayer practice had the effect of affiliating the town with Christianity." The Obama administration sided with the town on the case, citing the long history of allowing sectarian legislative prayer.

ATHEIST MEGACHURCHES ON THE RISE

(WNS)--According to the Associated Press, atheist "megachurches" are springing up around the country that look a lot like Protestant megachurches everywhere: "rousing music, an inspirational talk and some quiet reflection." But, the article goes on to say, "The only thing missing was God." About "three dozen" of these congregations have sprung up in the U.S. and Australia, and a British couple that founded the movement, Sanderson Jones and Pippa Evans, are planning many more. They are touring cities across the U.S., hoping to raise \$800,000 that will fund this non-church planting movement. Jones said the idea came to him when he attended an inspiring Christian church service. "There was so much about it that I loved, but it's a shame because at the heart of it, it's something I don't believe in," Jones said. "If you think about church, there's very little that's bad. It's singing awesome songs, hearing interesting talks, thinking about improving yourself and helping other people — and doing that in a community with wonderful relationships. What part of that is not to

like?"

"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" (Ps. 14:1).

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS IRAN'S CRACKDOWN ON CHRISTIANS HASN'T LET UP

(WNS)--When Christians around the world marked the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church on Nov. 3 (or Nov. 10 for some groups and churches), Iranian pastor Behnam Irani marked nearly 900 days in prison for his Christian faith. Four years remain in the pastor's sentence for crimes against national security. Those crimes include holding church services and telling Muslims about the gospel. Dozens more Christians remain in Iranian prisons as well. In a country where less than half a percent of the population are Christians, devotion to Christianity remains dangerous—and in cases of male converts from Islam—punishable by death.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Grace Baptist Church of Rural Hall, NC would like to announce their Annual Fall Meeting. Services will be held from Wednesday, December 4th through Sunday, December 8th.

Service times are at 7:30 P.M. except on Sunday which will be our regular schedule of services, 9:45 A.M., 10:45 A.M., and 1:30 P.M.

The scheduled speaker is Elder John Pruitt from Buffalo Valley Baptist Church in Clay, WV.

All are invited to attend, and pray for us if you can't attend. For more information or questions, please contact pastor Andy Proctor at (352) 895-1437.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Galena, OH is in need of a pastor. Any interested candidates possessing the qualifications and traits concerning the office as found in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are asked to contact either of the following: Bro. Randy Coffey at (614) 871-2406 or email recoffey@aol.com, or Bro. Joe Vass at (614) 846-8699 or email jami joe@wowway.com.

com.

The Glade Creek Baptist Church, Summersville, WV, is in need of a pastor. This church believes and preaches the doctrines of grace and church truth. Any interested Elder should call Bro. Rodney Perkins at (304) 742-3050 or Bro. Allen Frame at (304) 742-5775.


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.

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.

The Liverpool Independent Baptist Church of Liverpool, New York (north of Syracuse) is searching for a sovereign grace pastor. The church believes in the doctrines of grace, the local church, and is pre-trib and pre-mil. Interested brethren should contact Bro. Greg Sigworth at (315) 677-3819.

The Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Marion, IL is in need of a replacement pastor. Elder Raymond T. Ellis is the current pastor, but due to his age, is needing to resign. The church believes and preaches the doctrines of grace and the local church. Any interested Elder may contact Elder Ellis at (618) 983-8697 or Bro. Gary Ratley at (618) 841-0228.

The Twinbrook Hills Baptist Church of Hamilton, OH is prayerfully seeking a pastor. Organized in 1938, the church holds to historic Baptist truths, including the Doctrines of Grace. Please visit the church's website at <http://twinbrook.net> to view the Church Constitution and other items that describe our beliefs and show what the church is doing today. Please contact Bro. Chris Willis at Elohimfirst@gmail.com for more information.



**Quotes
from
Brother
Ritechus
N.
Dignation**
by Joseph Harris

Enemies of homeschooling keep saying one of the biggest problems is socialization and homeschooled young'uns will miss out on all the benefits of what they will learn from socializin' with other kids. Well they are right. They will miss bad language, pressure to accept ungodliness, rebellious attitudes, and undue exposure to sex and drugs.

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 10-1-2013 to 10-31-2013

| | |
|---|------------|
| Beginning Balance | \$6,913.31 |
| RECEIPTS: | |
| Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS | 225.00 |
| Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY | 100.00 |
| Calvary B. C., Everson, WA | 100.00 |
| Grace B. C., Corbin, KY | 100.00 |
| | 525.00 |
| TOTAL | 7,438.31 |
| EXPENDITURES: | |
| Radio Time | 454.98 |
| Tape Production | 195.00 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURES | \$649.98 |
| ENDING BALANCE | \$6,788.33 |

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 10-1-2013 to 10-31-2013

| | |
|---|------------|
| Beginning Balance | \$2,728.22 |
| RECEIPTS: | |
| 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 |
| Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY | 150.00 |
| Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL | 25.00 |
| Clif Tompkins, Franklin Springs, GA | 19.00 |
| Faith B. C., Lynn, AR | 12.50 |
| Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME | 20.00 |
| Grace B. C., Corbin, KY | 100.00 |
| Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, 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 |
| Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH | 100.00 |
| New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN | 50.00 |
| Parkway Landmark B. C., Springfield, OR | 100.00 |
| Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL | 100.00 |
| Portland B. C., Pumerville, AR | 50.00 |
| Southside B. C., Fulton, MS | 50.00 |
| Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL | 100.00 |
| Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX | 30.00 |
| Victory B. C., Courtland, VA | 25.00 |
| Subscriptions | 156.00 |
| Anonymous | 1,200.00 |
| Dividing checks | 150.00 |
| Sub Total | \$3,620.95 |
| TOTAL | \$6,349.17 |
| EXPENDITURES: | |
| Printing | 535.00 |
| Postage | 646.69 |
| Wages | 2,300.00 |
| FICA | 175.90 |
| Dividing checks | 150.00 |
| Total Expenditures | \$3,807.59 |
| ENDING BALANCE | \$2,541.58 |

God Is In Absolute Control of Everything AND EVERYBODY

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma

Is God in control of this world and its people? Is God in control of government leaders? Is God at war with the devil? Is there a possibility that the devil may win? Does God have a plan? Is He able to do His will? Is God saving His chosen people? Or is He trying to save everyone? Logically we must say that God is a failure if He is trying to save all mankind for more are lost than are saved. We have God's revealed will in the Bible. It tells us what is sin and what is right. Men do not live according to that revealed will of God: they never measure up. But God also has a secret or unrevealed will: an eternal plan. To accomplish His secret will God allows men to do what they want as long as it pleases Him. God even allows men to sin in order to accomplish His unrevealed will. They can sin because God allows it. They may not know it, but they fulfill His predetermined secret will even in their rebellion against His revealed will, the Bible. They still sin. They were responsible for their sinful actions. But it was God that allowed them to sin and predetermined that they would do what they did – all in order to bring about the fulfillment of His plan and prophecies. The Bible in both the Old and New Testaments teaches that God is in absolute control of all things and all men.

That is why Paul could write: **“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren”** (Rom. 8:28-29). If God is not in control, those two verses and others in the Bible could not be true. How could all things work together for good to God's children if nobody was in control bringing about those things that are good for them?

Even loving human parents seek to be in control of all things that pertain to their children. They try to keep them from harm and to provide good things for them. And so it is that God has a plan: an unrevealed plan. He carries out that plan in every detail. Because God is in control of all things and all men, the Bible says two different times that wicked men were unable to do what they wanted because it was not yet God's predetermined time for them to do so. Speaking of the Pharisees trying to kill the Lord Jesus, the Bible says: **“Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come”** (John 7:30). Again in John 8:20 we read of a similar incident: **“These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come”**. Peter publicly preached to these very Jews about God's control and their sin in killing the Lord, saying: **“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”** (Acts 2:23). God determined beforehand the exact time and means of the death of the Lord Jesus. He even prophesied it. He did not force men to sin in slaying Him. The men did it because they were wicked. They were responsible. Peter not only preached about God's absolute control, he prayed about it in these words, **“The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined**

before to be done” (Acts 4:26-28). Even wicked men do exactly what God has already predetermined to be done. God does not force them to do it. Yet they do that which God wants done. Wicked men killed Christ, but they did God's will. They violated the revealed will of God, but accomplished His secret will.

Back in the days of the prophet Daniel King Nebuchadnezzar said this about God: **“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”** (Dan. 4:35). The king learned those things by experience as well as revelation. God has His way in Heaven and among all people on the earth. That means nobody can stop God from doing what He wants to do. That means the inhabitants of the earth do His secret will. God works this way: He allows man's wrath, for instance, to cause them to do what brings glory to Him, but restrains men from going beyond His will even in their anger. This is stated in the following verse: **“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain”** (Ps. 76:10) It is written, **“..O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?”** (II Chron. 20:6). The Bible says God even controls tornadoes and storms: **“..the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm..”** (Nah. 1:3). All things and all men are in God's control!

God says that He will do all His pleasure – whatever He wills, that He will do. This is clear from the following,

“..I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it” (Isa. 46:9-11). God is bringing all things to pass just as He determined from the beginning. Whatever God purposes He does. God is able to do what He wants to do. In the last quoted verse it was prophesied that God would raise up a far away Gentile king to accomplish His will regarding the Jews. He did that very thing!

In Bible days, kings did as they pleased. They were sovereign. Their orders were carried out whether to kill or allow to live. And yet consider what God said about His control over kings: **“The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will”** (Pro. 21:1). God controls the courses of rivers and He controls the hearts (desires, plans, will) of kings. They do as He pleases. In fact the Bible reveals that it is God who places kings, presidents and even dictators in power. God **“..removeth kings, and setteth up kings..”** (Dan. 2:21). God controls even wicked dictators. He is able to control all men and He does that very thing.

Do you believe the Bible? It says God is in absolute control of all things and all people. God does as He pleases – including saving whom He wants to save when He wants to save them. He is able to work both outwardly upon men and inwardly within men. Paul wrote of this, saying: **“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”** (Phil. 2:13). God is absolutely in control! It is wickedness and blasphemy to say that puny men must “let God” do anything! God does not need you to “let Him” do anything! You cannot stop Him from doing what He pleases! He is the all powerful God! He is the Sovereign! Give Him the glory! He does all things well!



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