

The Berea Baptist Banner

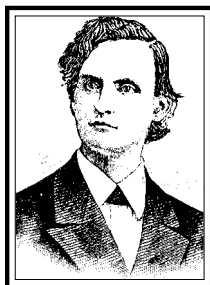
"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" Ps. 60:4

Receiving Divine Blessings

By J. B. Hawthorne
(1837 - 1910)

"Blessed be...the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble..." (II Cor. 1:3-4).

These are the words of the most thoroughly poised and symmetrically developed man, save One, the world has ever seen. The human heart has never cherished a nobler and holier



feeling than that to which he here gives utterance. He thanks God for comforts which he had received in great trials--

thanks Him, not so much for the relief which they gave him, as for the new strength which they imparted to him for the comforting of others

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The Preacher's Advice for the Worship of God

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words



be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of

words. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast

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Dying Deceived

By Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

"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).

In the verses before the text Christ gave a warning about false prophets (Matt. 7:15-20). There is a connection between my text and the preceding verses. A false prophet tells lies while pretending to speak the truth. He preaches salvation by good deeds, water baptism, church membership, decision card signing, praying through, and good feelings.



Millions follow these false prophets to their everlasting ruin.

A man by nature is a religious being. No matter

how destitute of knowledge and civilization he may be, he is generally found in possession of a creed, a shrine, and a god. Thousands upon thousands of such religious beings have been misled by false prophets. They are religious but lost, for religion is not regeneration and profession of salvation is not the same as possession of salvation. Many expect to go to Heaven and will be disappointed. A man may go to Hell by the gates of Heaven.

SAYERS, NOT DOERS

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he

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The purpose of the Berea Baptist Banner is as follows:

1. To honor God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To preach the gospel to lost sinners.
3. To spread the whole counsel of God's Word.
4. To encourage God's preachers and to 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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A HUNGRY FLOCK

This month the editor's meager pecking again travels to the barnyard. I call your attention to the illustration. We have a young girl feeding the flock of the barnyard. It seems our young feeder is being overwhelmed by the hungry flock. Having witnessed this, morning after morning, I can understand her plight. Many times I have seen the rushing geese, waddling ducks, and chickens coming from everywhere in a mad dash to get the feed and seed for breakfast. So, what lesson can we learn from our feathered friends?

In the Bible there are numerous Scriptures on feeding the flock of God's people. I Peter 5:2 says, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof..." While we have other verses that give the same thought, I want us to look at it from the other side. The flocks side.

In all my years of feeding, when the feed goes out the flock "comes a running." Some at break-neck speed, others at a steady pace, and occasionally some are slow. The slow are generally the ones to check, because this usually means there is a reason; foot or leg problems or sickness. Well, a pastor gets the same view on Sunday morning. When he arrives to deliver the message he

has prepared, he sees his flock coming in. He has the early arrivers who get there for all the services, other who make it just in time for morning worship, and then those who do not show up at all.

So, as a member of the flock which are you?

Are you a hungry flock member, who when the pastor throws out the seeds from the Word of God, you come running to hear the message and gobble up everything



he feeds you? Are you a flock member of little appetite, who comes for a few seeds, but would rather do your on scratching for worms and bugs of the world? Or are you a sick flock member who has lost both your appetite and hunger for the precious seeds from the pastor's hand?

May the Lord grant that we all become a hungry flock member, and feed on the precious messages our pastor prepares for us from God's Holy Word each week.





Light Contemplations

By Luke Austin
of Cadillac, Michigan

"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD" (Psalm 107:43).



THE UNFAIRNESS OF SALVATION

"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13).

Much theological debate has been made of this verse. Those that hate the sovereign grace of God have twisted this verse like a man looking to wring out the last drop of water from the wash rag. But doctrinal position is not our aim with this post. Take away the doctrinal supposition of this verse and just read what it says, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

Now ask yourself "is this fair?" Take the time to study the life of Jacob and Esau in Genesis and you will find based on fairness alone, this is not "fair." Fairness implies that what was received was earned or deserved. Jacob gave God more reason to treat him unkindly than Esau did. You will find more record of Jacob's treachery and ill doings than Esau's. So why does God say Jacob have I loved? Because God determined to do so before the children were born, before having done any good or evil. **"(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).

Those that would cry "unfair," need to step back and think for a moment. What if God dealt with mankind in fairness? The Bible tells us in Romans 3:23, **"For all have sinned and come short or the glory of God."** So ask yourself,

do you want God to deal with you in fairness? If God dealt solely in fairness, nobody would be saved, all would be condemned.

So this is why you must be saved by grace. If you are to receive anything good from God it must come without merit in you. Because there is no merit in you. All you can possibly merit is death, condemnation, hell, and the lake of fire.

This is the same salvation that Jacob received, by grace through faith from God determined before the foundation of the world. **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 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. 1:3-4).

Now I can not tell you if God has set you apart from before the foundation of the world. The Bible does not tell you to try and figure that out. The Bible says to repent of your sins and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. That He died for your sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. If you can believe that message in a life transforming, sin conquering way, then I can say to you He set you apart from before the foundation of the world. But not before. Will you believe on Jesus today?

(Luke Austin is a member of the Cadillac Baptist Church of Cadillac, Michigan.)



Dying Deceived

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that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). These words imply that those who do not acknowledge Christ as their Lord and Master are not even professedly on the way to Heaven. Even some who acknowledge Christ as Teacher and Savior will be excluded from the kingdom of Heaven, having never been a true subject of the kingdom of grace. Only those who actually do the Father's will shall be finally and eternally saved.

A person can desire to be accounted a Christian and be accepted among the people as a follower of Christ, and yet have no real love for Christ or His cause. The obedience here required is not mere outward obedience of the law of God, nor is it a bare subjection to the ordinances of the gospel. It is faith in Christ for life and salvation which is the source of all true obedience and without which nothing is acceptable to God. Jesus Christ declared: **"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day"** (John 6:40). I John 3:23 says: **"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ."**

Profession is no substitute for obedience. Antichrists say, "Lord, Lord." Hypocrites say, "Lord, Lord." To call Christ Lord and ignore His will is to mock Him (Luke 6:46). Because of faith in Him and love for Him we must do what He requires and obey His commandments. Everything short of doing the will of God is merely saying, "Lord, Lord." Titus 1:16 declares: **"They profess that they know God; but in works**

deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Let us beware of a formal profession of faith in Christ. Let no man imagine that he builds on the tried Foundation who hears the words of Christ and does not obey them. Hebrews 5:9 tells us that Jesus Christ is **"the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."**

THE PLEAS OF HYPOCRITES

"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?" (Matt. 7:22).

What is meant by **"in that day"**? It surely means in the day of judgment when men stand before Christ, the righteous Judge of all the earth. This text makes it plain that Jesus Christ laid claim to being the judge of the living and the dead. He is the future Judge of the world. **"In that day"** when the graves are opened and men stand before God. **"In that day"** when the despised Galilean shall appear in all His glory upon His great white throne. The judgment day is the day to which all other days have pointed, whose sun never sets, and whose transaction will never be reversed or forgotten. **"In that day"** when the books are opened before the judgment bar and every complaint is silenced, every murmur is hushed, and every excuse is banished. All other days are nothing in comparison to this day!

Some who die deceived will plead that they have prophesied in the name of Christ: **"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?"** Those false professors speak of a past historical fact. To

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prophecy means either to foretell future events or to publicly preach the Word (Rom. 12:6; I Cor. 13:9; 14:1-5). They had pretended to preach in the name of Jesus and to have authority from Him. Jesus Christ spoke in Revelation 2:2 of some **“which say they are apostles, and are not.”** To the Corinthians the Apostle Paul wrote: **“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”** (II Cor. 11:13-15).

Can a man prophesy and be a false prophet? Balaam and Caiaphas both uttered true prophecies, but neither of the two men ever had an experience of grace. It is possible for a man to speak the truth while living a lie. One can hold the truth in unrighteousness and be a false prophet. It is possible for a man to be a preacher, have talent as a speaker, give good advice, have some outward success, write good books, pray long prayers, pastor some church, hold revival meetings, and yet be in **“the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity”** (Acts 8:23). He may pretend to help others to Heaven and come short of it himself. According to Jesus Christ, thousands of such people will die deceived.

Others will lay claim to being exorcists: **“And in thy name have cast out devils?”** The word translated **“devils”** is “demons” in the Greek. There is only

one Devil, but there are many demons. There were people in the New Testament times which cast out devils and did not follow Christ (Mark 9:38). They cast out demons in the name of Christ, although they did not have any faith in Christ (Matt. 12:27). These people used the name of Christ in the formula of exorcism (Acts 19:13-14). A man may cast out a devil, be a devil, and be cast to the Devil. Judas may have cast out demons in the name of Christ.

Still others will claim to have done many wonderful works: **“And in thy name done many wonderful works?”** They will say at the judgment bar of God: **“We have spoken in tongues, moved mountains, drunk deadly poison, and healed all manner of sicknesses. We wrote commentaries on books of the Bible. We helped the poor and down trodden of the world. We promoted good morals in our community and lived the best we could.”** Christ does not dispute their claim of having done many wonderful works. But those who expect to enter Heaven on their good works will die deceived by the Devil.

According to Jesus Christ, the only people who plead their good works for salvation at the judgment are those who die deceived. They lay all the stress upon what they have done in the name of Christ and say nothing about the work of Christ. They do not utter one syllable about what Christ has done and suffered. It is plain from the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount that there is no salvation in any kind of good works---not even preaching or casting out demons! Many are deceived into believing that they will go to Heaven because they have a good reputation among religious professors, give money to

the church, and are members of some church with a Bible name. It is a soul-destructive error to imagine that good deeds can atone for reigning lusts, pride, and worldliness and lack of love for God and man. These people have deceived themselves and shall perish eternally with a lie in their right hand!

We cannot merit God's favor by what we do. It is a common tendency in man to attach the idea of merit to his religious conduct. Millions think they have procured the favor of God by their social integrity, their benevolent deeds, and their devotional observances. If you believe this you are so very wrong. Were you as holy as an angel and as devoted as a seraph you could not merit a single favor from God. The power by which you performed these good works, the influence which incited you to do them, and the time employed to do them, would be His. What merit would be attached to your performances? Jesus Christ said: **“So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do”** (Luke 17:10). How absurd for a sinner to attach the idea of merit to the best of his labors!

Note that in prophesying, in casting out demons, and in performing many wonderful works they appealed to the name of Jesus, as if genuine intimate union with Christ had been the source of their preaching and praying. In truth they had prostituted the name of Jesus, using it merely as a kind of a magic formula. By use of this name in their preaching and praying they hope to enter Heaven. But our Lord makes it plain in my text that there are those who wear the name of Christ and yet do not

know Christ.

CHRIST'S JUDGMENT ON HYPOCRITES

“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:23). People who die deceived make a profession before men in this world. At the judgment Jesus Christ will profess before men and angels their true condition. Christ as the omniscient God knew their real character and condition. He knew they were hypocrites. He knew what they had done under the guise of religion in His name.

What are we to understand by the words of Christ: **“I never knew you”**? Surely they do not indicate that Christ was ignorant of them, for as God He possessed unlimited knowledge (John 1:47,49; 2:24-25; 21:17). It was because He knew these false professors so thoroughly that He was so completely justified in condemning them at the judgment.

The word “know” means a knowledge of heart which involves electing love, friendship and fellowship. Some are known of God with love and affection and with the intent to do good. Consider some verses in the Bible which prove this. **“For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous”** (Ps. 1:6). **“You only have I known of all the families of the earth”** (Amos 3:2). **“The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him”** (Nahum 1:7). **“I am the good shepherd: and know my sheep, and am known of mine”** (John 10:14). **“But if any man love God, the same is known of him”** (I Cor. 8:3). **“But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye**

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Narrow Paths

By Doug Newell IV of
Clendenin, West Virginia

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14).

A FORM OF GODLINESS

I lived in North Carolina for a time, quite close to a very big seminary. In town, you could not throw a rock without hitting a preacher in training. I could not begin to guess how many times I was told that, I did not look like a pastor. I started replying by asking them what a pastor was supposed to look like? But I never got any answers. I knew what they meant. I did not look like all the other pastors in town. I was weighed in the balance of their perceptions and found wanting because I did not look like a slick-faced salesman in a suit and tie. What does the Bible say a pastor ought to look like? Chapter and verse, please.

Paul warns in II Timothy 3:5 about false teachers who have a **"form of godliness."** They look the part, or at least they look the part of what people perceive the part is supposed to look like. Godliness has a form because there is such a thing as godliness and it can be defined. Godliness is practical piety, or when someone is expressing love and devotion to God by their fidelity to Him in obeying His Word and following His Lordship. Godliness is loving the true and living God as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures where the Lord has given us **"all things all things that pertain unto life and godliness"** (II Peter 1:3). Christians have everything needed to live godly lives, including what actually defines godliness.

The enemy of souls likes to

copy the Lord's work. There are missionaries of darkness, deceivers who go out into the world, taking the name of Christ and living with a form of godliness defined by the perception of the people he is preaching to. False teachers have a form of godliness, but not the real thing. They are a copy, patterned after what they have seen and heard and perceive a Christian ought to be. It is all on the outside. They dress in a way that gives the appearance of godliness. Or, they may speak in a way that gives an appearance of godliness. They talk the lingo, and dress the part, and sell a product. To the undiscerning eye, they are the picture of what a Christian ought to be. But they deny the power of godliness. They have a form but stumble over shibboleth.

Godliness is not an abstract but it is something real, with genuine power. II Peter 1:3-8 shows us that knowledge is connected to godliness. How can you be a godly person if you do not know what it means? But godliness is more than knowledge. There is a genuine love of Christ, wrought in the heart by the effectual working power of the Spirit of God. Without being made a partaker of the divine nature, you will never escape the corruption of the world. Are you a godly person? Does your life characterize a person who loves and is dedicated to the Lord Jesus?

(Doug Newell IV is pastor of the Buffalo Valley Baptist Church of Clay, West Virginia.)



Dying Deceived

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again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" (Gal. 4:9). **"The Lord knoweth them that are his"** (II Tim. 2:19). Those whom God knows He foreknows (Rom. 8:29; 11:2; I Pet. 1:2).

Thus these words mean something like this: "I never had any love or affection for you---never approved of you or your conduct---never knew you as my Father's chosen and love gift to Me---never knew you as my sheep in the covenant of grace---never died and called you by my grace---never knew you to exalt my blood and righteousness---never knew you to do any good works for my glory." How dreadful is the thought to be disowned by Christ whose smile is Heaven and whose frown is Hell!

Christ's use of the word **"never"** in Matthew 7:23 kills the doctrine of falling from grace. Christ does not say that He once knew them and then rejected them as His people---that they had been baptized and then had fallen from grace---that they had been once pardoned and then had apostatized. Rather, Jesus Christ declared that He had never at any time regarded them as Christians. Whatever had been their talent, their miraculous works, their hopes, their pretended joys, their visions, their zeal, and their profession, Christ had never at any time regarded them as His true disciples. Those who die deceived appear at the judgment as false professors, not as former Christians who fell from grace. Here is the strongest possible proof that true believers do not fall from grace. These words of Christ for ever settle the question of falling from grace, for all who

believe the words of our Lord.

These hypocrites who die deceived are for ever banished from the presence of Christ: **"Depart from me."** To depart from Christ is the Hell of Hells and the foundation of all the misery of the damned in Hell. The absence of recognition by Christ, though not represented as the cause, yet will involve banishment from His glorious presence. **"Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power"** (II Thess. 1:9). **"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment..."** (Matt. 25:41,46). How sad to be cut off from Christ and His mediation---to fall from the heights of hope to the depths of eternal torment!

The reason for their banishment from Christ is not because God did not elect them or predestinate them, but it is because they are workers of iniquity. The unsaved in Scripture are often called **"the workers of iniquity"** (Job 31:3; Ps. 14:4; 36:12; 53:4; 59:2; 64:2; 92:7; 94:16; 125:5; 141:4,9; Prov. 19:28; Isa. 31:2; 32:6; Hos. 6:8; Luke 13:27). Those who die deceived, like Ahab of old, have sold themselves **"to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD"** (I Kings 21:25).

Those who claimed to have performed many wonderful works were, in fact, workers of iniquity. At the judgment Christ will tear off the sheepskin and lay bare the ravaging wolf. **"The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity"** (Ps. 5:5).

Millions will appear at the

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judgment to discover that iniquity is their ruin. Their supposed good works will be found to be works of iniquity---done for the wrong reason and with the wrong aim. Some who profess to be preachers will go down to perdition. Some who claim to work miracles will discover they only worked iniquity. Some who professed to cast out demons will be cast into Hell with the demons. An orthodox creed alone cannot save. The **“devils also believe, and tremble”** (Jas. 2:19).

CONCLUSION

1. Some people have told me over the years that they do not believe that God will allow a man to die deceived. But this is wrong. According to our Lord Jesus Christ, millions will be religious but lost. Thousands will land in Hell who thought they would go to Heaven. The person who is deceived does not know that he is deceived. Are you deceived by the Devil? Will you be among those who will die deceived?

2. Beware of a false profession of faith, for the number that are deceived are said to be by Christ “many.” Workers of iniquity may prophesy, cast out demons, and do many wonderful works. A man may have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, even have mountain-moving faith, and be nothing but sounding brass and tinkling cymbal (I Cor. 13:1-2). Matthew Henry said: “Grace may bring a man to Heaven without miracles, but miracles will never bring a man to Heaven without grace.”

3. The most fearful words Christ can ever speak to hypocrites is: **“Depart from me.”** What a dreadful separation! For united to Christ all is Heaven, separated

from Him all is Hell.

4. There is in our land and country many today who claim to have the gift of prophecy, to cast out demons, and to do many wonderful works. Just as Christ predicted, they do all of these things in the name of Jesus only. They preach in the name of Jesus only. They baptize in the name of Jesus only. They heal the sick in the name of Jesus only. Sincere and honest these people may be, but they will die deceived.

5. Do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Oh, to know Him is life eternal. Have you really felt His cleansing blood upon your sin-stained soul? Are you sure that Heaven is your home? Do you really know where you will spend eternity? Are you depending on your works, or on the finished work of Christ at Calvary, to take you to Heaven? In Ezekiel 18:30 the Lord says: **“Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.”** Jesus Christ said: **“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able”** (Luke 13:24).



Divine Blessings

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in distress. He gloried in his tribulations, because in them he had experience of God's presence and power which enlarged his capacity for instructing, comforting, and strengthening other men, and especially other Christians.

To covet gifts for the use we can make of them in promoting the world's welfare is the best proof of a regenerated heart and a Christ like character. So much more did this man Paul love

others than himself, that he was willing to be accursed from God if by bearing a divine malediction he might save the apostate Jewish people.

Blessed is the man to whom God has given the secret of rejoicing even in tribulation. Blessed is the man who can see and enjoy at all times what is good in the world, and who can transmute what is evil in itself into elements of strength and happiness. It is the condition of a man's heart that makes the world what it is to him. He see things as he is.

The mind is its own place, and in itself

Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

I sometimes meet a person to whom the world is a great picture gallery. Wherever he turns his vision he beholds a panorama of bewitching beauty. If you should pluck out his eyes it would not destroy his happiness, because his heart is full of bright and beautiful pictures. The conditions of happiness are not without but within him. This fact gives him the mastery of his environment and makes all things contribute to his felicity.

I suppose you have not forgotten the fable of the firebrand and the lamp. One day they went out to see what they could find. The firebrand came back and wrote in its journal: “The whole world is very dark.” When the lamp returned it made this entry in its journal: “I did not find any darkness in all my journey; it was bright everywhere.” The explanation of this difference between the observation of the firebrand and that of the lamp is, that the latter carried a light and the former did not.

Every man in going through the world will find just what he takes

with him. If he takes darkness he will find darkness, and if he takes light he will find light. If there is beauty in his soul he will find beauty in every spot and in every object on which his eye rests. If he is selfish and mean he will find selfishness and meanness everywhere. If he has a heart whose sympathies embrace the whole world, he will find a kindly sympathy and a sweet charity greeting him in every community that he enters.

Two men came from a distant city to visit our Tennessee Centennial Exposition. When they returned to their homes each gave his impression of the “White City.” One said, “Oh, it is a big show and big crowds go to see it, but I got very tired of it.” The other, with a feeling akin to rapture, expressed his appreciation of everything that he saw. He described every building and the exhibits which it contained. When he spoke of the Parthenon---an exact reproduction of the original---and of its beautiful specimens of painting and sculpture, the creations of the world's best genius, his eye flashed with the inspiration of his theme. He passed rapidly from wonder to wonder of the great pageant, and concluded with a description of the music, which he declared to be so sublimating in its influence that he could scarcely tell “whether he was in the body or out of the body.” One of these men had appropriated nothing. The other had absorbed everything. The great scene was photographed in all its beauty on his inner being, and there it will remain to be studied and enjoyed through all the days of his coming life.

If a man has music in his soul,

♦ (Continued on page 7)

Moderate Steps

By Paul Stepp of
Indore, West Virginia

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD:
and he delighteth in his way." (Psalm 37:23).



OUR REDEMPTION DRAWS NIGH

Times are certainly turbulent, dangerous, and even frightening for many people in the world today. I was reading in the book of Luke, and I thought of our day and time as I read the following passage: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:25-28).

The nations are "distressed." The people are full of "perplexity." With so many ideas of what is right and what is wrong; what is true science and what is false science; what is safe public protocols and what is merely deprivations of liberties. "Men's hearts" are even now "failing them for fear."

I believe the world and the powers of darkness are using the world-wide virus to sow the seeds of panic and despair throughout the world. It is readily apparent that the vast majority of people on the earth, are troubled or even consumed with the things of the flesh and the material world, while the things of the spirit and eternal life are not of any immediate concern. As the attention of the

world is directed more and more to the things of the flesh; as the world of men becomes more and more perplexed with the dangers and the fears that are all around them – wondering, "What do we do next?" With never a thought to trust in God rather than men; as men and women have their eyes more and more cast downward, to man and man's abilities and the help that comes from man; even at such a time do the people of God need, even more, to look up! The time is upon us! Our Redemption draweth nigh! The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is near!

Our true hope is in Jesus Christ. I do hope and pray that men and women will turn to Him in faith and repentance. The world is not coping very well with the Covid virus. Why do you think the world can do any better when it comes to easing your guilt of sin, or of saving you from the wrath to come?

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which

God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:4-10).

(Paul Stepp is pastor of the Indore Baptist Church of Indore, West Virginia.)



Divine Blessings

(Continued from page 6) ♦

he hears music everywhere. Some men can walk through a forest on a May morning and find more inspiration in listening to the warbling of the birds than some other men would get from the grandest music that human voices can make.

Give me the man who sees and enjoys all the good in his earthly allotment. Give me communion with the soul that extracts honey from every flower that blossoms along its homeward journey. Give me for a friend and companion the man who finds nuggets of gold in the rocks over which his feet stumble. Give me for a counselor and guide the man who beholds objects of beauty and loveliness all along the pathway of toil and conflict. Give me for a fellow-traveler in life's pilgrimage the man who finds that,

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods;

*There is a rapture on the lonely shore;
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar.*

Give me for a comforter in distress the man who sees angels in the disguises of earth, and gets a blessing from them ere they spread their radiant wings for homeward flight.

There is a great building in Europe, whose dome is so shaped that sounds uttered beneath it come back in a delightful response of melodious music. Even a discord is converted into harmony as it floats up into the resonant vault and returns to the

ear.

Such a dome hung over the soul of that grand old apostle who said: **"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content,"** (Phil. 4:11) and who, while incarcerated in a Roman dungeon and stained with the blood of his own lacerated flesh, sang praises to God. Beneath that dome, visible only to the eye of faith, Paul's groans and lamentations were converted into anthems, and every discordant sound was transmuted into sweetest harmony.

What are the causes of your discontent and unhappiness? You think that if you had more money, more distinction, and more power, the trouble would be cured. You are under a delusion, a Satanic delusion. The causes of your discontent are not in your circumstances, but in yourself. Let God into your soul, let him be your constant guest, and you will easily master your circumstances. Let the glory of His love shine through your sorrows, and they will be converted into joys. Get a sweet song in your heart, and melody will fill all the air about you. Even the wailing storm will make soothing and restful music to your troubled spirit.

Get God's beauty into your soul and you will see beauty everywhere in the heavens above and in the earth beneath. Get God's peace into your life, and you will find peace all along your journey to the skies. Put yourself by faith in such relations with Jesus Christ that He will be "all the day long your joy and your song," and then, like Paul, you will bless God even in adversity and extract comfort even from the bitterest tribulation.

My second remark is upon the nobility of the man who uses

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Divine Blessings

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every divine blessing bestowed upon him in blessing his needy fellow-men.

Paul sought comfort from God that he might use it in comforting his brethren. The bed-rock principle of Christianity binds us to live for the welfare of others. Christ came **“not to be ministered unto, but to minister,”** (Mark 10:45) and He taught His disciples that in the judgment of the last day He would measure their fidelity to Him by what they had done in caring for the poor and sick and distressed of this world.

In that great day He will say to those upon the right hand of His throne: **“I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me”** (Matt. 25:35-36). And when in amazement they reply, **“Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?”** (Matt. 25:37-39) He will say, “Ah, you did not know it, but every time you fed a hungry pauper, or gave a cup of water to a thirsty pilgrim, or cared for an orphan, or nursed a sick neighbor, or comforted a prisoner, or opened your door to a stranger, you ministered unto me.”

I endorse the sentiment of a distinguished Christian writer, who says: “The incense which God loves best is not that which is burned in a golden censer and wastes its perfume on the

air, but that which is burned in the habitations of the needy, to cheer some human weariness, or comfort some human sorrow.”

My brethren, I seriously fear that many of you are under the fatal delusion that you are doing the vital thing in religion and meeting your obligations to God by simply coming to a religious service in this sanctuary on the Lord’s Day. Some of you seem to be utterly blind to the truth, that our Sabbath worship here is only preparation for the real work of religion. Oh, that God would give me power to strike the scales from your eyes!

Your divinely appointed task lies not within these sanctuary walls, but outside of them. Your real battles for God and His cause must be fought, not within this sacred enclosure, but out yonder in the great wailing world of sin and suffering.

Lying out on the very surface of revealed religion is the great truth that God enriches no man, temporally or spiritually, without laying upon him at the same time the obligation to use the blessings bestowed on him in supplying the needs of other men.

My brother, why has God given you material wealth? Why does He prosper you in business, and permit you year after year to add to your already ample fortune? That you may live in a mansion, fare sumptuously every day, move in a fashionable circle, and be courted and flattered by a fawning world? If this is your interpretation of God’s goodness to you, you are worse than blind, and need conversion from an error that is mischievous and ruinous in the last degree.

You are simply God’s steward. Your money is God’s money. If you squander it in the gratification of unholy pride and

ambition, you rob God, defraud the world, and doom yourself to incurable wretchedness.

What is true in this respect of material wealth is equally true of knowledge. Knowledge is a talent which God requires us to use, not for our own pleasure and aggrandizement, but for the elevation and happiness of those who are inferior to us in intellectual attainment.

Paul thanked God for the comfort bestowed upon him, because it increased his power to comfort his afflicted brethren. It was a great thing to feel the warmth of God’s love permeating his own heart, and the benediction of God’s peace settling upon his own soul; but the joy of this experience was almost forgotten in the greater gladness of knowing that he had gained new power for comforting and cheering the hearts of his fellow-toilers and fellow-sufferers. O Paul, noble, Christ-like Paul! there is no place in human admiration and affection that is too high for thee. Thou didst call thyself **“less than the least of all saints,”** but we are persuaded that of all the jeweled crowns in heaven, thine is the brightest, save one.

Peter, overcome by fear, denied his Lord, and thus brought upon himself disgrace and anguish. Foreseeing that he would repent and be forgiven, Jesus said to him, **“When thou art converted, strength thy brethren.”** By this He meant that Peter, in going through the pangs of remorse, and in finding forgiveness for his terrible sin, would learn lessons that would be very helpful to his brethren, both in resisting temptation and in recovering from sinful mistakes.

Who doubts that Peter did strengthen his brethren when

the joy of salvation was restored to him. I sometimes imagine that I see him standing in a group of his fellow-Christians, and that I hear him saying: “Brethren, let no man among you follow my example by denying the Master, because such moral dastardly is a crime against the best Being that every breathed the atmosphere of earth, and because it will bring upon Him an indescribable spiritual darkness and anguish. Save yourselves from such an affliction, by standing up bravely for your Lord in the face of every difficulty and danger. But if, through the weakness of the flesh, any of you should, like me, fail and fall away, do not despair; do not follow the example of poor Judas; do not let your remorse drive you to madness and self-destruction; but remember that the Master still loves you and intercedes for you, and that if you will only return to Him and fall at His feet, He will lift you up, enfold you in the arms of His love, bestow upon you His forgiving grace, and breathe upon your troubled spirits the benediction of His unspeakable peace.”

David fell, and when he fell, darkness covered him and peace forsook him. But he still believed in God’s recovering mercy, and in the midst of his deepest distress, he prayed: **“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee”** (Ps. 51:12).

Brethren, in prayerfully studying the condition of this church, I have reached this conclusion: Many of you, through worldliness and neglect of duty, have lost “the blessedness you knew when first you saw

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Brief Truths

By Randy Johnson of
Texarkana, Texas

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Ephesians 1:13).



WHERE IS THINE HEART?

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21).

I know it is common for us all to concern ourselves with our future. So, we work hard and save for our future, because the day will come when we will no longer to be able to work. There is nothing wrong with that at all, we all need a nest egg for tomorrow. With that being said, Christians should not allow themselves to forget or even neglect their nest egg in heaven. Just think if some Christians put as much effort and sacrifice into the work of the Lord as they did into their collection of worldly possessions, they would be "heaven reward rich."

A lot of Christians will have little or no service to the Lord and His churches, while having a lot in this world. As Christians, we all need to pay attention to the Scriptures and obey as the Lord commands. Sometimes I can see by the reactions of people when witnessing or preaching the Word of God is being ignored, beloved, you will never make a bigger mistake in your entire life than you will when you ignore God's Word.

Our heavenly Father is so gracious to us, He sent His own dear Son (Who knew no sin) to die for our sins. Jesus said there is no greater love than a man lay down his life for a brother (John 15:13). That is the sacrifice God made of His own and His dear Son made for you. We are saved from the fiery pits of eternal hell because of this great sacrifice of grace and mercy on God's part. God had no gain from this sacrifice and neither did Jesus, because their sacrifice was an act of love, not for gain. This should be why we Christians live our life on this earth, to glorify our Father's love and our Saviour's love.

Once saved every newborn child of God ought to be baptized and join a local New Testament church and make it our earthly spiritual home. We ought to sacrifice for it and do everything to make sure it is being the lighthouse of God in your community. We ought to search the Scriptures daily paying awfully close attention to its contents, working to fulfill God's commandments. This ought not be for gain, but because we love Him like He first loved us (I John 4:19).

We ought to help those in need, beginning in our own churches, then to those around us. We ought to love our brothers and sisters in Christ more than anyone else, because these are our eternal family. We should never allow another Christian or their family to go without while we have for ourselves. James

wrote "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:14-17).

Many people call themselves Christians, but when their works are dead, chances are faith is not there. The Lord told us that our test as Christians is that we love each other, how can we love God and Jesus if we cannot love one another. Where is your spiritual heart? What balance is in heaven's rewards bank, you cannot check the account, you cannot withdraw from it, but when we get to heaven Jesus will give us our rewards and crowns.

There are not reward's for overlooking Scripture and looking another way when a need is there. Loving one another just because we are Christians, with no strings attached is a must and not an option. Folks, we all have one life on this earth. God has saved our unworthy souls from hell's eternal never quenching fires. We need to focus on the Bible and walk in the spirit doing for God and ignoring this world and its treasures. **"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built**

thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (I Cor. 3:11-15).

(Randy Johnson is pastor of the Sovereign Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Texarkana, Texas.)



Divine Blessings

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the Lord." You are walking in darkness; you are without comfort, without peace; the spirit of prayer has forsaken you; your service of God is the deadest formality; you get out of it no inspiration, no help. In this condition you are clogging the wheels of Zion; you are making it almost impossible for the church to move forward and win a victory for God. Not until you follow the example of David and Peter by retracing your steps, not until you have felt the pangs of a godly sorrow for your sins, not until you have sought and found forgiveness, and God has restored to you the joy of salvation, can this church make a move towards the enemies of Christ with any reasonable hope of success. Not until then can she teach transgressors the way of truth and life, not until then will God use her for the conversion of sinners. An awful responsibility is upon you. If you can be made to feel it, and can be persuaded to put yourselves once more in touch with God, and in the line of Christian rectitude and duty, there is in reserve for us a victory that will make gladness throughout all the camp of Israel on earth, and provoke even the glorified hosts of heaven to lift up their myriad voices in higher and sweeter notes of praise!



Preacher's Advice

(Continued from page 1) ♦

vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God” (Eccl. 5:1-7).

King Solomon is known, wide and far, as the wisest of kings, and the wisest of men. As the primary mortal penman for the books of the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, he has passed on to the world a wealth of knowledge and a wealth of worthy and useful axioms and sayings. These words of wisdom are useful to all, not just the Jews, not just the saved and redeemed of God, not just the religious world, but really useful to the world of men at large.

I want us to consider our brief text passage, and apply these words that Solomon penned, to the method and the means of our worship of God. In our text passage, Solomon begins by making reference to the **“house of God.”** He continues by making reference to the hearing, the speaking, the heart of man, and the service that men provide unto God. I think these warnings and teachings were applicable to each individual Jew, as he or she attempted to worship God in the place of worship. I think these warnings and teachings are also applicable to the saints of God in the New Testament, including us as we seek to serve the Lord, particularly as members of the churches of Jesus Christ.

I want us to consider the warnings of King Solomon, and apply his practical wisdom to the means and methods of our worship of God, especially as we serve Jesus Christ as members of the body of Christ on earth.

WATCH YOUR STEP

“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil” (Eccl. 5:1). First, let us address the beginning of this verse, when Solomon says, **“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God...”** If Solomon were alive on the earth today, maybe he would put it this way, to the Christians and church-members of today: **“Watch your step.”** Matthew Poole said that Solomon is referring to the feet of thy soul, which are the thoughts and affections, by which men go to God, and walk or converse with him. **“Make straight steps. See that your hearts be purged from sin, and prepared and furnished with all graces or necessary qualifications, as good intention, reverence, humility, etc. It is a metaphor from one that walketh in a very slippery path, in which there needs more than ordinary care to keep him from falling.”** This world is a tricky and slippery place. Men who follow after God are opposed by the devil and by the world. There are places and times where we might slip or fall. Be careful! Watch your step!

When we come into the house of God, or when we come into the presence of God, let us do our best to present ourselves in a humble and obedient way. Let us seek to set aside the affections and the lusts of the flesh. Let us seek to set aside all of the sins and the distractions with which our journey here on earth is fraught. Let us use Joshua as an example.

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD’S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so” (Joshua 5:13-15). In the presence of a glorious God and Saviour, Joshua fell on his face. In the presence of a wondrous and beautiful Redeemer, Joshua was humble and obedient. He knew a little of the holiness of God.

Is not God still holy? Is not our Saviour still righteous and beautiful? Is not the Redeemer of men still the holy and gracious Lord Jesus Christ? Where is the humility that men should show? Where is the constraint and the carefulness that men should show to their Saviour? In the New Testament, we, the churches of Jesus Christ must **“demonstrate constraint.”** In the New Testament, we the children of God, as we worship the Lord Jesus Christ must **“demonstrate humility.”** Peter said, **“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble”** (1 Peter 5:5).

The humblest of men, Moses, took off his shoes in the presence of the Lord. **“And Moses said, I**

will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God” (Ex. 3:3-6). Moses humbly hid his face in the presence of God. I wonder, how much humility do most saints (or so-called saints) of God show in the presence of the Lord God? Do you realize, that we are just as much in the presence of God when we assemble in the house of the Lord, as was Moses at the burning bush? You and I are members of the body of Christ. You and I are members of the church of the living God. What constraint we should demonstrate. What humility we should show!

O, how we should leave our pride and our self-centered ways at the door, as we enter into this holy sanctuary of worship. Here, only God should be featured. Here, only His glory should be honored. If Joshua and Moses would have it so, should not the New Testament churches of Jesus Christ have it so, as well?

When you come into this place, you should **“mind your manners.”** The Apostle Paul told the Church at Corinth, **“How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If**

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Little Valleys

By Timothy J. Hille of
Ashland, Illinois

"He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills." (Psalms 104:10).



ACTS 16:31

God is nothing if not specific. He tells every person specifically how to be saved from sin. He is also patient and kind toward willful sinners. He not only gives us all the answers in His perfect, infallible, and divinely inspired book, the Bible; He also supplies us with the questions – and good thing, too, seeing that we, in our natural condition as we were born into this world, are too wicked and foolish to know the right questions, let alone the right answers. We think the question is, "How can I make more money?" or, "How can I keep up with the Joneses?" or, "Do I not just have to be good and eventually I will get to heaven?" Thanks be unto God He has supplied the question for ignorant sinners like you and me. **"What must I do to be saved?"** (Acts 16:30) is the question that needs asking by every soul. Thanks be unto God, He also has supplied the answer. **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"** (Acts 16:31).

We, in our self-righteous arrogance and willful ignorance imagined the answer was, "Be baptized and you will be saved" or, "Take communion and you will be saved" or, "Repeat the so-called sinner's prayer, and you will be saved" or, "Be good and want to go to heaven, and God will accept you in the end." There is no end to the false notions that fill people's sin-darkened hearts, but there will be an end to all false belief and false practice one day, when God shall put an end to all the world's man-made, devil-influenced

religion, and shall exalt Jesus Christ above all things in heaven and in earth, and put them under His feet. While it is sad to have been deceived into believing a lie, it is sadder to remain willfully ignorant once the truth has been declared. God declares the truth to every sinner (that is you and me) in the Gospel of His Son Jesus Christ. The truth is that the only salvation from sin is the salvation God gives to those whose trust is in His Son Jesus.

(Timothy J. Hille is pastor of the Pleasant Plains Baptist Church of Pleasant Plains, Illinois)



Preacher's Advice

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any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also

saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (I Cor. 14:26-35). I believe these words of Paul are very similar to the warning of Moses, "watch your step." If the service and the public worship of God begins to feature any particular man, or any particular woman, or any particular group of men or women, more than it features God; then, that service and that worship is not acceptable in the sight of our holy and glorious God.

Later in this chapter, Paul said to the Corinthian church, **"Let all things be done decently and in order"** (I Cor. 14:40). Just as the wise words of Solomon, these words of the Apostle Paul have become an axiom: "Let all things be done decently and in order," especially in the house of God, and in the public worship of Jesus Christ.

PERK UP YOUR EARS

Let us return to our text, and read again, **"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil"** (Eccl. 5:1). Next, I want us to notice the middle part of this verse, as Solomon says, **"...and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools..."** I think that we could paraphrase with another idiom: "perk up your ears."

How many times do we enter into the house of God, with no real desire or intention to listen to the Word of God? I wonder how many souls across this nation of ours have, today, entered into the so-called public worship service of Jesus Christ, with no intention of listening to the Word of God; but, rather, with the hope or the

aim of being pleased in the flesh, through the songs, through the pleasant words, or through the adoration or the praise of men? I wonder how many so-called worshipers of God have, as their primary goal, to satisfy their own needs, or their own desires, or to make happy their own persons rather than to listen to the Word of God, and to grow in the most holy faith? We should not be giving the sacrifice of fools. We should not be entertaining the flesh. We should be more ready to hear the Word of God!

I suppose that we could simplify things by saying, simply, that we need to "pay attention to God." How many times did your father, or mother, or your teacher in school say, "pay attention to me." Well, God is telling us, through Solomon, "pay attention to me."

The Lord Jesus Christ told the devil, **"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"** (Matt. 4:4). The words of God are life to the lifeless. The words of God are hope to the hopeless. The words of God are the nourishment and the sustenance to those who believe on His Name. Should we not pay special heed to God's Word? King David (the father of King Solomon) said, **"I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments"** (Ps. 119:131). David said also, **"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things,**

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. As a pastor, what is the most discouraging thing you see in our Baptist churches today?

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“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Heb. 13:7).

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17).

There are two major issues I have seen as a pastor in our Baptist churches today. Of course, it must be stated, that is, in my opinion. The first on being the lack of respect for the office that I hold. Being a pastor to me is not a dictatorship, and the two verses in Hebrews that I have listed above show that.

I have told my congregation time and time again, that if I fail to preach and teach the truth, they are to fire me. The truth of God's Word is most important to me. **“Remember them”** and **“Obey them”** are very important admonitions (cautions, warnings, and rebukes) from the writer of the Book of Hebrews.

In (v. 7) a pastor should be remembered in prayer by his congregation. People have no idea

the attacks that come to me every day, and I need to be lifted up in prayer, and that I have the ability to speak the **“word of God”** and that they may see my faith as they follow my lead. I am not a super human being, I am just a human being as they are, the difference is that I have been given a huge responsibility to watch for their souls.

This brings me to (v. 17). I am called to preach the truth and in the process, I am to see that none waiver to the right or to the left, and when I do I must exercise the instructive words that Paul told young Timothy. **“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”** (II Tim. 4:2).

Most have not learned that not only do I have to answer for myself when I stand before the Lord, but I have to give an account of those He has given me to pastor. I am to watch for their souls, and when I preach the truth they should listen, and do it. And this is where I am discouraged, they may hear me, but they would not change. They keep going down the same path. Remember what James said, **“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”** (James 1:22). What do you think those words mean? Like I said, many are hearers but not doers.

The next great discouragement as a Pastor of a Baptist church is the disrespect from other preachers who think they are better than me, and as I put it, “think they have arrived and know

all.” They forget that we are all called of God, but for some reason they think they have to rough shod over the rest of us. In my book they are cowards. If you can not come to me out of respect and speak with me about an issue you may have heard and never talked to me or any other preacher about to see if it is the truth, how can I respect you?

You know when I find out these things? Usually at a Bible Conference, they stand behind the pulpit with their accusations, but have not the never to talk to me to my face. I abhor that, and I know the Lord does, too. I literally hate Bible Conferences for that very reason, and I am not the least bit upset when not invited to preach at one.

And just so the reader will understand, this has been going on for years, it is not something new, that is why many have continued on to this day. Here is what the Scripture teaches:

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10).

“Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits” (Rom. 12:16).

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:18-19).

If other preachers would mind their own business and not worry about others, they would be much better off. If other preachers are doing it wrong, let God correct them, or at least have the guts to speak with them yourselves privately. **“Now the**

God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:5-6).

Here is one more Scripture, and there are many I could draw from but this will be enough: **“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints”** (I Thess. 3:12-13). Do you love me, or do you hate me?

I can not begin to tell you how I have been hurt over the years by this practice. But I have a work to do, a commission from God Himself, and I do not have time to engage in such foolishness. I have repeated this verse of Scripture over and over in my head often so that I may have some peace about things like this. **“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them”** (Ps. 119:165). God Bless!

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As a pastor I do my best to maintain a positive attitude about the Lord's work. I feel blessed to be saved by sovereign grace and have the privilege to be a member of one of the Lord's churches. I also count it a great honor to be called

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. As a pastor, what is the most encouraging thing you see in our Baptist churches today?

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One of the most encouraging things I have seen in recent years, is that the Lord seems to be touching more folks with an awakening desire to hear and learn about the sovereignty of God and the sovereign grace of His mercy in the salvation of lost souls. This has typically cycled in Christianity where there is an explosion of serious study of God's Word and His attributes as they are biblically revealed. I think the internet explosion of knowledge has made so much information available and its "forum" formats have put folks into a position where they are forced to defend the Word of God's revelation of a God that is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. Selah! Think about it!

Whenever the truth is laid bare, the arminian and humanistic tendencies of the authoritarian religious leaders have been brought to light as gross and vile props to consolidate power for the glory of men. The printing press was one of the most important reasons for the reformation explosion and education of the common Bible reader in the simple and clear doctrines in Holy Writ. Sola Scriptura! Sola Fide! Sola Gratia! were the

gradient shouts of those climbing out of the oppression of human pride and salvation by works that had shadowed the Christian world throughout the Dark Ages. The shining lights of our (Ana) Baptist forefathers instigated a search into the doctrines of grace. Total Depravity was clearly true when the Bible was read instead of listening to dogma sermons that required works and coins to procure a Catholic salvation. **"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities"** (Isa. 64:6-7).

In that day, and now in ours, the "damnable" words of predestination, election, and foreknowledge began to be bandied about and a defense could not be made for a God that succumbed to the power of man's free will. How could God be a God of undeniable prophecy and have an immutable will, yet be dependant upon lowly men's decrees and decisions? Prattled dogma is being peeled away by a thirst and hunger for a God of providence and power. **"Remember the former things of old: for 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: ...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).

The defense of a God that loves everyone, yet is not able to save anyone will never stand in true debate with the world of atheists and agnostics. Perhaps, within a "Christian" debate, the love of God might ring true as the underlying and preeminent attribute of God, but in the rough and ready world of the humanist and naturalist, only the holiness of God can make a stark defense of the nature of our God. Truly He is unique and sanctified, as only the Bible deity of Jehovah claims and proclaims. **"Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men"** (Pro. 15:11)? **"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God"** (Ps. 9:17).

I know that many are coming to sovereign grace through the reformed and covenant crowds, but if the Lord is allowing grace to coalesce into a rallying point in these dark and desperate times, then how simply and easily could He lead such worshipers of a sovereign God of Grace into a sovereign God of church authority and the holy sanctification of His Baptist Bride? Surely, again, it will take an explosion of truth and biblical exegesis that the Holy Spirit is so famous for. Revivals and turning back to forsaken landmarks that are lit by the candlesticks of the Lord's New Testament Baptist churches could be the logical next step of a merciful and compelling God. Selah! Think about it!

That would also be sovereign grace, eh? **"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will**

take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26). **"And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart"** (Jer. 24:7).

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"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God" (I Thess. 1:2-4).

The greatest encouragement that I have seen as a Baptist preacher is the love and compassion my congregation have shown me over the years. They have stood by me through the good times and the bad times. I have been truly blessed with these people God has given me.

The other encouragement has come from our sister churches that have stayed with us throughout the building process of the new building. They have also helped me financially as well, when I needed it the most. They have truly amazed me with their cards, letters, and phone calls of encouragement. Many times, I have wondered if they would stay with us, with some of the decisions we have had to make concerning the building. They have been

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Forum Question #1

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into the ministry and to pastor a New Testament Baptist Church. Frankly, the source of most of my times of discouragement is me. There are times when I feel overwhelmed by my failures and shortcomings as a Christian man, a husband, a dad, a papaw, and a pastor. I often find myself crying out with the apostle: **“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin”** (Rom. 7:24-25). Over the past 40 years of serving the Lord I have learned that the failures of the flesh are ever present, but God's grace is much greater! God graciously grants repentance and fills me with His joy and fresh applications of the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

As far as what I see that discourages me most in our churches in general is something I have no control over. It is the aging population of our churches. The average membership of Baptist churches is growing older and many faithful members are passing on to glory. I just recently preached the funeral of Brother Glen Peters who was one month shy of ninety-nine years old. He was a World War II veteran, but more importantly he was a seasoned veteran in the service of the Lord. He rarely missed a church service or a special meeting. He was always looking for ways to contribute to the Lord's work. He was a witness who shared the Gospel with others. He sang in the choir. He faithfully served as our church clerk for many years. He was a dear brother who was filled with grace and was a blessing

to so many people. When you lose members of Brother Peters' caliber it can be discouraging.

Along the same line of thought, many faithful preachers and pastors are aging. As the old faithful pastors graduate to glory, in many cases churches are left with no one to carry on in the ministry. Certainly we need to pray that God would save young people, add them to His church, and call more young able and qualified men into the ministry. We must also put feet to our prayers by witnessing to the lost and preaching the Gospel to every creature. God saves and adds to the church as it pleases Him, but it is our solemn responsibility to sow the good seed of the Gospel on all grounds until Jesus comes again. I refuse to merely say “it is the last days” and capitulate to pessimism. I want to fight the good fight of faith until Jesus comes again with a hopeful heart that God will save sinners and work in our churches!

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The most discouraging thing that I see in Baptist churches today is the conspicuous and prevalent absence of young folk in attendance. This is not just a phenomena of Baptist churches, but is a troubling trend across fundamental Christianity as a whole. The measures that more liberal churches take to “entertain” the younger generation does nothing more than stretch their attendance a few more years, until they still yet disappear

from the church doors of faithful membership. Selah! Think about it!

Faithful membership is the discouraging part. I realize that we are not in charge of saving the younger generation, but only to faithfully discharge the gospel of Jesus Christ, and God will call out His elect and powerfully regenerate them irresistibly. So, if souls are not being saved that could be considered discouraging, but really, if God does not save them and add them to His church, anything I might do to “save” and “add” would just make matters worse and muddy the waters so much the more. **“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”** (Acts 2:46-47).

No, what I am discouraged by is that the ones that are saved (or seem to be) are not faithful and energetic members. Perhaps, it is the cycle of peer pressure and lack of real persecution that is causing the problem. It comes too easy, and real commitment has historically been soldered in the fires of resistance. The crowds of liberalism and easy believism have watered down the evident doctrines of truth in Christianity to the point that compromise has become the golden calf of the younger generation. To “fit in” is more desirable than to sturdily (and awkwardly) “contend for the faith.” The loyalty to God's venerable doctrines seems to have lost its appeal, as ecumenicalism has grasped our young folk and weakened the links of holy truth. **“But these speak evil of those**

things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves” (Jude 1:10).

Casually, it seems the modern generation will sacrifice using wine, in favor of grape juice in the Lord's Supper in consideration of the contemporary views on alcoholism and the temperance movement fall-out. The woman's headcovering is deemed “old-fashioned” among their young cohorts, reared up in an ever-changing feminist world. Chivalry and motherhood have become “un-American” according to the whispers of Satan and his demonic hordes infiltrating our public schools and universities. The concepts of church and family-discipline are fading in the rear view mirrors of modern society. No accountability in these matters of “sin” that are now termed “mistakes” and “iniquity” is just another “error” that a little bit of polish can remit, instead of the precious blood of Jesus Christ ALONE! Selah! Think about it!

I think that the Lord is going to allow persecution to come upon our American Baptist churches, if we do not pray harder and actively involve ourselves with the education and example-by-leadership in this area of our own polluted worship. The stigma of “cultism” has been unfairly slung at our Sovereign Grace, Landmark Baptist churches. If we do not clearly condemn the errors of “universal church” and “Catholic holy days,” we cannot but expect God to refrain from blessing our children with the courage and integrity to stand against their worldly friends. The sound foundation of God's King James Bible has been allowed to erode and with the multiplicities

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Forum Question #1

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of Bibles has come the inevitable multiplicities of truths! How can any sane person expect any less? The singularity of truth must be lived, and holiness must once again mean sanctification, or the standards of holy living will be reduced to trends and fads.

It begins again in our families and the teaching aspects of our Baptist churches. Too much of that necessary personal teaching has been relegated to “public and Christian schools” and “Sunday schools” and Dads and Moms have parceled out their responsibilities to those that God never intended to have such authority. May we recognize our mistakes and may the Lord bless our efforts to ground our young folk in the singular Baptist truths that will keep them faithful members of the next generation of Baptists. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



Forum Question #2

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awesome, and that goes for all the individual saints I have come to love and know in this work.

Along with these I have mentioned, I do not see how I would have been able to continue without the support of our home church and her pastor. They have truly been amazing and most understanding during these past eleven years.

I would have never been able to keep my head above water if it had not been for all these folks listed above. I truly could not have been more encouraged in my ministry. I only pray that God will allow me to live long enough to see our little Mission organize into a True New

Testament Baptist Church. If the Rapture were to happen before it is done, believe me, I will not be disappointed. God Bless!

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There are a lot of things that encourage me in our Baptist churches. However, if I were to narrow it down to the most encouraging thing I see it would be seeing young families saved and added to our churches. I rejoice when I see young parents being faithful to the Lord in leading their children in the ways of truth and godliness. It is so encouraging to see more young families take a strong interest in educating their own children. The advent of home-schooling and Christian based education is really taking hold in a lot of our churches. There is much to be hopeful about when I see young people concerned about spiritual things with a strong desire to serve and follow the Lord.

It is a tonic to my soul when I see our young families training their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. When I see young men and women being faithful in church attendance, Bible reading and study, worship, and witnessing it thrills my soul. Though our churches may be small in number we can be hopeful as we see young people being raised up by God to serve in the Lord's churches until Jesus comes again. I am not a “Pollyanna” but I do think it is important that we all learn to accentuate the positives and thank God for all the blessings

we have. Sometimes I feel that Baptists spend way too much time in the “slough of despond” by focusing on everything that is bad and foreboding. Let us learn to rejoice and be encouraged by all the blessings God has showered upon us. Let us study to be a more content, thankful, and joyful people as we serve the Lord in His churches. Psalm 60:12 declares: **“Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.”** May God enable us to take hold of this glorious promise in the days and years ahead.

TOM ROSS



Preacher's Advice

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I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday” (Ps. 42:1-4). King David had a longing for the Word of God. King David had a longing for the person and the presence of the Lord. O, how our ears should perk up when someone relates to us the Word of God. O, how our hearts and minds should be enamored as we consider the words and the ways of God.

I suppose that Solomon would warn us to consider our ways, just as he said in our text that the fools **“consider not that they do evil.”** A proper consideration of our ways is only possible if we will listen to the words of God so that we have a basis of wisdom and understanding, whereby we may be able to properly judge what it is that God would have us to do, and what it is that God would have us to refrain from doing.

We need to quite simply, “pay attention to God's Word.” We

need to “consider our ways.” You and I need to show a desire for the words and ways of God.

WATCH YOUR MOUTH

As we return to our text passage, we read, **“Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words”** (Eccl. 5:2-3). These wise words of Solomon remind us that there is a great danger to men, in that we may speak or say words that we ought not, or words with no wisdom or merit. To apply another axiom, which your father, mother, or teacher may have used against you, “watch your mouth.” Sometimes, these words spoken by our parents might have been followed with a use of the rod or some other method of instruction.

As children, we are prone to speak before we think. As children, we are apt to say things that we ought not, either through ignorance, or through a deliberate desire to offend someone or something. If these ill-spoken words are an offense to men, do not you imagine that we are apt to offend God as well? Elsewhere, King Solomon said, **“In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise. The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth. The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom”** (Prov. 10:19-21). We might say that the more we speak, the more opportunity there is for us to speak amiss. We might say that the less studied we are, the more apt we are to speak wrongly. If

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Preacher's Advice

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we are to speak wisdom, let us apply our hearts and minds to understanding the Word of God.

The tongue of speech is a powerful thing. It can be used for evil or for good. The book of James reminds us of these things: **"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh"** (James 3:5-12). The mouth, the tongue, the words of a man can accomplish great good or great evil. Armed with a knowledge of God, should not we, who are the children of God, be desirous of accomplishing good through the use of our tongues? Does not this desire to do good inspire us to control our tongues, so that, whether our words be few or many, they will be full of grace and truth?

It is a difficult thing to do, but

our goal should be to not let our mouths get ahead of our brains. Our desire should be to speak words of wisdom, words of encouragement, words of rebuke and instruction, words of praise and meant to glorify God.

The fool is led by his heart, which may lead him wrong. In like manner, the uneducated and the un-studied amongst us, may be desirous of saying the right words, but without an understanding in the Word of God, how can they accomplish their desire to please God?

We might say that the fool will speak many words without much wisdom. But, the wise man will speak few words, wherein will be found truth and righteousness. In other words, "be a man of few words," and make sure those words are aptly spoken. As Paul told the Colossians, **"Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man"** (Col. 4:6). Let your speech be seasoned with salt. Watch your tongue.

DO WHAT YOU SAY

Finally, today, let us notice another portion of our text: **"When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God"** (Eccl. 5:4-7). Quite simply, Solomon is telling the worshiper of God that he must follow

through on his commitments. To term another idiom, Solomon is saying, "do what you say." Or, we might say, "practice what you preach."

When the fool worships God, he does so in a sometimes grand way, making many promises, making many vows. But, he does not consider that there is a great danger in making vows that he has no intention or ability to keep. Those of us who know the Lord, and who seek to worship Him in the New Testament, must understand that God hears and knows all things. Therefore, every vow or promise that we make, whether others hear it or not, is known unto God. Be careful what you promise!

We are quick to judge the foolish man or woman who makes an ill-conceived or vain promise. We know that that person will have an impossible task before them, in order to keep that promise. In the end, we expect that person to fail, and expect them to break their promise or vow. It should not be so with the child of God. In our earnest desire to serve and please the Lord, we must and should keep our promise to

serve and love Him. David said, **"I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows, Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble"** (Ps. 66:13-14). Elsewhere, the Lord said through David, **"Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me"** (Ps. 50:14-15).

We all know that we owe all that we have unto our God. Further, we all, the entirety of the church here at Indore, have made known our desire and our commitment unto the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have voiced your intention to follow after Him, now you must follow through on your commitment. Do not be like the fool, who makes many vain promises, and then fails to keep them. Instead, be like the wise man, speak few words, make careful promises, commit yourselves surely unto the Lord your God, and unto His service.



Acts 28:22

By Roy Mason
(1894 - 1978)



My text is found in Acts 28:22, **"But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against."** It is strange, but all through the centuries, the religion of Christ has been talked against. A missionary who some time ago visited the island of Haiti, told me that back in the interior the natives practiced Devil worship, and sometimes resorted to human

sacrifice. But he said nothing about any criticism of that Devil worship by the people of that land.

There have been numerous vicious religions in the past that demanded sacrifice, but they were not talked against. The religion of Christ is different from these, in that it is a religion of mercy and love and compassion. Most of the institutions of mercy

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Acts 28:22

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and benevolence in the world today are here as a by-product of Christianity. Christ, the founder of our religion, never did harm to any man. He never lifted His hand, save in blessing, to those among whom He lived and walked, and yet the name of Christ is coupled with the vilest curses, and the Christian religion has been persecuted, and the followers of Christ have been persecuted and murdered by the tens of thousands. That talking against the religion of Christ began back there in the first century, **“for as concerning this sect,”** said the Jews to Paul, **“we know that every where it is spoken against.”** A bit later, the Roman Emperors persecuted Christians to the death, and in Nero’s time, when the city of Rome was burned, the blame was laid on the Christians, and they were put to death in great numbers. Today, when anything is done that is wrong by a Christian, it is played up in the newspapers. Let a preacher or a prominent church man step out of line, and the papers feature the story. Why all this antagonism toward Christ and Christianity and Christians through the centuries, and at the present time? There is but one answer, and that answer is Satan. He engenders criticism and persecution of Christianity because he hates God. He hates Christ. He hates every follower of Christ. The stricter a church is today, the more cussing it gets. You take my church in Tampa, that I was Pastor of for thirty years, was perhaps the strictest church in the city as to its standard of life, and my ministry was the strictest ministry in that city, perhaps, in its outspoken condemnation of evil, and

consequently we got more knocks than any church in the city. Let me say that we likewise had more friends in Tampa and out over the state of Florida than any church that I know of, and we wielded perhaps the greatest influence of any church in the state for years, but along with that, we got more criticism and misrepresentations, too. One of our members told me about a neighbor, a drinking man, who had never been to my church, and he had never met me personally, but he understood that I was opposed to some of the things that he did, and so he hated me with bitter hatred, and this neighbor said sometimes, when this fellow was drinking heavily, he would just go around the yard cussing Roy Mason. Now why do we run up against such great antagonism? Simply because we oppose the Devil and all his works, and when we do that, we encounter his bitter enmity. It is but a modern manifestation of this thing that obtained back in the first century, and that cropped out in the words of those men to Paul, **“as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.”** Now because of Satan, Christianity has been blamed for most everything you could think about down through the years, and it is blamed for a great many things today. What are some of the things that Christianity is blamed for today? Let us think about that for just a few minutes.

In the first place, religion, and I mean Christianity, is often blamed when people go crazy. I have known cases in which some person went mentally unbalanced, and irreligious kin-folk immediately laid the blame on religion. “He has been driven crazy by religion,” they say. Just because the person was a church-going

person and a Christian, they said that. There have been thousands of cases in which people became insane through drink. Psychiatric wards are full of people like that this very moment. People who have snakes in their boots, so to speak, and mental aberrations of all kinds, and yet there is no bitter, wide-spread hatred of alcohol. A liquor joint and a liquor dealer will never receive half the criticism and abuse that a church and Pastor that stands firmly against wrong will receive. Liquor is driving its addicts out of their minds every day, and little is said about that by way of blame, but let some fellow go crazy and let him mention religion, and some fellow is ready to take up the cry, “He has gone crazy on religion.”

I mentioned some time ago of a wealthy man up north who had cussed churches and preachers, and had refused to have anything to do with Christianity, but as he lay on his death bed, he said, “I have had time for business, I have had time for pleasure, I have had time for everything but God, and I am going into eternity doomed.” His sister standing there by his bedside whispered, “He is out of his head---he is delirious.” The sick man opened his eyes and said, “No, I am not out of my mind. I never was more sane in my life, but I have been crazy all through the years, as I have given time to everything but to God and my soul, and now I face eternity lost.” Listen, it is not craziness to be religious, and to give time and thought to God and your soul and eternity. It is insanity for you not to do so. People take out burial insurance and life insurance, they buy burial plots in the cemetery, and make various arrangements looking toward the time of death, and yet make no provision for the soul which must live forever

somewhere. I ask you, is that not crazy? An unsaved man who was going on a long trip came to my home with his will made out to my church. Had he been killed in an accident, nearly everything that he possessed would have gone to the church. I appreciated his confidence and his regard for the church, but I could not keep myself from saying, “If you get killed, what about your soul? You have made provision concerning your property if you die, but far more important it is that you concern yourself about your soul.”

And then in the second place, the church and religion is often blamed for physical ills. Here is a fellow who goes fishing on a cold Saturday. He wades in water, he gets so chilly that his teeth chatter, and his lips turn blue, but he does not grumble. Next day he goes to church and begins to take cold. Does he blame it on the exposure of Saturday? He certainly does not. He says, “I got too warm in that church, and when I got out, I cooled off too quickly---it gave me a cold,” and he does not return to church for weeks. I have know of a sudden cold snap to come and the heating apparatus of the church was not in good shape, maybe, and folks got a bit chilly. My, how they grumbled! They did not forget that happening for months. Some make it their excuse to stay away from church indefinitely. People can sit out at a ball game, and sit on a concrete slab and freeze stiff, and like it, but the smallest change in the weather discourages them from attending the worship service. I remember a ship launching that took place in the city of Tampa on a miserable, cold day. I saw droves of people stand for hours as they shivered and shook, but some of the same persons would not have stuck

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Acts 28:22

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their heads out on Sunday in order to get to worship. I do not wonder that the people of the world out here think that a lot of Christian people are a bunch of hypocrites, because they show less endurance, less fortitude, less faithfulness, as regards to the Lord's cause, than is shown by a lot of people in the matter of the things of the world. I am reminded just here of a young man who had been accepted by the foreign mission board for service in South America. He was trying to study the language that he would have to use down there, and he was having an awful time. He felt like just giving up the whole thing, when one day he saw an Italian pushing around a cart of bananas. Evidently he had not been in this country very long, but he got himself a push cart, got himself some fruit, and he started out to learn the English language and to make a living. Up and down the streets he went, calling out, "Gooda banan--ripa, fresha banan, who wanta banan?" That would-be missionary looked and listened to that Italian fruit vendor, and then he said to me, "I am disgusted with myself! Thank of it! There is a man who is learning the English language so he can peddle bananas, and here I am grumbling about acquiring the use of a language in which to preach the blessed Gospel of the Son of God." That fellow hushed his grumbling, and he went to the foreign field, and he learned that language, and he preached the gospel in it. I say, "Shame on us---that we sometimes show less fortitude, less industry, in the things of God than the people around us show concerning the things of this world." Listen, when the weather is such that people

can go to their place of business, it is such that we can get to church to worship God.

But now in the next place, speaking of things blamed on religion, if a person comes to show any extraordinary zeal in serving God, somebody is just ready to brand them as a "fanatic." When Jesus, during the early part of His ministry got so interested in preaching and teaching that He missed some of his regular meals, His mother and His brothers came to take Him away, thinking that He had lost His mind. And Paul had the charge of being crazy leveled at him. Old Festus that we read about in the Book of Acts said, "You are crazy, Paul, you are crazy!" I remember preaching a sermon once on "Wanted---Fanatics!" and I say to you that we need more so-called fanatics

than we have. We hear and read about "Baseball fans" and this kind of "fan" and that kind of "fan." The word "fan" is a shortening of the word "fanatic." People can go fanatic at a ball game, they can yell and shriek their heads off, but they must not show any enthusiasm in connection with their religion. Back years ago when I lived in Kentucky, I went to a ball game one Thanksgiving Day. One of the deacons had a son that was on the football team, and that deacon became a crazy fool. He ran up and down the field yelling like a fiend. I do not think I have ever heard any man so into such a spell. He yelled until he became so hoarse that he could not speak an intelligible word, and then he kept on making a hoarse racket of some kind in his throat. But I do not remember ever

hearing that deacon say "Amen" one single time at church. He was a dumb as an oyster when he came to church. Somebody uttered a criticism of Billy Graham, the Evangelist, saying he had too much emotionalism. Why should he not have some emotionalism when he is speaking to a world that is rocking on down toward doom! Billy Graham does speak rapidly and with enthusiasm, but he does not show any more zeal than he ought to show. As the Apostle Paul puts it, "He speaks words of truth and soberness."

Dr. Lynn S. Broughton was once asked to supply for a very fashionable church, where everything was laid out in a stiff order of worship. Everything went in a very dignified manner, until he got to preaching, and he warmed up and finally he really got to "going to town," as we put it. He felt impressed to warn sinners of judgment to come, so he stepped down off the platform and he pleaded with the lost to turn to Christ, and gave a fervent Gospel invitation. A railroad man stepped forward, then another fellow followed, and by the time the invitation was over, fifteen people had come forward to confess Christ as Savior. As Dr. Broughton went to the door at the close of the service, a very dignified lady accosted him, and she said, "Dr. Broughton, I think you were very presumptuous this morning in violating the proprieties of this church. You arbitrarily departed from our set order of service. I, for one, am very disapproving of it." But, listen, that railroad man that turned to Christ that Sunday morning, went out on his run that afternoon, he was in a wreck, and was brought to home a dead man. I ask you, was it more important that the preacher speak to the

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Acts 28:22

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order of service and observe the proprieties, or that that lost man should be brought to Christ? I say, "Away with this high-brow stuff!" Anything that I hate and despise and abominate is ritual, ritual, going through ritual, set forms, mumbling the same old prayers. Oh, God must get tired of that stuff some times. We need more what the world labels as "fanatics." People who see men and women out of Christ as lost, and who are in desperate earnestness to see them brought to Christ. That is the main concern of my heart today. Who in my audience are lost? It is a matter of the most serious moment that you turn to Christ, and that you take that step this very hour.

But still speaking about the way religion is blamed and talked about, churches and Christianity are blamed for hypocrites. That is the stock excuse put up by many people. When you try to talk to them about their soul and eternity, "There are hypocrites in the church." Well, suppose there are? Then what? I want to tell you that there are hypocrites out in the world, too. Hypocrites in everything. Did you ever hear anybody say, "I am not going to the ball game. There will be some people out there who are not the right kind of people." When did you ever hear anybody say, "I am not going to the show---there will be some people there who are not the right kind of people---I would be a hypocrite." You never heard such a dopey excuse as that put up in your life. But when it comes to religion, people are just that dopey. "I am not going to become a Christian because there are hypocrites among the professed followers of Christ." Yes, and when you go on

unsaved, you are just fixing to live with all the hypocrites that ever lived throughout eternity. Because hypocrites may get their names on church rolls, they do not have their names written on the Lamb's Book of Life. No, siree!

And then again, speaking of people blaming religion for things, there are a lot of people who blame the conditions that exist in the world on God and Christianity. They say, "Why does God not do something?" The war and sin and strife of the world do not exist because God is pleased with it. It exists in violation of His good and beneficent laws. "But why does He not do something about it?" Listen, God HAS done something about it. He did something about the sin question there at Calvary, when He gave His Son to die for the sins of men. During this age of grace, extending already across nineteen centuries, He has called men to proclaim the Gospel, offering salvation from sin to all who will receive the Savior provided. That is exactly why I am speaking to you today. I am not speaking because I want to be in public life. I am not speaking because I wanted to be a public speaker to begin with, I am speaking because God burned the conviction down in my soul that He wanted me to preach His Gospel, and tell men about the Savior who has been provided for them. Not only HAS God done something about the sin question, It is equally true that God is going to do something about it. Read His Word, study the Bible on the question, and you will find His plans for the future revealed. We are living right now in the very end-time of this age. Jesus is predicted and scheduled to return to this earth, and when He comes, it will be both as King and Judge, to straighten up things, and take over the rulership of this world.

And Satan's day is going to be over them. **"...As concerning this sect,"** said those men to Paul, **"we know that every where it is spoken against."** Yes, and the religion of Christ has been spoken against all down through the centuries, and is today, but the first prophet to whom the Lord made revelation shortly after creation, foretold the second coming of Christ, and the judgment that would fall upon those who should speak against the religion of Christ. God, I say, is going to do something, and those who live in their sins until the very moment of their death, or His return, are going to find it out too late, when they can not do anything about the situation. Now, let me ask you folks, how many of you listening in are unsaved? There is only one thing that stands between any unsaved person hearing me and salvation and eternal life. Nothing but your own unsundered will. Your sins will not keep you from being saved, for the Savior died to pay the penalty for your sins. Lack of money, lack of education, lack of good looks--

-none of these things are keeping you from being saved, for God is no respecter of persons. But one thing can stand forever between you and God and the salvation of your soul, and that is, your "I will not!" God will not override that. Saving faith in Christ is saying "I will" to Him. Saving faith in Christ is trusting Him to save you. Saving faith in Christ is taking Him for what God sent Him to be. If God now speaks to your heart, give in to Him, will you? Trust in His Son for eternal life, and then confess Him before men, and go out to serve Him, no matter what it costs. Our Father in Heaven, we thank Thee that Christ has the power to save. We know that Satan puts all kinds of excuses in men's hearts, and that he causes people to speak ill against Christianity, but we thank Thee that there have been those down through the centuries that have received Christ as Savior, and we pray that some may so receive Him this day, as in His name we ask. Amen.

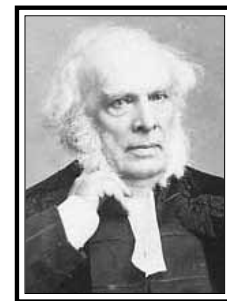


The Everlasting Righteousness

By Horatius Bonar
(1803 - 1889)

It is in righteousness and by righteousness that God saves the sinner.

He justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5); but He does it in and by **RIGHTEOUSNESS**. For **"the righteous LORD loveth righteousness"** (Ps. 11:7). He "justifies freely by his grace" (Rom. 3:24); but still it is "in and by righteousness." His grace is righteous grace; it is grace which condemns the sin while acquitting the sinner; nay, which condemns the sin by means of that very



thing which brings about the acquittal of the sinner. His pardon is righteous pardon, and therefore irreversible.

His salvation is righteous salvation, and therefore everlasting.

It is as the righteous Judge that God justifies. He is **"faithful and just"** in forgiving sin (I John 1:9). By His pardons He magnifies His righteousness; so that he who goes to God for forgiveness can use as

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his plea the righteousness of the righteous Judge, no less than the grace of the loving and merciful Lord God.

God loves to pardon because He is love; and He loves to pardon because He is righteous, and true, and holy. No sin can be too great for pardon, and no sinner can be too deep or old in sin to be saved and blest; because the righteousness out of which the salvation comes is infinite.

The sacrifices on which the sinner is called to rest are the **"sacrifices of righteousness"** (Deut. 33:19; Ps. 4:5). It is from the **"God of our salvation"** that this righteousness comes (Ps. 24:5). It is with the **"sacrifices of righteousness"** that God is **"pleased"** (Ps. 51:19). It is with righteousness that His priests are clothed (Ps. 132:9). It is righteousness that looks down from heaven to bless us (Ps. 85:11); and it is righteousness and peace that kiss each other in bringing deliverance to our world. It is the work of righteousness that is peace, and **"the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever"** (Isa. 32: 17).

It is with the **"robe of righteousness"** that Messiah is clothed over and above the garments of salvation (Isa. 61:10), when He comes to deliver earth; and when He proclaims Himself **"mighty to save,"** it is when **"speaking in righteousness"** (Isa. 61:1). When He came to **"finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity,"** He came also to bring in **"everlasting righteousness"** (Dan. 9:24).

"This is his name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer.

23:6); and as if to mark the way in which He blesses and justifies, it is added in another place, **"This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness"** (Jer. 33:16), ---His name passing over to the sinner; the sinner's name lost and forgotten in that of his substitute. Oneness in name, in nature, in privilege, in position in righteousness, and in glory with Messiah, his divine sin-bearer, is the sinner's portion. **"Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord"** (Isa. 54:17); for **"He, of God, is made unto us righteousness"** (I Cor. 1:30). The transference is complete and eternal. From the moment that we receive the divine testimony to the righteousness of the Son of God, all the guilt that was on us passes over to Him, and all His righteousness passes over to us; so that God looks on us as possessed of that righteousness, and treats us according to its value in His sight. Men may call this a mere "name" or "legal fiction," but it is such a "name" as secures for us the full favour of the righteous God, who can only show favour to us in a righteous way; and it is such a "fiction" as law recognizes and God acts upon in dealing with the unrighteous as if they were righteous, ---supremely, divinely righteous, in virtue of their connection with Him, who, **"though he knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"** (II Cor. 5:21).

This is **"the righteousness of God which is revealed from faith to faith"** (Rom. 1:17). This is **"the righteousness of God without the law which is manifested, and was witnessed by the law and the prophets"** (Rom. 3:21); **"the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all**

and upon all them that believe" (Rom. 3:22). Thus, **"in believing"** (not in doing) this **"righteousness of God"** becomes ours; for the promise of it is **"to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly"** (Rom. 4:5).

On our part there is the **"believing;"** on God's part, the **"imputing"** or reckoning. We believe, He imputes; and the whole transaction is done. The blood (as **"atoning"** or **"covering"**) washes off our guilt; the righteousness presents us before God as legally entitled to that position of righteousness which our surety holds, as being Himself not merely the righteous One, but **"Jehovah our righteousness."** We get the benefit of His perfection in all its completeness; not as infused into us, but as covering us: **"Thy beauty was perfect through my comeliness which I had put upon thee"** (Ezek. 16:14). Applying here the words of the prophet concerning Jerusalem, we may illustrate and extend the figure used by the Holy Spirit as to the **"perfection"** of him whom this righteousness covers. Spread out, it is as follows:

1. **"I said to thee, Live"** (Ezek. 16:6).
2. **"I spread my skirt over thee,"** (ver. 8).
3. **"I entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine"** (ver. 8).
4. **"I washed thee"** (ver. 9).
5. **"I anointed thee"** (ver. 9).
6. **"I clothed thee"** (ver. 10).
7. **"I shod thee"** (ver. 10).
8. **"I girded thee"** (ver. 10).
9. **"I covered thee with silk"** (ver. 10).
10. **"I decked thee with ornaments, bracelets, chains, jewels, a beautiful crown"** (ver. 12).
11. **"Thou wast exceeding**

beautiful" (ver. 13).

12. **Thy renown went forth for thy beauty"** (ver. 14).

Such, in the symbols of Scripture, is a picture of the perfection (not our own) with which we are clothed, so soon as we believe in Him who is **"Jehovah our righteousness."** **"Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee"** (Song of Sol. 4:7).

"He that believeth is not condemned" (John 3:18). This is the negative side; and even were there no more for us, this would be blessedness, seeing our portion was by nature that of **"children of wrath."** But there is more; for it is written, **"all that believe are justified from all things"** (Acts 13:39); and **"Christ is the end (or fulfilling) of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"** (Rom. 10:4). **"As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life"** (Rom. 5:18).

The strength or kind of faith required is nowhere stated. The Holy Spirit has said nothing as to quantity or quality, on which so many dwell, and over which they stumble, remaining all their days in darkness and uncertainty. It is simply in believing, ---feeble as our faith may be, ---that we are invested with this righteousness. For faith is no work, nor merit, nor effort; but the cessation from all these, and the acceptance in place of them of what another has done, ---done completely, and for ever. The simplest, feeblest faith suffices; for it is not the excellence of our act of faith that does aught for us, but the excellence of Him Who suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. His perfection suffices

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Little Hills

By Nathaniel Hille of
Plant City, Florida



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON - BIBLE SURVEY #17 MIRIAM

TEXT: Exodus 15:1-21

DEVOTIONAL READING: Numbers 12:1-16; Micah 6:4

AIM: An Over-view of the life of Miriam.

INTRODUCTION: We look now into the life of Miriam. She is the sister of Moses and Aaron. Miriam = rebellious, bitter, concretely rebellious. This was most certainly lived out in her life.

We are first introduced to Miriam when she followed Moses as a baby when he was laid into the river (Ex. 2:1-10). Here we are told that she followed Moses to see what would be done to him. Here she was used providentially of the Lord to have Moses returned to his mother while he was yet young (Ex. 2:7-10).

I. MIRIAM SENT BY GOD—Micah 6:4—here we are taught that Miriam was sent or appointed (Strong) by the Lord to be leaders of the people of God (Ps. 77:20): Moses-- the inspired leader, teacher, and law giver; Aaron—the priest the director of Divine worship; Miriam—the prophetess who led the praises of the people at their great deliverance.

As being sent by God, we should realize that we each, who have been saved by God's grace have been appointed by the Lord (Eph. 2:8-10; John 15:16). Just as Miriam had been sent by God we need to realize that we, too, are accountable unto Him that sent us.

II. MIRIAM WORSHIPPING/PRAISING GOD—Ex. 15:20-21—Here we find the song of the redeemed as sang by Moses and the children of Israel unto the Lord, upon the Lord delivering them from Egyptian bondage.

***Please NOTE that Miriam & other women went out and danced unto the LORD while singing unto the Lord. There is no comparison to be made here between what Miriam and the women of Israel did and what is done at school dances and/or "clubs".

1. Miriam Prophetess—Ex. 15:20—the word "prophetess" is also rendered "inspired woman" (strong). There are other women who were called such (Deborah [Judges 5:2-31]; Huldah [II Kings 22:14-20]; Anna [Luke 2:36]).

2. Worship & Praising God—In the instance of Miriam we see what the important part of the thanksgiving service was, and that part assigned to the women. The idea conveyed here is that Miriam and the women responded to the singing of the song ("**And Miriam answered** (to heed, to respond) [to] **them**"--Vv. 21). Here she was leading the women in song in response to Moses and the children of Israel. See how under Holy Spirit leadership (II Peter 1:20-21) that God led His people to be in unity with one another in the worship of the Lord.

When Miriam worshipped the Lord she in no way went against the Divine order of the sexes. Furthermore, she in no way participated in fleshly entertainment or in sensual enticement. Rather, it was all done

to the praise and glory of His grace (Eph. 1:6).

III. THE SIN OF MIRIAM—Numbers 12:1-16—Here Miriam lives up to her name in rebelling against the Lord

The Sin:--Miriam's sin was in that she spoke against the Lord's anointed—a very grievous sin (I Sam. 24:6; 26:9). We are told that the Lord heard it—that is that He took judicial notice about it. The Lord had made a clear distinction between Miriam—the prophetess and Moses (Vv. 6-8). While the Lord would speak to the prophets in dreams and visions—Moses was not like them—for the Lord spake unto him "mouth to mouth." The Lord, not Moses, had distinguished the offices of Moses and Miriam. Miriam evidences her jealousy over this and uses the occasion of Moses' marriage to sin. Oh the deception of sin. But God is not fooled

The Root of the Sin: The root of the sin is jealousy—Miriam displays her jealousy of Moses in what she spoke concerning him. She shows that she had little respect for God's Divine appointment for Moses and herself (James 3:13-4:5; II Peter 2:1; II Cor. 12:20). Her words were not according to faith in thus saith the Lord

The Chastisement: The Lord struck Miriam with leprosy. The Jews considered leprosy a sign of the Lord's disapproval. As such, this rendered her to be unclean.

The Intercession of Moses: Here we find that Moses intercedes for her (Vv. 13). Moses, like the Lord, although the offended party makes intercession. This shows that it is by grace that Miriam was delivered from her sin and divine disapproval.

Miriam a Hindrance: Miriam's sin was a hindrance. She was the originator of the sin that seemed to take Aaron with her. Furthermore, we find that the whole nation could not be moved forward while Miriam was unclean (Vv. 15,16). Perhaps this is the case with the Lord's church today, that they are hindered by the sin, unbelief of individuals within her.

Miriam Forgiven and Restored: Vv. 15—The Lord teaches forgiveness & restoration. We never find where this is ever mentioned again showing that it was forgiven. Miriam was "received" back into the camp. Are we not received through God's grace (John 1:12). We, too, are received when we do wrong through grace and forgiveness?

IV. MIRIAM'S DEATH: Numbers 20:1—Miriam's death brought about no human laurels, or honor like Moses' death (Deut. 34:8); yet we are assured that one took notice of it: The Lord. "**Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints**" (Ps. 116:15).

(Nathaniel Hille is pastor of the Bible Baptist Church of Plant City, Florida.)



The Everlasting

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to cover not only that which is imperfect in our characters and lives, but that which is imperfect in our faith, when we believe on His name.

Many a feeble hand, ---perhaps many a palsied one, ---was laid on the head of the burnt-offering (Lev. 1:4); but the feebleness of that palsied touch did not alter the character of the sacrifice, or make it less available in all its fullness for him who brought it. The priest would not turn him away from the door of the tabernacle because his hand trembled; nor would the bullock fail to be **“accepted for him to make atonement for him”** (Lev. 1:4), because his fingers might barely touch its head by reason of his feebleness. The burnt-offering was still the burnt-offering, and the weakest touch sufficed to establish the connection between it and him, because even that feeble touch was the expression of his consciousness that he was unfit to be dealt with on the footing of what he was himself, and of his desire to be dealt with by God on the footing of another, infinitely worthier and more perfect than himself.

On our part there is unrighteousness, condemning us; on God's part there is righteousness, forgiving and blessing us. Thus unrighteousness meets righteousness, not to war with each other, but to be at peace. They come together in love, not in enmity; and the hand of righteousness is stretched out not to destroy, but to save.

It is as the unrighteous that we come to God; not with goodness in our hands as a recommendation, but with the utter want of goodness; not with amendment

or promises of amendment, but with only evil, both in the present and the past; not presenting the claim of contrition or repentance or broken hearts to induce God to receive us as something less than unrighteous, but going to Him simply as unrighteous; unable to remove that unrighteousness, or offer anything either to palliate or propitiate.

It is the conscious absence of all good things that leads us to the fountain of all goodness. That fountain is open to all who thus come; it is closed against all who come on any other footing. It is the want of light and life that draws us to the one source of both; and both of these are the free gifts of God.

He who comes as partly righteous is sent empty away. He who comes acknowledging unrighteousness, but at the same time trying to neutralize it or to expiate it by feelings, and prayers, and tears, is equally rejected. But he who comes as an unrighteous man to a righteous yet gracious God, finds not only ready access, but plenteous blessing. The righteous God receives unrighteous man, if man presents himself in his own true character as a sinner, and does not mock God by pretending to be something less or better than this.

For then the divinely provided righteousness comes in to cover the unrighteous, and to enable God to receive him in love, and justify him before earth and heaven.

In all this we find such things as the following; each of them bringing out a separate aspect of the answer to the great question, “How can man be just with God?”

1. The Justifier; ---**“It is God that justifieth.”** The sentence of acquittal must come from His lips,

and be registered in His books.

2. The justified; ---Man, the sinner, under wrath, the ungodly, the condemned.

3. The justifying fact; ---The death of Him whose name is Jehovah our righteousness.

4. The justifying instrument; ---Faith. Not strong faith, or great faith, or perfect faith, but simply faith, or believing. “We are justified by faith.”

5. The justifying medium; ---The righteousness of God. This is the “best robe” which is prepared for the prodigal, by which he is clothed and beautiful, and made fit to enter his Father's house, and sit down at his Father's table. Christ is Himself our justification. In Him we “stand.” In Him we are “found.” Him we “put on,” and with Him we are clothed, by Him we are protected as by a shield, in Him we take refuge as in a strong tower.

“Found in Him.” What then? Our own “self” has disappeared; and instead there is Christ, the beloved Son in whom God is well pleased. Found in ourselves, there was nothing but wrath; found in Him, there is nothing but favour. We are hidden in Christ. God seeks for us; and when at last He discovers us in our hiding-place, it is not we that He finds, but Christ; so complete is the exchange of persons, so perfect and so glorious the disguise. Yet it is not a disguise which shall ever be taken off, nor of which we shall have cause to be ashamed. It remains ours for ever. It is an everlasting righteousness.

Jehovah is satisfied with Christ's obedience. He is well pleased with His righteousness. And when we, crediting His testimony to that obedience and that righteousness, consent to be treated by Him on the footing of its perfection, then is He satisfied and well pleased with us.

Jehovah is satisfied, more than satisfied, with Christ's fulfilling of the law which man had broken. For never had that law been so fulfilled in all its parts as it was in the life of the God-man. For man to fulfill it, would have been much; for an angel to fulfill it, would have been more; but for Him Who was God and man to fulfill it, was yet unspeakably more. So satisfied is Jehovah with this divine law-fulfilling, and with Him Who so gloriously fulfilled it, that He is willing to pass from, or cancel, all the law's sentences against us; nay, to deal with us as partakers of or identified with this law-fulfilling, it we will but agree to give up all personal claims to His favour, and accept the claims of Him Who hath magnified the law and made it honourable.



The Short Pews



Brief Articles
by Curtis Pugh
(1944 - 2018)

GENUINE CHRISTIANS ARE DIFFERENT

Paul wrote: **“For who maketh thee to differ from another...”** (I Cor. 4:7)? Who has made you different from others, if you are? True Christians are different: they are followers of the Lamb: Jesus said so. He said, **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”** (John 10:27). Either they do or they do not, and Jesus said they do! Not being perfect they may stumble, but they continue following Christ.

False Christians still love the world: their desires and actions prove it. John wrote: **“...If any**

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The Short Pews

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man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15). Lovers of the world are not followers of the Lamb! They have not been made different from others! The question is all important: **"who maketh thee to differ from another?"** If you are different from the world it is God who has made you different. It is God who causes individuals to cease loving the world.

Just what is the "world?" The world is made up of all those things, activities, people and ideas that are popular with the majority. It is the things God hates for Jesus said: **"...that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God"** (Luke 16:15). Look around. All the things that mankind loves, values, strives for, and thinks are worth doing or having are hated by God.

Hollywood stars, TV actors, sports figures, politicians, wealth, pleasure, power – these are some of the things **"highly esteemed"** among people today. Even some preachers and world renowned religious leaders are well loved and highly popular. We must face the fact that much called Christianity is hated by God. Remember the prophetic words of the Lord Jesus: **"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. 7:22-23).

Look at popular "Christianity." Who is claiming to prophesy? Who claims to have power over demons, sickness, and the devil?

What crowd claims to be able to work miracles? And what religious leaders have multitudes clamoring after them? Jesus said when that crowd stands before Him He will order them out of His presence because He never knew them. And He will pronounce all their religion as being horrible sin. But that crowd, while claiming to believe the Bible, are so blind as to be unable to see themselves in the words of Christ this very day! Remember, Jesus spoke of "blind leaders of the blind." He said, **"...if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch"** (Matt. 15:14).

The question is, can you see? Has God made you different by giving you spiritual eyesight: spiritual understanding? **"Who maketh thee to differ?"** If you are different from the world, God made you so! Give Him the glory!

A THIEF'S TESTIMONY

The Lord Jesus was nailed to a tree between two guilty thieves. Matthew 27:44 says, **"The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth,"** referring to the mocking words of those who passed by. Both thieves mocked the Lord Jesus with the same words as the others. Their mocking included these words: **"He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God"** (Matt. 27:42-43). Both were clearly unbelievers just as the other mockers were.

Luke records additional details giving us the testimony of the one thief: **"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But**

the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:39-41). While one thief continued mocking the Lord Jesus, something happened to the other one: something inward, something that changed his mind about himself, his sinfulness and about the Lord Jesus.

This thing that happened is called the new birth or the birth from above. Theologians call it regeneration. It is an instantaneous work of the Holy Spirit by which a sinner is changed inwardly. It results in spiritual sight or understanding causing the unbeliever to suddenly become a believer in the person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In speaking about this inward work the Lord Jesus likened the Holy Spirit to the wind. He said, **"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit"** (John 3:8). That old word **"listeth"** means pleases or chooses. The idea is that the Holy Spirit is neither controlled nor influenced by anyone or anything outside Himself. He does as He pleases!

There is no other way to explain what happened to the changed thief. He had once had a carnal mind. Romans 8:7 says: **"...the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."** The impossibility of a sinner changing his mind is clearly stated here. But God can and does in an instant give elect sinners a change

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BEREA BAPTIST BANNER

Financial Report

10-1-2020 to 10-31-2020

Beginning Balance	\$1,096.62
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	200.00
Carol Willett, Cottonwood Shores, TX	70.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR	12.50
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Gladwin, MI	50.00
Grace B. C., Rural Hall, NC	50.00
Grace Missionary B. C. Tulsa, OK	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
The Lord's B. C., Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	35.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Parkway Landmark B. C., Springfield, OR	100.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR	50.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Indianapolis, IN ..	110.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Wellington, KS	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	62.00
Anonymous	700.00
Dividing checks	0.00
Sub Total	\$2,604.50
TOTAL	\$3,701.12
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	569.56
Supplies	0.00
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.96
Dividing checks	0.00
Bank charge	13.00
Total Expenditures	\$3,548.52
ENDING BALANCE	\$152.60



BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST

Financial Report

10-1-2020 to 10-31-2020

Beginning Balance	\$3,388.40
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
.....	325.00
TOTAL	3,713.40
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	313.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	313.00
.....	3,400.40
Interest	+0.03
ENDING BALANCE	\$3,400.43

The Short Pews

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of mind, an understanding of spiritual things so that he believes savingly in Christ.

The believing thief turned to the Lord Jesus and said, **“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom”** (Luke 23:42). Have you experienced this new birth by which you were changed from an unbeliever into a believer in the Lord Christ Jesus? The Lord Jesus said, **“..Ye must be born again”** (John 3:7).

THE THREE PERMANENT GIFTS

The Bible says, **“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity”** (I Cor. 13:13). In the context of this verse Paul is dealing with gifts which were supernaturally given to the members of Christ’s congregation in Corinth. He points out that all the gifts were given individually according to the will of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:11). Paul says such showy gifts as supernaturally speaking in an unlearned language (“tongues”), the gifts of healing, of prophecy, etc., were temporary gifts. They were given until that which is “perfect is come:” i.e. he is speaking of the complete Word of God. The language proves that he is not speaking of a perfect person, but of a perfect thing: what we call the Bible.

But there are three and only three gifts that Paul says are permanent ones. Three that continue to exist since the others have ceased. “Abideth” means continues to abide or continues to exist. These three are as much unmerited bestowals given sovereignly by the Holy Spirit as were any and all of the other gifts. Just as “tongues” and other

gifts can be counterfeited, so also can faith, hope and the kind of love called **“charity”** by the King James translators. Obviously a counterfeit is an imitation of the real thing, but lacks the worth of the genuine article.

Faith is trust and confidence in a thing or a person. In our text it is trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work. Faith looks back to what Christ did according to the Bible record. Biblical hope can be defined as faith turned toward the future. It is trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He through the Bible has promised to do. It involves His coming both for His saints and later with those same saints to rule. And charity, or love, (Greek “agape” pronounced ag-ah’-pay) is not mere sentiment. It is not a “you scratch my back and I’ll scratch your back” kind of love: not a trade-off kind of love. It is the kind of love God has for His sheep. It is the kind of love that Christ had for His filthy sinful sheep when he **“..loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood”** (Rev. 1:5). Christ loved His sheep when they still needed cleansing from their sins. His love caused Him to shed His blood on their behalf and cleanse them from their sins. All whom Christ loved are cleansed! The

Bible says so!

The question for each of us is this: have we received as a freely bestowed gift these three permanent gifts? Ephesians 2:8 says faith, **“..is the gift of God.”** II Thessalonians 2:16 tells us that God has given us **“good hope through grace.”** Paul wrote, **“..the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”** (Rom. 5:5). Have you these three permanent gifts? If you are saved you have them!



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Grace Landmark Baptist Church of Buckhannon, WV, is seeking a pastor. The church is Sovereign Grace and Landmark in doctrine and practice. Any interested called pastor of like faith may contact Brother Brad Butcher at (304) 669-4738 or (304) 745-6226.

The Stephens Branch Baptist Church of Martin, Kentucky is in need of a pastor. They are an Independent, Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Missionary Baptist church holding to the doctrines of grace and the King James Bible.

If you are interested in being considered or would like more information on the church you can call Brother Lonnie Edwards at (859) 629-1413 or write the church at: Stephens Branch Baptist Church, 1025 Stephens Branch Road, Martin, Kentucky 41649.

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

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

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

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