

The Berea Baptist Banner

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The Five Senses and Salvation

By Rosco Brong
(1908 - 1985)

Traditional Five Senses of the Body Used in Bible as Figures of Spiritual Perception

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Feeling, tasting, smelling, hearing, and seeing have been recognized for thousands of years as the "senses" or the different ways in which the human body finds out the nature of its physical environment. It is interesting to note that all five of these traditional senses are referred to in the Scriptures in a spiritual connection, as God is pleased to reveal spiritual truth in terms of ordinary human experience.

Notice that I have named the five senses in the order of the degree of intimacy required for an outside object to produce a sensation in the body. That is, if by feeling we mean not merely the outward sense of touch but also internal feeling and emotion, then our feeling is a response to a direct contact and even to a penetrating effect of the object felt. At the other extreme, we can see objects untold millions of miles away.

AMAZING GRACE!

It is surely no accident, but an expression of God's amazing grace, that up to a certain limit the further a sinner is away from God--the more difficult it would seem for him to recognize God--so much the more abundant are the provisions and promises of grace! **"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"** (Rom. 5:20). Note a few of these "precious promises":

1. Feeling. God **"hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of**



us" (Acts 17:26-27).

How often we hear people use expressions like "I feel that I am a Christian" or "I don't feel that God would send me to Hell," showing that they are depending on their feeling as a guide to salvation! We hear even preachers asking the question, "Do you feel that you are saved?" Blind leaders of the blind! Where is the Scripture that says we can know our salvation, or lack of it, from our feeling?

SINNERS PAST FEELING

Of course the lost sinner does not feel that he is lost: if he did, he would get saved. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: **"Walk not as other Gentiles** (that is, the lost) **walk, in the vanity of their mind,**

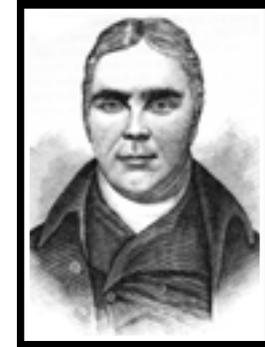
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To the Afflicted

By Andrew Fuller
(1754 - 1813)

Those whose Christian compassion induces them frequently to visit the sick, see and hear things of which others can scarcely form any conception. They see affliction, not merely in easy circumstances, wherein it is alleviated, as far as possible, by the comforts of life, but as it exists in the poor man's dwelling, aggravated by privations and hardships, many of which would seem intolerable to some, even in a time of health. They sympathize with you, and as far as they are able, it is presumed, administer to your relief.

But there is one thing which has particularly struck the writer of this article; namely, the different manner in which affliction is borne by religious, and by irreligious people. He wishes to be understood as speaking generally, rather than "universally." Some who are thought to be religious, and are not so; and some



that are truly religious, are the subjects of morbid nervous sensibility; while others who are not so, have much constitutional patience and equanimity. But other things being equal, he

has perceived a wide difference in favour of religion. In visiting the dwellings of Christian people in times of affliction, his heart has been cheered by their cheerfulness. Their troubles have seemed to be more than balanced by their enjoyments. Hope has glistened in their very tears, and submission to the will of God has brightened their emaciated countenances. But on entering the abodes of the irreligious, such discontent, despondency, and misery have appeared,

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PRAYING FOR THE UNSAVED

By T. T. Shields
(1873 - 1955)

"But Abraham stood yet before the Lord" (Gen. 18:22).

We read in the Epistle of Jude, that Sodom and Gomorrah **"are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."** Incidentally, the New Testament again bears witness to the historicity of the Genesis record. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were real cities; the men of Sodom and Gomorrah were real men--they were sinners before the Lord; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was a very real destruction; the salvation of Lot out of Sodom was a very real salvation, as Lot well knew. Everywhere the New Testament teaches us that these historical portions of Scripture are designed to teach us spiritual lessons. I have frequently reminded you of that great principle laid down in the New



Testament, respecting the journeyings of the children of Israel: that not only is the record of their experience written by inspiration, but that the events recorded were themselves providentially arranged, in order that they might teach spiritual truths. It is said of the life of our Lord Jesus: **"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through His name."** It could also be said, that many other things occurred in the life of God's people of ancient time, which are not written in the Old Testament; but the things which are written, are written for our learning, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Abraham is spoken of in the Word as **"the father of all**

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The road less traveled is usually the best way.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." - Matthew 7:13-14

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Staff: Sheron Cockrell, Marsha Kiser, Virginia
Cockrell

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

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Five Senses

(Continued from page 261) ♦

having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. 4:17-19).

So it must be admitted that the Scriptures afford little comfort to people who depend on their feeling for guidance.

2. Tasting. **"O taste and see that the LORD is good"** (Ps. 34:8). We read of those who **"tasted of the heavenly gift"** and **"tasted the good word of God"** (Heb. 6:4-5). And Peter exhorts, **"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious"** (I Peter 2:2-3).

DOUBTFUL TASTE

The references to our spiritual sense of taste are more hopeful than those to our spiritual feeling, but much doubt remains. The Psalmist, for reassurance, links seeing with tasting. The passage in Hebrews has been variously interpreted. Peter says, **"If so be ye have tasted."** It seems our sense of taste is not very dependable.

3. Smelling. **"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life"** (II Cor. 2:14-16).

The word savour in this passage means odor or smell.

GOOD SMELL OR BAD?

Food must make contact with the organs of taste to be tasted, but can be smelled at a considerable distance. Even so, it would seem that spiritually we can "smell" Christ when we are too far away to "taste" Him. And so God makes manifest **"the savour of his knowledge"** (the smell of the knowledge of Christ) in every place where the gospel is preached.

Yet the same smell may be pleasant to one person and unpleasant to another, and so the "odor" of Christ diffused by His witnesses attracts some persons to Him for salvation and drives others away to their everlasting destruction. God save us from a depraved spiritual sense of smell that would make us turn away from His Son!

4. Hearing. **"Hear, and your soul shall live"** (Isa. 55:3). Jesus said: **"He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.**

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5:24-25).

THE HEARING OF FAITH

Certainly the hearing that obtains salvation from God is not a mere hearing by the ear of flesh, but a spiritual hearing that believes and gives heed to the divine message.

Jesus, explaining to His disciples why He spoke many things in parables, said: **"Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them"** (Mark 13:13-15).

Of the Israelites in the wilderness we read that **"the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it"** (Heb. 4:2). Paul asked the Galatians, **"Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"** (Gal. 3:2). **"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"** (Rom. 10:17).

5. Seeing. **"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29).

Not physical sight but spiritual vision is what we need for salvation. **"For we walk by faith, not by sight"** (II Cor. 5:7). Jesus said, **"Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed"** (John 20:29).

LOOK AND LIVE!

Yet it is by means of our physical eyes that we can see in the heavens other worlds and suns millions and unknown billions of miles away, according to astronomers. And so God is pleased to use man's sense of sight as a type of the faith that looks to Jesus Christ for salvation no matter how far from God the believing sinner may be.

When the Israelites **"spake against God, and against Moses. . . the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And**

Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" (Num. 21:5-9).

This is the divinely appointed type to which Jesus referred when He said: **"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that WHOSOEVER believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life"** (John 3:14-15 emphasis RB).

Yes, the poison of the serpent flows through the veins of every child of Adam, and would bring every one of us down in spiritual death, physical death, eternal death, unto **"everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord"** (II Thess. 1:9). Only one remedy can save from the damning power of the dragon's venom: God's appointed remedy for sin is **"Jesus Christ, and him crucified"** (I Cor. 2:2).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).



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From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



The Seven Church Ages

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet. Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea" (Rev. 1:10-11).

For the last seven years I have treated upon the grammatical historical meaning of the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2-3. I have applied the words addressed to each church as a message to that local church actually addressed in its respective city. I pointed out conditions which actually existed at that time, commenting upon the things for which these churches were commended and condemned. I firmly believe this is the primary meaning of these seven epistles dictated by Christ.

Someone has well said, "Every passage of Scripture has a primary meaning, a practical application and a prophetic revelation." This is definitely true of the seven churches. There is much practical information in them to Christ's churches in all ages. They serve as an admonition to all churches across the centuries. In each generation there has existed some backslidden churches like Ephesus, some persecuted churches like Smyrna, some worldly churches like Pergamos, some lax churches like Thyatira, some dead churches like Sardis, some loving churches like Philadelphia and some lukewarm churches like Laodicea. When such conditions prevail as seen in these seven historic churches in Revelation, churches of today can expect like consequences as attended these churches in Asia Minor.

But all too many times the prophetic revelation of these churches is ignored or denied. Some totally reject any thought of a prophetic revelation of seven church periods in the seven churches. Some object because they think it leads to amillennialism; others object saying it is a modern innovation which originated in the Scofield Reference Bible. I answer the first objection by pointing out that the letters are a prophetic foreview of New Testament churches. These historical periods already elapsed constitute fulfilled prophecy. Hence there is no tendency to amillennialism. I answer to

the second objection by denying that this view is a modern innovation. The church age view was held by Tichaenius in the fourth century, Arethas of Cappadocia and Primasius of Adrumetum in the sixth century. In more modern times it has been held by Mede, Siess, Ironside, Gaebelin, Scott, Copper and a number of others. Among the ranks of Baptists its advocates have been such men as J. R. Graves, Clarence Larkin, J. E. Cobb, G. E. Jones, E. C. Gillentine and W. A. Criswell.

There are many good reasons for holding to the prophetic revelation of the seven churches being seven distinct periods of the history of true churches. First, this is a most reasonable view. God gave Moses a foreview of the history of Israel (Deut. 28:63-67). Daniel received a foreview of the history of the Gentile nations from his day until the end of the times of the Gentiles (Dan. 2:7). Then why could Christ not give John a foreview of the entire church age?

Second, the number seven points to completeness, perfection and dispensational fullness. The Book of Revelation is replete with sevens--the seven candlesticks, the seven lamps of fire, the seven stars, the seven thunders, the seven heads of the beast, the seven crowns upon these heads, the seven plagues, the seven vials and the seven mountains. There are references to **"the seven Spirits of God."** We know this refers to the one Holy Spirit in His complete office work, or His dispensational fullness. Even so, the seven churches refer to the church as an institution in all its dispensational fullness.

Third, these seven churches were not the only churches in Asia Minor; therefore, they must have a symbolic meaning. Why did Christ not dictate messages to the churches at Rome or Jerusalem? Why did Christ not send epistles to the churches at Colossae and Hierapolis which were in the same Roman province of Asia? The reason must have been that Christ chose these seven churches out of the hundreds existing at the close of the apostolic age because they had the spiritual characteristics which revealed the seven church ages.

Fourth, the letters must have had an application beyond that of each church addressed because of their conclusion. Each of the seven epistles end with the words: **"He that hath an ear, let him**

hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Note it is not "the church" (singular) but **"the churches"** (plural). This means what was said to them was said to all churches, all churches from the first century to the Rapture.

Fifth, I suppose there is some secret meaning to the seven churches because they are referred to as "mysteries." Revelation 1:20 speaks of the **"mystery of . . . the seven golden candlesticks."** There must be some deep prophetic revelation here. Is it not that the seven churches represent seven phases of the history of the true churches?

Sixth, I know there is some special significance in these addresses because they are found in a book of **"prophecy"** (Rev. 1:3; 19:10; 22:7, 10, 18-19). If there is no meaning beyond the local historical congregations, why are they put in a book of prophecy? The reason must be that they form a vital part of this prophecy being a prophetic foreview of the churches of Christ through the centuries.

Scholars disagree as to the time table of the period and at least some would make some of the seven churches to represent both true and false churches. I am unable to see any of the seven churches as false churches myself for the following reasons. First, all seven of these churches were true churches, for Christ Himself called them churches. Christ walked in their midst (Rev. 1:13), a thing which could hardly be said of a false church. Second, the false church is mentioned under the figure of **"MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH"** (Rev. 17:5). Third I know of no place in the Bible where Christ calls a true church a false church. Hence I affirm these seven churches represent the seven stages of the church throughout her existence on earth.

Some premillennialists apply these seven local churches to the universal, invisible church. Even some Landmark Baptists are not free of this error. Some say these churches represent seven periods of the true church, and then turn around and give a history of Christendom. But Christendom is not the church but the family of God. To make such an application is a step in the direction of universal, invisible church heresy.

It shall be my purpose in this message to give the history of the true New Testament churches from Christ's personal ministry on earth to the Rapture by developing

the historical application and fulfillment of what is predicted. Hence we are to give a bird's eye view of the seven successive periods of the churches during the times of the Gentiles. We shall view the errors, corruptions, mistakes and sins of the church as an institution as seen through the eyes of Jesus Christ.

THE EPHESIAN PERIOD A. D. 96-200

The word "Ephesus" means "desired." This is the period of the apostolic and post-apostolic churches. Such churches were "desired" and greatly loved by Christ (Eph. 5:25, 28-30, 32). Many of these churches heard the inspired apostles preach and enjoyed the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit. These early churches, like the Ephesian Church, were characterized by earnestness and zeal in witnessing. They strongly opposed false apostles (II Cor. 11:13) such as the Gnostics. But after a time their love for Christ waned and heresy was not hated as it once was (Acts 20:29-30).

The fault of the Ephesian Church was its loss of her first love. Outwardly everything was fine, but Jesus Christ knew the hearts of the church members. He knew they were growing cold toward Him. There was a serious cooling of love and devotion for the great Head of the church. This was the chief trait of the churches in the Ephesian Period. They were ceasing to give Christ the pre-eminence. As the churches diminished more and more in their love for Christ, the Montanists churches in Phrygia rose up in A.D. 156 to protest against this growing problem and to call the churches to repentance.

THE SMYRNA PERIOD A. D. 200-312

"Smyrna" means "myrrh," which was one of the ingredients of the perfume used for embalming the dead. The Smyrna Period was the time of persecution, suffering and martyrdom. Members of true churches in this age were tried by the magistrates and cast into prison. Although sorely tried by both Jews and Gentiles, these little flocks of Christ were faithful unto death.

The Smyrna Period was the time when the irregular churches began to appear. These were not churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. There was no fellowship between the regular and irregular churches. Both groups denied that the other group was a true church. The true churches in this time were called Montanists, Novatians and Donatists. They rejected the ordinances and ordinations of the apostate churches. They denied that infant baptism was scriptural baptism. Since they administered the rite of baptism anew to those coming from the heretical churches, they were denominated "Anabaptists" by their enemies. These scattered and persecuted flocks of Christ often gave

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Seven Churches

(Continued from page 263) ♦

up their lives rather than to give up their faith.

The “**ten days**” in the Smyrna Church’s epistle speaks of the ten years of awful persecution by Diocletian during which so many suffered and died. This ten-year persecution was aimed at the extermination of all Christians in the Roman Empire. It is described at length on pages 24 to 33 of *Fox’s Book of Martyrs*. Their enemies soon discovered that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the early Christian churches.

THE PERGAMOS PERIOD

A. D. 312-606

The name “Pergamos” means “a tower” or “marriage.” The Pergamos Period shows how the church gave up her pilgrim character and married the world. It seems that Emperor Constantine performed the marriage ceremony. The Devil, seeing he could not destroy the church from without, led the church into an unholy alliance with the world. This was spiritual fornication, called by Christ “Balaamism” or “Nicolaitianism.” Even some of the true churches were caught up in this union of church and state, although the vast majority of the New Testament churches stayed out of this.

Most historians believe the days of Constantine were some sort of golden age of the church. They speak of this period as a work of God and victory for Christianity. However, the truth of the matter is just the opposite. The days of Constantine were in fact the work of Satan to defeat true churches by making them into a worldly institution. The union of church and state armed the false churches with all the power of the state to murder the Novatians, the Donatists, the Tertullianists and Paulicians.

THE THYATIRA PERIOD

A. D. 606-1450

The word “Thyatira” may be equivalent to “thygaira” which means “daughter.” Thus the Thyatira Period was the time when Satan’s daughter, the apostate church, did her best to corrupt and destroy the true churches. This was the age of Jezebelistic persecution as was seen in the wars of the Crusades and the rise of the Inquisition. The true churches of these times, called Bogomiles, Paulicians, Paterines, Arnoldists, Albigenses, Henricians, Anabaptists, Petrobrussians and Waldenses, were subjected to hangings, roastings, stabbings, drownings, stranglings, burnings, boilings, poisonings and hacking to pieces. The world will never know the enormous cruelties carried on by the Great Whore against these innocent and God-fearing people. Better than fifty million were slain by this blood-thirsty, murderous, apostate church.

The woman Jezebel was permitted

to teach and to seduce God’s servants to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols in the Thyatira Church. The woman Jezebel speaks plainly of the Roman Catholic Church with all its paganism from Babylon. In 606 Boniface III was crowned universal bishop or pope. During this period the papacy assumed the place of teacher and dictator.

THE SARDIS PERIOD

A. D. 1450-1730

The word “Sardis” means “a remnant” or “an escaping few.” The awful persecution of the Dark Ages had driven the true churches into the Piedmont Alps and the glens of England until they appeared to be dead as to their existence to the world. Nevertheless, some escaped the wrath of the Great Whore. A remnant of true churches lay concealed in almost all countries of Europe and England long before the rise of Luther and Calvin. They were called by various names such as Waldenses, Anabaptists, Lollards, Hussites, Mennonites, Wickcliffites, and Baptists. They were true New Testament churches, and it matters not what men may have called them.

In the Sardis period we see the true churches strengthening the things which remained despite Satanic oppression. Some of the churches did die by being swallowed up in the rise of Protestantism. But God be thanked for those scattered few churches who did “**not defile their garments.**” No matter how bloody and far-reaching the rage of the Prince of Darkness, it was impossible for the gates of Hell to completely prevail against the true churches for which Christ died.

THE PHILADELPHIA PERIOD

A. D. 1730-1900

“Philadelphia” means “brotherly love.” The “**little strength**” of the Sardis Period had now become “great strength.” Philadelphia was the church of the open door. In this period was the beginning of modern missionary efforts under William Carey, Adoniram Judson, Luther Rice and others. Revivals swept America and England. In this age the greatest books and papers ever published were put out by our Baptist writers, especially in this true of the 1800s. Baptists had their strongest and soundest schools and seminaries in modern times. This was the “Golden Age” of the Baptists. What a blessing to have lived in these times!

The Philadelphia Period was characterized by a rejection of nearly all human pretensions. The Baptist army was united against its common enemies. Their influence and power were felt by the political powers of these times. If ever there was a time when Baptists held strongly to the Word of Christ and refused to deny His name it was in these days. They stood up in great numbers against the corruption of the ordinances of the church. So far as Baptist history is concerned, it may be said these were their finest hours.

THE LAODICEA PERIOD

A. D. 1900-Rapture

The word “Laodicea” means “the rights of the people,” or “the people’s judgment.” Baptist churches achieved a great degree of democratic rule in this age. But strong congregational rule tended to go to the extremes. The pastor became a slave to the deacon board, not the overseer of the flock. The churches became dominated more and more by the popular opinion of a self-righteous and self-sufficient majority.

The Laodicea Period is the day in which we find ourselves today. Our churches have fine buildings, educated preachers, robed choirs, good offerings and countless other material things. But there is an absence of spiritual blessings. Our quantity is good but our quality is bad. There is a growing indifference to Christ and His cause. All too many of our churches are boastful, self-sufficient and arrogant. They are blind to their real condition. Worldliness has permeated the churches until Christ has forsaken the assembly. Sad to say, most churches have never even missed the presence of Christ! This condition will wax worse and worse until the Rapture.

CONCLUSION

The church period interpretation of the seven churches of Asia Minor established beyond any reasonable doubt that Christ has preserved a succession of witnessing churches until this present hour and will until the Rapture. There was never a time even in the Dark Ages when the church needed to be reformed, refounded, reorganized, restarted or restored. Christ’s church has been in the world under different names and found in different countries ever since He founded it during His personal ministry on earth. Are you a member of the church founded by Jesus Christ?



Afflicted

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that he has come away quite dejected. The smile of hope, and the tear of joy, were there alike unknown. The smile of hope, and the prospect of thicker darkness.

Let us try to find out the causes and the cure of this state of mind, which adds so much to the miseries of life. If every one could tell his tale, and would tell the truth, we might hear some such accounts as these:

“My heart was set upon certain things, and I seemed almost to have gained them, when unexpectedly I was seized with this heavy affliction. And now all my plans are broken; I seem likely to die disappointed; and what is worse, I have thought nothing, or next to nothing, of a hereafter.”

“I have lived,” says another, “a thoughtless and careless life, putting

the evil day far from me. I began by entertaining a dislike to the worship of God, and so forsook it, and turned the Sabbath into a day of sports. I kept bad company, and soon began to doubt the truth of the Bible. I drank, swore, and when in company laughed at religion; though a secret persuasion that it would prove true sometimes made me very unhappy when alone. I laid my account with living as long as my neighbours; but I am afraid now I shall not recover, and that my soul is lost. Oh, how little did I think a few weeks ago that I should be so soon arrested in my course! What have I done? What can I do?”

“I have lived a sober life,” says a third, “and have not been used to doubt but that through the merits of Christ, this would answer every purpose: but since I have been laid aside, I have been thinking, in case I should die, whether this ground will bear me; and the more I think of it, the more it seems to sink under me. I am a sinner, and know not how my sins are to be forgiven.”

“I have been brought up in a Christian family,” says a fourth, “and have heard the gospel from my childhood; yet my conscience tells me that I am not a Christian. I heard the truth, but never received it in the love of it, that I might be saved. I conformed to family worship, but my heart was never in it. So much was it against the grain of my inclination, that I longed to get from under the yoke. At length my father died, and I had what I wished for, my liberty. Since then I have been very wicked. And now I am brought down to death’s door. I know what will be the end. The Lord have mercy upon me!”

If any of these cases be yours, or nearly so, allow me to remind you that a time of affliction is a time when God calls you to a serious inquiry into the state of your soul. In the day of adversity consider. It is the only time, it may be, in which the voice of religion and conscience can be heard. You may have been as the wild ass used to the wilderness, neither to be turned nor restrained; all those who have sought to reclaim you have but wearied themselves: but as in her mouth she was to be found, so are you in yours. Consider then that God has laid His hand upon you, that He may cause you to feel what He could do, and induce you to hearken while He reasons with you. He has awakened you also to some sense of your danger, that you may feel your need of the salvation of Christ, ere it is for ever hid from your eyes. I dare not comfort you on the consideration of your distress of mind, as though it were a hopeful sign of salvation. If it lead you to the Saviour, you will be saved; but if not, it may be to you but the beginning of sorrows. Your sins are much more numerous and heinous than you are aware of; it is an evil and bitter thing to have departed from

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CELLBLOCK TO CELLBLOCK

By David G. Hoffman

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

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



Changing Seasons

Greetings, grace, and peace to you, dear reader. May the Lord bless you abundantly and give you great joy!

Last month I mentioned that I would be taking a full load in college next semester---well, things have changed. I have completed the vocational class and academic classes of last semester. Now I work in the unit kitchen as a first shift cook.

As a cook I'm eligible to enroll in a six month Culinary Arts course, and I have done so. But in doing so I had to cancel the next semester of academic classes because I may be leaving in the middle of the semester to go to the Eastham Unit for the culinary class.

But don't fret; I'll get back into college as soon as this class is over. One of my major goals is to finish my Associate Degree before I'm released. And besides, this class is 15 credit hours I can use toward my degree.

Please continue to pray for me, dear reader, as I face the daily struggle that is prison life and endeavor to better myself through it. Grace be with all who love the Lord in sincerity.

The following story was shared with me by a fellow prisoner and it contains such a simple truth I decided to share it with you. May it encourage and instruct you---

There was an Indian chief who had four sons. He wanted his sons to learn not to judge things too quickly. So he sent them on a quest, in turn, to go and look at a pear tree that was a great distance away.

The first son went in the winter, the second in the spring, the third in the summer, and the youngest in the fall. When they had all gone and come back, he called them together to describe what they had seen:

The first son said, "The tree was ugly, bent, and twisted."

The second son said, "No, it was covered with green buds and full of promise."

The third son disagreed. He said, "It was laden with blossoms that smelled so sweet and looked so beautiful. It was the most graceful thing I'd ever seen."

The last son disagreed with them all. He said, "It was ripe and drooping with fruit, full of life and fulfillment."

The Chief then explained to his sons that they were all right; because they had each seen but one season in the life of the tree. He told them you can't judge a tree, or a man, by just one season. The essence of who they are, and the pleasure, joy, and love that come from that life can only be measured at the end, when all the seasons are done.

If you give up when it's winter, you'll miss the promise of spring, the beauty of summer, and the fulfillment of fall.

Don't let the pain of one season destroy the joy of all the rest. Don't judge life by one difficult season, persevere through the difficult patches---better times are ahead.

- Live simply.
- Love generously,
- Care deeply.
- Speak kindly.
- Leave the rest to God.
- Happiness keeps you joyful.
- Trials keep you strong.
- Sorrows keep you human.
- Failures keep you humble.
- Success keeps you glowing.
- But God keeps you going.

I hope you have enjoyed this little story, dear reader. There is much wisdom in its simple truth, learn it well.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen” (II Cor. 13:14).

Krystal Ruthann, I love and miss you dearly. You are in my thoughts and prayers daily.

Bro. Jeff & family, I love you guys. You remain in my prayers, too.

Bro. Harold, thank you for your continued encouragement.

Bro. Kevin, I still miss you, man! Stay strong and stay in the Word. You are not alone.

Bro. Danny, how goes the book? Keep working on it, I believe the Lord will bless your effort.

Until next time---SHALOM!



Afflicted

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the living God, and to have spent so large a part of the life He gave you without His fear being in you. God might justly cut you off, and cast you into perdition.

But consider the faithful saying, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of sinners. You have doubtless heard of this, but perhaps have never considered its import. If Jesus came into the world on such an errand, He must be the Messiah foretold by the prophets, the Son of God, and the Saviour of men. If He came into the world to save sinners, the world must have been in a lost and hopeless condition. If any thing could have been done by man towards saving himself, it would doubtless have been left to him: God would not unnecessarily have interfered, especially to send His Son to be made a sacrifice for us. It does not comport with the wisdom of God to send His Son to suffer and die, to accomplish that which might have been accomplished without Him. Moreover, if Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, He must have come with a design, which is what no mere creature ever did. Whatever design there may be concerning our coming into the world, we are not the subjects of it: but Christ was the subject of design. He **“took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men”**; and this from a state of mind that we are called upon to imitate (Phil. 2:7). His coming into the world was nothing less than the Word being made flesh and dwelling among men; or, that eternal life that was with the Father being manifested to us. But if all this be true, sin must be indeed an evil and bitter thing, and salvation from it a matter of the greatest importance. And shall we so pursue our farms and merchandise as to make light of it? Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. It is sufficient to warrant our coming to Him, that such are we. Finally, if He came to save the chief sinners, whatever our sins have been, they can furnish no reason for despair. If therefore our sins be lamented, and we have faith in Christ, however numerous or heinous

they have been, we shall find mercy. If a ship founders at sea, and while her company are some floating on pieces of wreck, and others swimming for their lives, a friendly vessel bears down and throws out a rope to every one of them, would it be for any one to hesitate as to his taking hold of it?

Many in the day of adversity have, like the prodigal, been brought to a right mind; but many are not so. Some are unaffected, and even hardened under their afflictions. Nothing is heard but murmurings and complainings; and nothing seen but sullen discontent, depression, and despondency. Others, being deeply entrenched in the persuasion that they have lived a good life, all that is said to them respecting the gospel makes no impression on their minds. Others are secure in consequence of having imbibed some false scheme of religion; and others, who are tender at the time, and appear to believe the gospel are no sooner restored to health, than they lose their impressions, and return to their former courses.

Let us review these cases. If affliction has been the means of humbling you, and bringing you to a right mind, you have reason, not only to be reconciled to it, but to consider it among your greatest mercies. It has been good for you to bear the yoke of adversity; and this should teach you to be resigned to the will of God as to your future lot. "It was by affliction," said a good man, "that I was first brought into the way, and by affliction that I have kept in it." Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I have learned thy Word.

But if the visitations of God have tended only to "harden you," and to provoke you to sullenness and discomfort, you have reason to fear lest you should be given up to such a state of mind. Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more, ---**“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone”!**

If you be full of self-righteous confidence, flattering yourself that your life has been good, and that you have nothing to fear, consider whether you be not in the very condition of those whom our Saviour describes as whole, and so "needing no physician." You appear to have no wants; and therefore none of the blessings of the gospel are interesting to you. A very interesting narrative was published a few years since of such a case as this. A worthy minister, on visiting a dying man, was told by him with great self-complacency, that "he had never been guilty of any particular sins, and was not therefore uneasy on that score." "To every thing I said," (says the minister,) "he gave the unlimited assent, which, when coming from an unenlightened person, has always appeared to me peculiarly embarrassing. To every truth I stated, his monotonous reply was, "Yes, sir," --- "To be sure, sir," --- "Certainly, sir," and the

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Tune in to the Berea Baptist Broadcast

STATION	TIME	DIAL	WATTS
WFTA, Tupelo, MS.....	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.....	101.9.....	3,000 FM
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WCTT, Corbin, KY.....	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.....	680.....	5,000 AM
KARI, Blaine, WA.....	Saturday 10:30 - 11:00 a.m.....	550.....	5,000 AM
DXRA, Davao City, Philippines	Sunday 8:15 - 8:45 a.m.....	783 Khz.....	10,000 AM

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like. I now felt (as I have often done under similar circumstances) discouraged, perplexed, and grieved; and could not but deeply lament the mental darkness under which the poor man appeared to be enveloped. After a short pause, I frankly confessed that I knew not what to say to him; observing that he appeared to have no wants---that the blessings of the gospel were for the poor, the wretched, and the lost---that if he were lamenting his sins, crying for mercy, and inquiring the way of salvation, I thought I should know how to address him; but that with his present views, the gospel must necessarily appear to him of very little value." This faithful remonstrance, together with a charge of having neglected his own salvation for the sake of worldly advantage, which charge the minister was enabled to bring home to his conscience, appears to have been the means of awakening him to a sense of his danger. "What," said he, "and is it too late? Is all lost? Is my poor soul abandoned? Have I lived in the neglect of all these things? And is it come to this? O what, what shall I do? O my sins! O my poor soul! O my God, my God! Shall I be cast off for ever? What must I do to be saved? Is there no way open for me? O what, what must I do to be saved?" --The way of salvation being pointed out to him, he appeared with great sincerity to embrace it, and died very happily. But many have died in the very spirit of the Jews, seeking after acceptance with God, without attaining it. And wherefore? **"Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone."**

But your security may be in consequence of your having imbibed some false species of religion, which influences your mind like an opiate, divesting you of all painful reflection, and filling you with dreams of future happiness. A confidence of this sort is more difficult to be shaken than self-righteous hope itself. Those who have not made much pretence to religion have not so great sacrifices to make in embracing the gospel as those who have. You account your darkness light: but, "if the light which is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!" There is an intoxicating quality in false religion, and in the false joys excited by it: like strong drink, it produces a kind of happiness at the time, and a vehement desire of repeating the delicious draught; but its end is bitter (Prov. 23:29-35). We have no mind to dispute with you, but wish to declare unto you the gospel of God, and leave it. If "the faithful saying" above referred to, be received, it will issue in your salvation; if not, we can only deliver our own souls!

Finally: Though your mind may have

undergone a change during your affliction, yet, recollect that sick-bed repentances are often, though not always, like what is said of the goodness of Ephraim: **"As a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away."** If you abound in vows and promises as to your future life, it is rather a sign that you know but little of yourself, than of a real change for the better. An immediate apprehension of death is capable of producing great effects, which are often mistaken for a change of heart. Be confident of the truth of Christ's doctrine and promises; but be diffident of yourself. To doubt His Word is unbelief; but to be jealous of yourself is one of the fruits of faith. If God should restore you to health, and you prove by your Christian conversation, that His Word has taken deep root in your mind, your fellow-Christians will rejoice over you, and join in blessing God that the day of visitation has been to you a day of salvation (*Miscellaneous Essays*, 1845).



Praying for the

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them that believe." Those who believe are described as **"the children of Abraham,"** and we are said to be **"as Isaac was, the children of promise."** We are accustomed to think of Abraham's faith as having special applications to his appropriation of the promise respecting Isaac's birth. I endeavoured to expound to you a few Sunday mornings ago, the text, **"Abraham believed God"**; and I want to try to show you this morning that his faith in God led him to pray, and made him a mighty intercessor, calling down God's blessing upon others of lesser faith than his own.

I.

THE LORD APPEARED UNTO ABRAHAM IN THE PLAINS OF MAMRE.

His faith was itself begotten of a divine revelation. Abraham became a believer because of the disclosure of Himself which God made to him. It was when he saw God, or He revealed Himself to his understanding, he believed: when he realized Who and what God was, he was enabled to trust. And it is ever true that **"faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."** And on this occasion the divine Visitor renews His promise to Abraham; and very explicitly pledges that the blessing his heart desires shall in due time come.

But I want to show you this morning that prayer---true prayer---is an expression of faith, and like faith, is also always inspired by a divine revelation. We never talk to God until He has spoken to us. **"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."** True prayer ever asks that which is in accord with the will of

God; and the will of God may be known only as it is revealed to us by His Spirit.

Let us now look at this story, a part of which I have read to you this morning, for our instruction. Observe, first of all, that Abraham had known for a long time that Lot was dwelling in Sodom; and yet he had not prayed for him. There came a time when these two parted company; and Lot **"pitched his tent toward Sodom,"** and at last found residence within the walls of the wicked city itself. And beyond question, Abraham knew where Lot was. He knew that he was dwelling in the midst of a wicked people; but there is nothing to show that Abraham felt any particular concern for Lot; or that he ever went into the presence of God, and prayed for his deliverance from the midst of the city.

Is it not still true that there are many, who are children of Abraham by faith; who are children of promise; who are really the children of God; but who yet do not intercede for the Lots of our day? There are Christian wives, for instance, who rejoice in their husbands' material prosperity. The wife knows very well that he is getting on; that he is amassing wealth; that he is prospering, according to the standards of the world. And she sees, more and more, that he is being caught in the worldly tide; that he is destitute of religious interest; that he never prays; that he seldom attends the house of God; that in all his affairs he ignores God; that he has no concern for the spiritual welfare of his children, as long as they are respectable; as long as they are making progress in school, he has absolutely no anxiety about their spiritual state; he is careless himself; and equally careless respecting his children. And his wife, who is a Christian, is almost as careless as he is. She does not pray for him; she does not pray for her own children; she does not realize the peril in which they are found. Again and again I have observed Christian parents who are proud of the progress their children are making in school; proud of the young man's ability in his new situation; and rejoice in his worldly prospects. As the friends and neighbors come in they are sure to talk about how the children are getting on; but never a word is spoken about their relationship to Christ---no concern whatever is felt about their eternal future.

That was the state in which Abraham was respecting Lot. There is nothing to indicate that Abraham felt any concern whatever about Lot's spiritual state until God came to the door of Abraham's tent, and told him directly, personally that Lot was in dire peril; that the clouds of judgment were hanging low over the city where Lot dwelt; that before long vengeance would fall, and the city would be consumed. And when Abraham heard that word from the Lord, he began to pray! He stood before the Lord, and

prayed as he had never prayed before.

And I remind you that we have in this Book that very revelation. This Book clearly makes a distinction between those who believe, and those who do not believe. This Book clearly tells us that there is salvation in Christ; and that apart from Christ there is no salvation. This Book clearly tells us there is a place, a condition, which we are accustomed to speak of as Heaven: that there is a condition of life in which the soul may dwell in intimate fellowship with God. And there is another condition of life, in which the soul will be forever separated from God. This Book tells us of Heaven and of Hell most explicitly. The teaching of the Bible is that even of your friends and mine, husband, wife, children, parents, brother, sister, neighbors, business associates---every one of them who is out of Christ is condemned already; is under the curse of God's law; is in danger of being **"turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God."** That is the warning-revelation of God's Word; and yet some of us, perhaps, pray but indifferently for the salvation of those we love; while others do not pray at all.

Why was it that Abraham prayed when God told him these things? Let me give you the text of a few Sunday morning's ago in another setting. God came to Abraham's tent, and He said, **"Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?"** And then He told him of the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah and He said, **"I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know."** He told Abraham that He was going down to Sodom, and if He found it **"according to the cry of it,"** His judgment would fall. What made Abraham pray? The revelation?---not only that, but this, **"Abraham believed God."** Let me ring it in your ears---**"Abraham believed God!" "Abraham believed God!"** How did he believe? Just a short time before, on this visit, He told him that Isaac should be born. And when Sarah heard it she laughed aloud: it was too good to be true. **"And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh?"** And she denied, because she was afraid. **"And he said, Nay, but thou didst laugh when I gave thee My promise."** She was afraid in the presence of God; yet grace abounded toward her as toward her husband; and together, when they received the promise of life, they **"believed God."**

But the same day God uttered also His promise of death; and again, **"Abraham believed God."** Do you see it? He believed God! He said, "If God is going down to Sodom, if He is going to inspect it, if He has said that judgment shall fall, then judgment will fall; and Lot will share in the overthrow of the city." And immediately he stood before the Lord,

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and began to pray.

Now my brethren and sisters, what we need above all things is to believe God--not only the Word which promises life; but the Word which solemnly warns us that **"the wages of sin is death,"** that **"these shall go away into everlasting punishment,"** that there is a place **"where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,"** that it is true which God hath spoken: **"Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."** That if men are not saved through faith in the Lord Jesus; if they are not **"born again,"** then they are lost---that is all---they are lost!

We have no more ground for believing in our own salvation through faith in Christ, than we have for believing in the utter and eternal destruction of every soul that rejects Him. The Word of the Lord promises both, and if we believe God, we must believe both.

And that is the weakness of the modern church. Russellism and many other kindred heresies have served to lessen the conviction of Christian people respecting these matters. I recall some years ago being in a ministers' meeting, when a minister---I remember the shock of it at this moment---when a minister, I suppose of nearly sixty years of age, told the brethren how that once in his early ministry, he had preached from the text: **"The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God,"** and amid great merriment he told his fellow-ministers that long ago he had put away such texts as that, and had promised the Lord that if He would forgive him for that one indiscretion, he would never commit it again!

My brethren, the truth is, that people may go today into scores of churches in this city, and other cities, and hear no word that will disturb their consciences; no word that will arouse them to a sense of the peril of the wicked. And yet, if we believe this Word at all, we must believe both sides of the revelation---that He Who promises life in Christ promises only destruction out of Christ.

What then? Shall we believe God? I cannot persuade you of it; I cannot persuade myself of it. I am called frequently to conduct funeral services. A man has died without Christ; without showing the slightest interest in Christ. What am I to say? I wish I could speak words of comfort. I tell you what I do always---I preach the gospel; and tell people that there is only one way to be saved, and that is through Christ. It is not easy to be faithful in these matters, but we must be true even when and where tears are falling and hearts are bleeding. There are many people within the circle

of your acquaintance---people in your own homes; of whom your heart would dispose you to say: "I find it difficult to persuade myself that the Bible doctrine of final rewards can be true with respect to this and that one." There is only one way by which you can be persuaded of the truth: When God came to Abraham, and spoke to him directly, calling him by name, He said, in effect, "Abraham, there are the clouds of vengeance; there is the judgment coming---do you believe God?" And **"Abraham believed God,"** and believing, he began to pray.

It is not enough that we intellectually agree with the truth of Scripture. It is only as the Spirit of God takes His own word, and lays it upon our own hearts; when He comes by a personal visitation, and makes us realize the peril of the lost, that we shall begin to pray. And it is in my heart this morning, my dear friends, to suggest to you that we should pray together these coming weeks that God in the greatness of His grace will do for us what He did for Abraham---that He will come to us, that He will visit us each personally, and tell us unmistakably that peril in which men and women are found who are out of Christ. We read of men in times past who spent whole nights of agony, pleading for the salvation of the lost; of men who wept tears of grief, because they believed somebody was in danger of eternal damnation. But it is only as God the Spirit withdraws the veil from our eyes, as He makes the things of the spiritual realm real to us, and enables us to anticipate the future, that we shall be able to realize these tremendous truths of the Scripture, and be able to pray.

Shall we pray then for ourselves, that we may be awakened as we have never been awakened before; that we may realize as we have never realized before, the peril in which men are placed who know not Christ? **"Abraham stood yet before the Lord:"** and there is not a Christian wife here whose husband is unsaved! Nor a husband whose wife is unsaved; nor a father or mother who has children unsaved; nor one who has brother, or sisters over whom eternal doom is pending, hanging low over those we love---I say if we believed that, there is not a Christian here who would not stand before the Lord and pray! It would become the passion of our lives to bring them to Christ---everything in life would be subordinated to that one business.

Have you not seen it when sickness has come into a home? The wife, or child, or some other member of the family, is ill. But it is only a slight indisposition; and the work of the house goes on just the same. The father goes to business; and the rest of the family go about their work, for there is just one member slightly indisposed. But he or she does not get up again quickly. The doctor comes again and again; and he says, "The fever is rising, and rising"---until at length he

takes the family into his confidence. He says, "It is a battle now for life: there is only one chance in many hundreds that we shall be able to baffle death!" And then what happens? When death draws near, business and everything else must go, in order that everybody may concentrate on this one task of saving a precious life from the grave.

And if God would but open eyes, and enable us to see Hell itself yawning before those we love; we, too, should stand before the Lord and pray!

II.

HOW DID ABRAHAM PRAY?

By a kind of divine instinct, he pleaded the vicarious principles. I pity the man who does not believe in the divine inspiration of Scripture; he must be very blind. If God did not put the cross in the Old Testament, I wonder who did? One thing is certain: Somebody who knew all that was to be revealed in the New Testament wrote the first pages of this Book---and every page throughout the whole Book; because the vicarious principles run all through the Bible.

Abraham did not plead that sin should be condoned; he did not ask that God should ignore the wickedness of the city. No, But he said, **"Let the righteousness of the righteous avail for the salvation of the wicked. Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?"** **"And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."** And then Abraham said, **"Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous?"** and he received the promise that the city should be spared for their sakes. Then he dropped to forty; **"And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake."** **"Peradventure there shall thirty be found there."** **"Peradventure there shall be twenty found there."** **"I will not destroy it for twenty's sake."** **"And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there."** And the Lord answered, **"I will not destroy it for ten's sake."** But Abraham's faith could go no farther. He could only plead the righteousness of ten. For less than ten he did not dare to ask a stay of judgment.

How much more highly privileged are we! We have not to plead the righteousness of fifty, nor of ten; but we can plead the righteousness of One Whose righteousness avails for the salvation of a whole world! Blessed be God! And we are encouraged to pray that though the wicked deserve the judgment that is threatened, God will for the sake of Jesus, have mercy upon them. Surely a solemn obligation rests upon all of us who are thus privileged to pray, to stand before the Lord.

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Praying for the

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III.

But I must show you **HOW ABRAHAM'S PRAYER WAS ANSWERED.**

Lot was dwelling in Sodom; and was as indifferent to the impending doom as Abraham had been. And when the angels came to Sodom, and told Lot of his danger, he seemed to but half believe their warning, and to be in no hurry to quit the place. But the angels took Lot in hand: **"And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him; . . . and set him without the city."** He was reluctant to leave; and yet by God's grace he was saved out of the wicked city.

Well do I know that it is a tremendous task to awaken the unconverted to their need of a Saviour; but it is almost as great a task to awaken you and me to an appreciation of their peril. But mark this: When God awakens Abraham, He always awakens Lot. When He puts in Abraham's heart a deep concern for Lot, He will not leave Lot until he becomes concerned for himself. Agonizing saints will soon be surrounded by repentant sinners. An interceding church will soon echo with the cry of the newborn.

And I say this for the greater encouragement of anxious parents, or wives, or relatives, here this morning. You say, "Sir, I am disheartened; I am discouraged because I see no religious interest at all on the part of those of whom I am thinking this morning, and for whom I long have prayed." No, perhaps not, as yet, but when you and I become really desperately in earnest, as Abraham was, when this matter becomes real and imperative to us, it will become real to those for whom we pray.

Lot had some difficulty, too. He spoke to his sons-in-law, conveying to them the angels' warning. But it is certain that Lot had been long indifferent to his own and his family's danger, because when he spoke to his sons-in-law, and said, **"Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city,"** he seemed to his sons-in-law as one who mocked.

And there is always that difficulty of overcoming the influence of an indifferent past. Perhaps someone here this morning says, "I do not know how to begin; I have been indifferent so long; I have neglected my family so long in spiritual matters I am ashamed now to show an interest. They will not believe me if I warn them of the wrath to come." That is true. No one will believe you unless the power of the Spirit of God awakens him.

And while Lot lingered, the men laid hold upon him and brought him out of the city. Whether he would or not, they

compelled him to come. Do you believe that doctrine? I heard a brother pray in one of our meetings lately: "O Lord, we are tired of coaxing sinners to be saved. Give us the power that will break their wills, and compel them to come." And God, the Holy Spirit, will give us that power. Abraham never could have brought Lot out of Sodom, even if he had gone down into that city to speak for himself. He probably would also have seemed as one who mocked, both to Lot and his family. He might have said, "Uncle, what is all this about? I have been here a long time; but you have said nothing to me until now. I am glad to have a visit from you; glad you are interested in me; but you have left me alone for a long time. Why this sudden concern?" And the only way by which Abraham could bring power to bear upon Lot was over the Mercy-Seat! He accomplished by standing before the Lord what he never could have done by going down to Sodom. And so can we.

"And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand. . . and they brought him forth, and set him without the city." I have seen God force men to be saved. I have known Him to rob them of their sleep; and make it impossible

for them to attend to their business; and make the things of the spiritual world so real to them that they were constrained to yield to God. The record says, **"God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt."** Lot was saved in direct answer to Abraham's prayer. And God will remember our prayers. Still the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Shall we address ourselves with increased devotion to the ministry of prayer?

Shall this be a day of intercession with us? Shall we pray for our Lots? Shall we pray that God will give His angels charge concerning them; that somehow or another, by the power of the Holy Spirit, reluctant hearts may be drawn to Him, Whom we love?

*"When Jesus has found you tell others the story,
That my loving Saviour is your Saviour too;
Then pray that your Saviour may bring them to glory,
And prayer shall be answered, 'twas answered for you."*



The Effectiveness of God's Word

By Timothy Hille
of Ashland, Illinois

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Isa. 55:8-13).

I believe that the text before us contains perhaps the greatest incentive and the most important reason why we as one of the Lord's New Testament churches should have revival services in all the world. We (I speak generally of us, and I trust that the majority of you



share my feelings on this matter) desire to see souls saved. We desire to see the work of the Lord prosper spiritually and increase numerically. We desire for the name of the Lord

to be magnified and the truth spread abroad from this assembly into all places, as Paul did state to the Thessalonian church, **"For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad"** (I Thess. 1:8). We desire these things and we desire that they would be wrought of God by the Holy Spirit working in us, through us, and upon us unto the honor and glory of God. I tell you that we shall have none of these things without the preaching of the Word of God, and only the Word of God can bring these things to pass.

I want us to examine our text and note the power and effectiveness of the Word of God. Paul charged that young minister Timothy, **"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season"** (II Tim. 4:2). We have come to some very unfortunate times because we are living in a day when the majority of Baptists seem to think that it is no longer time to be instant, vigilant, diligent in the things of God and

in the preaching of the Word of God. The doctrines of Christ have become unseasonable and unfashionable to many, and so they have ceased to declare **"all the counsel of God"** (Acts 20:27). When we become discouraged and we begin to think that the preaching of the Word of God is no longer getting the job done, we need to stop and remember what God has said: **"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."** We begin to think that the old paths are out-of-date and obsolete, and that the preaching of the gospel is no longer sufficient to the task; and so we begin to wonder how we can get something going. If we are not careful and do not stop to remember that God said His Word was sufficient to accomplish all His will and that we are not to incorporate into the work of the Lord all the practices and programs of false religion and fleshly invention, then we will very surely make a mess out of everything. God does not need your help or my help: He never has and He never will. His Word was saving souls, converting backsliders, transforming children of darkness and wrath into children of light and life, and bringing honor and glory to His name long before you and I ever came onto the scene; and His Word will continue to do so long after you and I have left the scene.

By the help of the Holy Spirit, I want us to take note of some of the wonderful truths revealed in these inspired words spoken by the Lord's prophet so many years ago. First, beloved, I would have you consider the effectiveness of the Word of the Lord, for He said, **"My word . . . shall not return unto me void."** Secondly, let us be careful to notice the manner in which God's Word takes effect, as it is written, **"It shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."** Finally, we should take note of the effect which God's Word shall produce as revealed in our text.

I. GOD'S WORD IS EFFECTIVE.

The Lord tells us the following with regard to His Word: **"it shall not return unto me void."** This speaks of the power of the Word of God. God's Word which goes forth out of His mouth is effective, it is powerful, it produces the effect that God designs, and it cannot fail or fall to the ground unfulfilled. The saints of God whose lives are recorded in the Scripture experienced the power of the Word of God. Abraham experienced the power of God's Word in receiving the end of the promise, even the birth of the promised son in His old age, **"when he was about an hundred years old"** (Rom. 4:19). God's Word proclaimed unto Abraham was thus, **"I have made thee a father of many nations"** (Rom. 4:17 italics mine T.H.); as far as God was concerned, the matter was already finished in one

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Effectiveness

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sense, because He had decreed it: and His Word shall not return unto Him void. The first church and the apostles whom Jesus had set first in His kind of church experienced the power and effectiveness of the Word of God. **“They were unlearned and ignorant men”** (Acts 4:13), by the standards of the religious authorities and ruling powers of their day; but they preached the gospel, and never has any church seen such an outpouring of spiritual prosperity and blessing, even in the face of fierce opposition and persecution, as that first church and the churches which were begotten of her. Of them the scriptures state, **“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all”** (Acts 4:33). This was nothing but the power of the Word of God, for Jesus had already stated unto them, **“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”** (Acts 1:8). These and many others experienced the effectiveness of the Word of the Lord in their own lives and the lives of others unto whom God’s Word was preached.

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). There is no problem today with the Word of God. God’s Word has not lost any power or effectiveness; but many have stopped preaching the Word of God and have substituted something else for THUS SAITH THE LORD. We ought not to wonder that there is no power when something other than the Word of the Lord is being proclaimed. God said, **“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth”** (italics mine T.H.). There is a lot being spoken today in pulpits and in churches that never came forth out of God’s mouth. Therefore there is no power, only a form of religion that is vain and useless spiritually. The Apostle Paul warned us of the highly emotional and yet totally ineffective false teachers who would become more and more prevalent in the last days: **“having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away”** (II Tim. 3:5). Their message has no power to transform a sin-stained life into a sanctified life. Their gospel is ineffective in bringing the recovery of sight to the blind, healing the bruises of the broken-hearted, and opening the doors of the prison house of sin to the

spiritually captive. Their word is without effect spiritually, though they stir up much fleshly emotion and excitement; yet God’s Word will bring a person from the wasted wanderings upon the hills of sin and death into the safety and security of the Good Shepherd’s fold, where He feeds His flock in green pastures and leads them beside still waters.

The Word of the Lord will not fail. The Word of the Lord will prevail and be effective to the saving of the souls of lost men, women, boys, and girls. The Apostle Paul stated His confidence in God’s Word thus: **“So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”** (Rom. 1:15, 16). Human reasoning has never and will never save a single soul. You can reason a person all the way to hell, but only the Word of God which gives a person faith in the Son of God can change that person from a hell-bound sinner to a heaven-bound saint. **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”** (Rom. 10:17). Only the Word of God can produce saving faith in the heart of a man, woman, boy, or girl. You can give a person all the head knowledge of salvation in the world; but only God can reveal Himself to a person through His only begotten Son by His Word which goeth forth out of His mouth. (Read II Cor. 4:5,6.) Don’t try to humanize God and make the gospel understandable to someone; proclaim the gospel and let God’s Word perform that which He purposes and intends.

II. HOW GOD’S WORD IS EFFECTIVE.

How then, we may ask, does God’s Word perform that which He purposes and intends? How is God’s Word effective? The manner in which God’s Word works is thus: God’s Word accomplishes exactly what God purposes for it to accomplish. In our text the Lord states, **“It shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”** God’s Word always fulfills the purpose that God intended to be fulfilled. God’s Word never falls short, it only does what God wants, it always does what God wants, and no one can stop God’s Word or make God’s Word do that which God did not send it to accomplish. (Read II Cor. 2:14-17.) God’s Word is sufficient to the task which God has ordained, and our obligation is to preach the Word in sincerity and in truth.

We have a desire to see souls saved, and so then we ought to preach the Word. The problem that we have is that we forget that God’s Word is effective in that which He pleases and prospers in the thing whereto He sent it, and we do not have control over the Word of God.

You might read and expound upon every verse of Scripture in the Bible you know of in order to bring someone to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and that person may yet remain unregenerated, lost, and undone. We need to realize that God’s Word will have the effect that God intends, and we need to be in submission to God’s will. God knows best how to bring a sinner to repentance and faith. You would verily bring some sinner to salvation that is in Christ Jesus, and you have labored to that end, and yet that person remains without Christ. You would soon give up, but I tell you that you have more reason to press on and pray and seek the salvation of that soul than ever before, because God’s Word is effective! God must bring that sinner to the end of his or her own way, to the end of his or her own self-righteousness, to the end of his or her own power (though in reality he or she has no power but is spiritually dead in trespasses and in sins). God’s Word will break down the walls of defiance, rebellion, self-righteousness, self-trust, and unbelief, and bring a sinner to the place where he shall, like the prodigal, see his wretched condition, see that he alone is to blame for his doomed estate, see the love of God manifest in Christ, and rise up in humble repentance and go to the Father, who sees the sinner afar off and meets him in the way with tender kisses of love and mercy! Saul of Tarsus, that great persecutor of the early churches, was not saved the first time he heard the gospel. He was not saved when he stood and gave consent to the stoning of Stephen, who preached to the Jews and showed them their stiff-necked resistance of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God who had been made flesh and dwelt among them and whom they had betrayed and murdered. He was saved when God’s Word went forth and prospered in that thing whereto He sent it, when Saul fell to the earth on the road to Damascus, **“and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”** (Acts 9:4). God’s Word turned a vessel of wrath into a vessel of honor, as Saul who would later be called Paul was a chosen vessel unto the Lord to bear His name before the Gentiles.

God gives us an illustration of how His Word is effective: **“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth.”** God gives us the illustration of the rain and snow which come down from heaven, **“and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater.”** The rain and the snow do not descend in vain, but water the earth so that life may spring forth and multiply. The trees would yield no good fruit and the fields no golden grain if the water necessary to all life did not descend and supply the ground with moisture. The rain and the snow have an ordained purpose in the

creative handiwork of God, and they fulfill their purpose. God’s Word is the same. When the winter snows fall and the spring rains come, we do not look out in the orchards and upon the fields and expect to see the crops already ripe for the time of harvest. God’s Word will work in the time that God has ordained for it to work. Some may be saved the first time they hear the Word preached, God opening their hearts to the preaching of the Word by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon them. Others may only hear with their ears for a time; and then one day, God’s Word having struck many blows upon their conscience and their self-righteousness, they will see their sins and the Saviour and in an instant be saved, simultaneously exercising the gifts of repentance and faith as fruits of the miraculous and instantaneous regenerating work of the Spirit of God. We do not need to interfere with the office work of the Holy Spirit or the effectiveness of the Word of God. God’s Word will work just as God intends, and He will receive the honor and the glory.

III. THE EFFECT GOD’S WORD HAS.

God tells us what the effects of His Word shall be. One of the effects of God’s Word is that there will be spiritual joy. **“For ye shall go out with joy.”** The Lord describes for us the happy state of those whose lives are influenced by His Word. What joy had you when first you believed and God’s Word effectually wrought in you the revealing of the Saviour and the imparting of faith unto eternal life! (Read I Pet. 1:3-9.) We who are saved often seek that joy again, when we have grown cold and forgotten the mercies of God and wandered from the fellowship of His love. We take up the prayer of David of old, **“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit”** (Ps. 51:12). God’s Word is that which will give you joy. You shall go out with joy. You shall go out from the spiritual captivity caused by sin and return to the place of happiness in communion with God. Not only so, but you shall **“be led forth with peace.”** No more of the anxiety and restlessness and fear, which are the result of the influence of sin over our lives, for **“the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”** (Phil. 4:7). The joy and the peace that is missing in our lives is the result of our rebellion against the Word of God and our unwillingness to allow His Word to govern our daily lives. You had no true spiritual joy or peace before you were saved by the grace of God because your mind was at enmity with the Word of God. Now, you experience both joy and peace when you willingly submit to the rule of His Word. Jesus stated, **“These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might**

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. How should tracts be used? Can you recommend a good tract?

Mike DeWitt Sr.
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477

Pastor
Parkway Landmark
Baptist Church
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477



Tracts should be used whenever possible. I use them to either open a conversation or just give to a person who may not be open to conversation. I sometimes just leave them in a conspicuous place like the post office or laundry mat. There are many good tracts out there that sovereign grace Baptists have written and all are useful. I would recommend a tract that you yourself have written from your heart that is in accordance with the Gospel. With a self written tract it will be a message from you to them about Christ and His salvation and it will be all the more personal. You may not think you are qualified to write a tract of any kind, but remember this, God uses means for the salvation of His Elect.

MIKE DEWITT

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

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



Tracts may be used as a written means to provide scriptural information on a variety of subjects. Usually tracts are brief, concise and direct. They are a convenient means to spread the truth through the written Word.

Most people would consider the *Berea Baptist Banner* strictly an informative newspaper with excellent articles on a wide range of subjects. Yet, each self contained article could serve as a tract if it were published individually and handed out as such. In fact, several of the *Banner's* articles have been published as individual tracts through the years providing people with valuable information.

I have the privilege of owning the published works of John Gill, the Baptist theologian and expositor whose writings were published in the early 1800's. Three of the volumes are entitled "*Sermons and Tracts*." The subject matter covers a wide range of scriptural truth. Tracts have been used effectively ever since the invention of the printing press. Baptists have always promoted the spread of

truth through every lawful means possible, including the use of tracts.

Just because there are tracts that are heretical and filled with error we should not throw the baby out with the bath water. Not all tracts are bad. Our church has a tract that is used to inform people of our church's location, service times, the truth of the Gospel, and what we believe. It is simple and to the point.

There are many good, sound tracts being published by Baptists written by a variety of authors. The Berea Baptist Church has published many excellent tracts by the late Milburn Cockrell. The Bryan Station Baptist Church of Lexington, KY has a wonderful variety of tracts written by Pastor Al Gormley, H.B. Taylor, C. D. Cole, and others. The Independence Baptist Church of Foristell, MO has published many sound tracts by Pastor Wayne Reynolds. The Bethel Baptist Church of Lawton, OK has published many of the writings of Elder Forrest Keener in tract form. Pastor Wilbert Ellis of Florence, KY has maintained a printing ministry that publishes good, sound tracts for churches and missionaries through the years. I am sure there are many more.

What if every Baptist church member passed out 300 individual tracts on the Gospel of the grace of God each year? It would be an effective and inexpensive way to get the truth out to lots of people. It would also encourage people to get involved in witnessing and sharing the truth with others in a more direct way. I am all for spreading the truth through every lawful means possible.

TOM ROSS

Raymond F. Bennett
Berachah Baptist Mission
271 Gray Road
Ithaca, NY 14850-8761

Missionary of
Berea
Baptist Church
PO Box 39
Mantachie, MS 38855



And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you" (I Cor. 9: 20-23).

These verses are frequently abused to justify the use of worldly methods to attract people to our services, such as sales techniques in personal evangelism or making the worship services more of an entertainment than worship and Bible teaching. Nevertheless, what Paul is saying here is that he will adapt his methods to the people he is trying to reach. He does not justify swallowing goldfish or hiding a prize under a seat somewhere, but neither does he confine his evangelism to formal Bible exegesis.

Daniel Webster wrote, "If religious books are not widely circulated among the masses in this country, I do not know what is going to become of us as a nation. If truth be not diffused, error will be; if God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy; if the Evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will; if the power of the Gospel is not felt throughout the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness, will reign without mitigation or end."

This can be equally applied to tracts. Tracts are a means of getting the most basic, elementary elements of the gospel message into the hands of those who don't attend a good gospel preaching church and who don't sit down to read a good Christian book. Many will read so-called "Christian Novels," but I have observed that even those based on a Bible account usually stray far from the Scripture and do not have any type of clear evangelical message. Even the poorest of tracts that I have seen are usually a better means of spreading the gospel.

Many within our Sovereign Grace circles tend to consider handing out tracts as Arminian. However I suggest that while salvation is purely by the grace of God, not based on any work or action on man's part, "**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**" (Eph. 2:8-9). Man is not entirely passive. If God's effectual call reaches the tract reader, he, like the men at Pentecost and the Philippian jailer, will respond with the question, "What must I do?" If giving them instruction is Arminian, then Peter and Paul were Arminian.

Admittedly, *good* tracts are hard to find because most of them leave the reader with the concept that his filling out the form at the end of the tract means he is saved. Therefore I have taken to writing most of my own tracts.

I usually try to have a tract to leave whenever I leave a tip at a restaurant or after a conversation with someone.

RAY BENNETT

Effectiveness

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have peace" (John 16:33). These things are the effect of God's Word.

The effect which the Word of the Lord has will also be a miraculous and a changing effect. "**Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree.**" Beloved, God's Word works miraculously and causes a change upon those who come under its influence and power. By the Word of God those who were dead in trespasses and sins are born again and made to be partakers of the divine nature, against which they had previously been rebels and enemies. Where once grew the thorns and thistles of sin that choked out any holy and godly influence, now there is a tree of righteousness, planted of the Lord, which being fed and watered by the Word of God does not cease from yielding fruit. God was telling the children of Israel through the prophet Isaiah that the harsh, unfruitful, and unprofitable wastes and wilderness would be changed into a land with an abundance of good trees useful for good things. The fir tree was used in making musical instruments upon which might be played songs for the glory of God; and its wood was used in the construction of the temple that had been built in Jerusalem. The myrtle tree was used in the observance of the feast of booths, when the children of Israel would commemorate their sojourning in tabernacles when the Lord brought them out of Egypt with a great deliverance. These things held special significance for the children of Israel because of their spiritual uses. How much ought God's Word mean to us because of the effects that it has and the spiritual prosperity that results from those effects! Beloved, sinners do not need to be reformed, they need to be regenerated by the Spirit of God; "**and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**" is the only weapon with which men's hearts may be turned from spiritually thorny ground into a garden of holiness and righteousness planted by the Lord.

The effect of God's Word is ultimately that He shall be honored and glorified. "**And it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.**" When God's Word goes forth out of His mouth and prospers in the thing whereto He sent it, His name will be lifted up and magnified. God's Word is the only thing He will honor because it is the only thing that will bring Him the glory He is due. God does not rely on the inventions of men and carnal devices to bring sinners to repentance and faith, because He is calling out a people for His name, for His honor, and for His glory. (Read Acts 15:13,14; I Pet. 2:9; Tit. 2:14.)

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Does your church have a website? Is this a good means to reach people?

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

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



No, our church does not maintain a website. I do not have much computer or internet knowledge. However, there are many sound churches that have excellent websites.

Yes, it is an excellent means to reach people. It seems as though everyone nowadays knows how to access the internet. There is a lot of junk and heresy on the internet, but there is also a lot of good information as well. Since so many people use the internet, it is in the best interests of sound Baptists to maintain a presence on the web to spread the truth of the Word of God. Psalm 68:11 declares: **"The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it."**

TOM ROSS

Raymond F. Bennett
Berachah Baptist Mission
271 Gray Road
Ithaca, NY 14850-8761

Missionary of
Berea
Baptist Church
PO Box 39
Mantachie, MS 38855



Berachah Baptist Mission does not have a website. There are three reasons for this.

A few people have offered to help me set one up but we have never gotten such a project off the ground.

Maintaining a website involves more time and expense than I have the time, expertise or funds to do. If the website is not frequently updated it does not serve its purpose and often defeats its purpose. This missionary has been widowed for 5 years and lives alone. Therefore I am not only responsible for the study, teaching and writing of this ministry but also for all the household and property chores and maintenance.

We do utilize the web to distribute our weekly e-mail devotions and occasional texts or outlines of our attempted "Live Bible Studies". These may be had by contacting r4b33nett@juno.com or by U.S. mail at 271 Gray Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850-8761.

I question the effectiveness of a website to reach out with the gospel because there is so much other information already available on the web. Much of the

information is good but there is also a lot of false doctrine on the web. Websites are generally only utilized by people who are already interested in whichever point of view they want to explore. For instance, I haven't even checked the website of my home church for a long time.

Therefore, for the purposes of Berachah Baptist Mission, I do not feel I could justify the time and expense. Websites are a good source of information for those specifically looking for information, but anyone not knowing the website or otherwise not interested probably would not utilize a website if I had one.

Other larger and better known ministries, such as Berea Baptist Church, would not only be more effective, but if we were to set up a website, some of those websites could attach a link for us.

There are certain scriptural limits on the extent to which a ministry like Berachah Baptist Mission should just randomly cast out the seed. Jeremiah 7:16: **"Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee."** Matthew 7:6: **"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."**

RAY BENNETT

Mike DeWitt Sr.
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477

Pastor
Parkway Landmark
Baptist Church
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477



Yes, the Church I pastor does have a website. We have just put one together; it is small but fits our budget. I am no webmaster for sure, it will be plain to see, but that is not the purpose to be flashy or the best, we just want to have content that honors God. A web page this day and time is surely one of the best ways to get God's Word out there and to get exposure of small Churches with not a large membership. Exposure on the web is not the end all of contacting people, personal holiness is. The web reaches those we may not come in contact with on a regular basis.

Our website address is www.parkwaylandmarkbaptistchurch.org

MIKE DEWITT



Simon in the Sifter

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32).

Romans 15:4 declares: **"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."** This is certainly true of the passage before us in Luke. These two verses are replete with useful instructions to God's children. Here we see words of failure and faithfulness, of ruin and recovery, of instruction and intercession, of conflict and conversion. These were all written to promote our spiritual edification and perseverance.

Among the disciples of Christ, Peter occupied a very prominent and distinguished position. Considering his life as a whole, he was a bold, ardent, and devoted follower of Jesus Christ. He went from the business of catching fish in the sea to catching men for Christ. Beyond question, he was one of the most famous apostles of all time. Peter had the honor of opening up the kingdom of God to both Jews and Gentiles. However, he was not a perfect man in the early days of his discipleship. He had a problem with self-confidence, which exposed him to danger, and made him a likely candidate for Satan's sifter.

THE DOUBLE ADDRESS

The first words of our Lord in this text are: **"Simon, Simon."** Similar words are seen elsewhere in the Scriptures. In I Samuel 3:10 the Lord said: **"Samuel, Samuel."** In Matthew 23:37 Jesus Christ cried: **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem."** When the Savior reproved Martha He said: **"Martha, Martha."** When the risen Christ addressed the persecutor of the church He said: **"Saul, Saul"** (Acts 9:4). Evidently in our text the repetition of Simon's name implies solemnity and importance in the statement about to be made. Also it speaks of the deep concern which Christ had for his soul. He did not call him, "Peter, Peter," which means a stone, but by his old name in his unconverted state, **"Simon, Simon."**

But why did our Lord single Peter out from the other apostles? From the context I gather that Simon must have been the most forward in contending for the pre-eminence among his brethren. Therefore Christ especially addresses him instead of the others. In substance, the words of Christ told him that instead of seeking greatness he had better be on guard against Satan who was near by. Peter needed to be concerned with

putting on the whole armor of God in order to be able to quench the fiery darts of the Devil.

A DANGEROUS DEVIL

A dangerous enemy of the children of God is mentioned in this text. Satan is described in the Bible as an adversary, an accuser, a liar, a tempter, and a murderer. He is an old pro in fulfilling these offices. He has been exerting his spiritual power to ruin and destroy human beings since the fall in Eden. In our text he is seen especially as the tempter of the believer. The world is a snare to the believer and the flesh a burden. But there is no enemy so dangerous as that restless, ruthless, experienced enemy, Satan!

Few Christians realize how dangerous the Devil really is. We seem to forget that he is a spirit; therefore, he can appear in our house or in our car without notice. He can be at our side any place and any time. He has the power to confuse our minds, to inflame our passions, to pervert our judgment, and to pollute our conscience. Satan does not carry on an open warfare. He does not meet us face to face. He is an invisible spirit who attacks by ambushes and surprises. Therefore, it behooves us to be on guard.

The Devil never gives up at the job of getting Christians in his sifter. He tries to take away the gospel seed which are sown in the heart of one of God's elect. Failing to accomplish this, he then begins to assail the young convert. Satan will seek to make him doubt his salvation. He will try to allure him back into the world so as to ruin his testimony. The Wicked One exerts his stronger power upon the middle-age Christian who is mentally and physically capable of the greatest service to God. The Evil One harasses even the aged believer to make his last days on earth miserable days. Satan never gives up nor ceases his temptation until the dismissal of the soul to the region of everlasting light.

SATAN'S EVIL DESIRE

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you." These are fearful words indeed. How solemn the thought! Satan is constantly after the disciples of Christ. He wants to get them under his power and in his cruel grasp. The Devil is determined to directly expose them to his fiery darts. He wants to see the best of God's children fall into sin. To accomplish this, he engages in harassing temptations. Every effort is made to make the believer faint and fail under the temptations. The Evil One will not rest until the Christian has lost his testimony.

While there is something awful in the words about Satan desiring to have us, there is also some comfort in these words. **"Desired to have you"** can be rendered

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Effectiveness

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God's Word has the miraculous effect of bringing sinners from darkness into light, and they are called out a people for His name. When God does this, He does it so that no one can receive the glory except Him, and so that those whom He has saved will be His. He makes them trophies of His amazing grace, and He displays them, and He shows what is His magnificent power, love, and mercy in **"bringing many sons unto glory"** (Heb. 2:10). The preaching of the Word of God brings glory to His name, because that is the effect that God has ordained that it should have. We ought not to become distracted from preaching and practicing His Word or allured by the carnal ways of false religion that is in the world. God is calling out a people for His name, and He will do so in the way that pleases Him and in the time that pleases Him; and if **"it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"** (I Cor. 1:21), then they won't be saved any other way. That is His decree.



Simon in the

(Continued from page 271) ♦

"hath obtained you." The thought is that Satan had insinuated to God that Peter's religion was all chaff and not wheat. Like in the case of Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6), God had removed His protective hedge around Peter and gave Satan permission to sift him. The comfort seen in these words is that Satan cannot touch us without God's permission. The only reason that God grants him the right to sift us is that He may strengthen our faith and manifest His Divine care over His children.

SATAN'S SIFTER

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." The oriental threshing floor was a hard level portion surrounded by stones. The bundles of wheat were thrown onto it. Two oxen were yoked together to a drag. The drag was then driven around and around over the pile of grain. This mixture of chaff and grain then had to be winnowed. This was done by tossing it into the air so that the wind could blow away the chaff. When the chaff was gone, then the grain was tossed into a sifter to separate from it the stones and lumps of soil which clung to the roots when the grain was reaped. This was rough treatment for the grains of wheat.

This was the rough treatment that Satan wanted to give Peter on the threshing floor of the world. The Devil wanted to place trials and temptations before Peter. By these he would shake

the apostle, toss him to and fro, just like wheat is separated from the chaff. Satan would draw Peter into a state of the fear of man so that he would disown his Savior. Peter would soon learn that Satan has a very fine sieve. It is so fine that it always brings out the worst that is in a person.

In the case of Peter Satan overplayed his hand. He thought his sifting, his temptations, and his trials, would discourage and defeat the big fisherman. But not so. The temptation resulted in bringing out the chaff in Peter's life, the weakness of his faith, but it also made him a stronger Christian. The hotter the fire, the purer the gold is refined. This is always the case. Thinking to persecute the church, Satan has unwittingly propagated the church throughout all the centuries. Satan's desire to sift the children of God is over-ruled by Divine providence and by Christ's intercessory prayer.

THE PRAYER OF CHRIST

"But I have prayed for thee." Thank God that there is an Intercessor for tempted believers! Note the discrimination of the intercession. **"Satan has desired to have you"**---that is plural; **"I have prayed for thee"**---that is singular. The man that was in the greatest danger was the nearest to the heart of Christ and the chief object of His intercession. It has ever been so. Christ's mightiest petitions are for the weakest and neediest believers. It is wonderful to know that our friends pray for us, but it is wonderful beyond words to know that the Friend of sinners is praying for us when we need it the most.

Here is a notable example of Christ's intercessory work on earth. The Redeemer allowed Satan to put Peter in the sifter, but He prayed for him all through the painful process of sifting. While Peter boasted of his loyalty, Christ was praying for him. While Simon followed afar off, Jesus was praying. While the apostle was warming his hands at the Devil's fire outside the judgment hall, the Lord was praying. Even when the big fisherman began to curse and deny that he ever knew the Lord, the Savior was praying. While Peter wept in deep repentance over his sin of denial, Jesus Christ was praying. Christ truly loves the very weakest of His saints!

Many of the prayers of Christ during His humiliation were for the disciples. When we read that He went out and prayed all night it was doubtless for His weak and erring disciples. But the same Christ Who prayed for His disciples on earth (John 17) is praying for them today at the right hand of God. Speaking of Christ, Paul said: **"Who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"** (Rom. 8:34). Again he penned these words: **"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for**

them" (Heb. 7:25). Our great Redeemer now appears in the presence of God for His elect (Heb. 9:24). The apostle John said: **"And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"** (I John 2:1).

We can be sure that when a test or trial comes upon us, that we have an Advocate and an Intercessor before the throne in Heaven. The darker the sky and the stormier the gale, the stronger the prayer of Christ for weak and needy believers! Oh, brethren, let us remain unmovable in the work of the Lord and endure to the end, knowing Christ is praying for us in the regions above. This wonderful knowledge should take the sting out of sorrow, the danger out of conflict, the evil out of temptations. O for a faith that rises above carnal things to heavenly things, that sees Jesus at the right hand of God, pleading His sacrifice for all who trust Him.

Peter certainly did need someone to pray for him. Don't we all need the prayer of Christ? Into Satan's sifter we often get to the place where we seem to be beating our heads against a stone floor. The heavens seem as brass. Our prayers do not seem to ascend to the throne of grace. Our minds grow blank with discouragement and despair. It is in such a moment we need to realize that Christ is praying for us in Heaven.

"We know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom. 8:26). Our prayers are earth bound; His are Heaven free. We pray for things of time; He prays for those of eternity. We ask for pleasures which would result in pain. He prays for the pain to result in joy.

Dear brother and sister don't fight back at the sifting. Relax under the sifter, for it is for your spiritual good and God's glory. The sifting is permitted to purge you from the evil in your life. Little grains of wheat, tossed about and bruised, lie close to the bottom while the wind is blowing away the chaff and dirt. Always remember you are God's wheat. Satan's sifting cannot change this.

AN UNEFAILING FAITH

Jesus told Peter: **"I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."** Roman Catholic commentators use this statement of Christ to try to prove that the Roman Catholic Church was never to depart from the faith. They say that the church of which Saint Peter was the head has never fallen, while other churches went into ruin. But there is not the slightest proof in the Bible that Peter was the founder or head of the Roman Church. The words before us apply only to Peter as an individual and have no reference to the church. Peter's faith was so near a complete eclipse that only the prayer of Christ could prevent this.

The faith of the apostle Peter became so weak that it ceased to sustain him under temptation. He let down the shield of faith and was pierced by Satan's

fiery dart. But Peter did not entirely and fully apostatize. He did not yield himself up to Satan completely and go over to the enemy's cause. As suddenly as he sinned, equally sudden was his repentance when Christ looked upon him. Deep was his guilt, but deeper was his sorrow. Though he was cast down he was not destroyed. Proverbs 24:16 declares: **"For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again, but the wicked shall fall into mischief."**

Some one will ask, "But did not the prayer of Christ for Peter end in failure? Did not Peter deny his Lord?" I answer, no. Jesus said to the Father in John 11:42: **"And I knew that thou hearest me always."** Then how can you explain Peter's denial? The Greek word translated "fail" is the root of our English word "eclipse." An eclipse is not extinction, partial failure is not entire failure, and the momentary untruthfulness to one's deepest conviction is not the annihilation of these convictions. Christ's prayer was not in vain, for while Peter's faith became weak it did not die. Peter fell into the mud, but he did not continue to stay in the mud.

Here we learn that in the case of a true believer there may be a brief eclipse of faith. One who truly desires to follow Christ and believes in Him with all his heart may be overtaken in a fault (Gal. 6:1). His conduct may for a moment become hypocritical and inconsistent with his profession of faith. But, thank God, there is a vast difference between conduct which is inconsistent with being a Christian and conduct which is incompatible with being a Christian!

PETER'S CONVERSION

Jesus said: **"Whenthouart converted."** Was Peter lost? This expression has been differently understood. Some translate it so the sense is: "When thou hast converted thy brethren, strengthen them." This solves no problems but makes some new ones. I am very much content with the translation as it is in our English version. The conversion here is recovery from a fall, and it does not refer to the first conversion to God when an unbeliever becomes a believer. Peter's conversion was not from a state of sin, but from an act of sin into which he fell.

Peter did not fall from grace. He was a disobedient son. He did disgrace his sonship, but he did not lose his relationship with the Father. He did for a time lose his fellowship with God. For this act of sin Peter was severely chastened; he was put into Satan's sifter. When the ordeal was past he went out and wept bitterly. He went through some bitter hours between the time he denied the Lord and the resurrection morning. How cheering must have been the words of Mary who told Peter the angel of God had said to her at the tomb: **"But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter."** (Mark 16:7). **"And Peter"** was the

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Simon in the

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recall of a loving Christ. Peter's old heart must have burst with excitement and his sorrow must have turned into joy.

Peter may have exclaimed: "Do you mean that my Lord desires to see me, Mary? Even after I denied Him three times?" Mary may have replied: "Yes, He does. He mentioned you in particular because He wants you to know that He still loves you." That cured Peter's self-confidence and ended his open denial of Christ. He is out of the sifter now. He has passed the test because Christ prayed for him. His faith is now revitalized. Never more would he be guilty of such cowardly weakness. He was a changed person, a humble apostle, a wiser man, and a stronger Christian. He never forgot his fall into Satan's sifter. It is said of him that whenever, in after life, he heard a cock crow he burst into tears.

THE STRENGTHENED APOSTLE

Jesus said: "**When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.**" Strengthening is the purpose of sifting. Peter's self-confidence was a stumbling stone to his brethren rather than a stepping stone. His warming his hands at the Devil's fire chilled the souls of his brethren. But Peter's sifting resulted in making him a pillar in the church. He needed something to make him stand. He needed to be put in Satan's sifter. By realizing his weakness he became strong in the Lord and the power of His might.

The rest of Peter's life was spent in strengthening his brethren. He confirmed his brethren, warned them, and encouraged them. He used his experience to warn them of their danger and to sustain them in their temptations. The big fisherman was a living trophy of the power of God's grace to restore the fallen. Because of his sad experience he was well qualified to admonish others of the danger of pride and to teach the beauty of humility. He had compassion for his fellow-erring Christians, for he knew the misery of a fallen state and the distress of sinning against Christ.

Even in his death Peter manifested his deep abhorrence of this act of dreadful guilt in denying his Lord. It is said he requested to be crucified with his head downward, being unworthy to suffer in the same manner as did his Lord. What an illustration of Peter's profound humility and ripened piety!

Peter is still strengthening his brethren by the two inspired epistles which bear his name. These were written by him after a long life of usefulness. They are full of yearning tenderness, evangelical doctrine, practical admonition, and burning love for Christ. Every line abounds with grace and mercy. Hear him as he writes: "**That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold**

that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 1:7).

Listen to more strengthening words in I Peter 5:5: "**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.**" Still again: "**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith.**..." (I Peter 5:8-9).

The last words he ever wrote in II Peter are strengthening words: "**Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**" (II Peter 3:17-18).

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

1. Satan desires to sift God's children as wheat, but he cannot do so without God's permission.

2. Faith is the root of the whole Christian character, and it is faith that Satan labors to overthrow. He seeks to create unbelief.

3. Christ prays for the believer's perseverance in the faith.

4. God allows a believer to fall into sin that he may discover how weak he is and that he may be more dependent upon Christ.

5. Those overtaken in a fault should use their experience to warn and preserve others from falling into sin.

6. The best of the Lord's sheep are frail and weak. Only the intercession of Christ can keep their faith alive and active.

7. Those who fall into sin need to be converted from the error of their way. Tears, confession, and a change of conduct are in order.

8. Let us lift up the fallen and be compassionate toward the lame sheep of the fold. Help a brother, don't hurt him.

9. Only God's grace and the prayer of Christ can keep us from apostasy (Ps. 37:23-24).

10. Christian brothers and sisters, endure your pain, suffer your failures, undergo your hardship. God knows what He is doing. He is making you the Christian He wants you to become. Let every hard knock ring the bell of praise in your heart.

The poet has said:

*"He'll never forsake you, whatever you do,
Were you down in the gutter, He'd kneel beside you;
Were you covered with shame, He would stand by your side,
And the hurt in His heart for your sake He would hide.
He will stick to you, friend, though you lose every test.*

*All others may quit you and mock at your fall,
But your Jesus, undaunted, will come at your call.
He will follow you down to the deep depths of sin,
And love you and nurse you thru thick and thru thin;
And tho He may suffer thru what you have done,
He will never forget or desert you, my Son.*

*So long as He lives you are sure of a friend,
On Whom at all times you may safely depend.
You may wound Him by sinning, and hurt Him by shame,
Should you fail to be true, but He'll love you the same;
So remember, my friend, as you stand in life's test,
That you owe to your Jesus your finest and best."*

THE

BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

SHOE GIVEAWAY AT S.C. SCHOOLS CALLED UNCONSTITUTIONAL

(EP News)--Americans United for Separation of Church and State is threatening two South Carolina school districts with legal action if they continue to allow a church-sponsored shoe giveaway. Laces 4 Love began in 2001 after founding members noticed

schoolchildren wearing shoes that didn't fit or were inappropriate for cold weather. The group has distributed more than 12,000 pairs of free shoes to students throughout Edgefield and Aiken counties. The Alliance Defense Fund is offering free legal defense to the school districts if Americans United goes through with its threats.

FLA. SCHOOL BOARD VOTES TO TEACH SEX ED TO FOURTH-GRADERS

(EP News)--The St. Lucie, Fla., school board voted 4-1 in December to teach a graphic condom-education curriculum to fourth-graders. The explicit curriculum — Get Real about AIDS — includes teaching children how HIV is contracted. St. Lucie Pastor Bryan Longworth, who helped to gather more than 3,750 signatures in opposition to the curriculum, said he was shocked by the decision. "I was appalled to learn that 9- and 10-year-olds will be exposed to sexual content," he said at the board meeting. "The school board will rob children of their childhood."

STUDENT SUES OVER TEACHER'S OFFENSIVE COMMENTS ON CHRISTIANITY

(EP News)--A San Juan Capistrano, Calif., high school student and his parents filed a federal lawsuit this week, alleging his history teacher violated his constitutional rights by making "highly inappropriate" and offensive statements in class regarding Christianity, the Los Angeles Times reported. James Corbett, who teaches Advanced Placement European history at Capistrano Valley High School, consistently "demonstrates a sense of hostility toward religion," according to the lawsuit. The suit, which asks that Corbett be removed from the classroom, contends he told students during class that "when you put on your Jesus glasses, you can't see the truth." The suit also alleges he said religion is not "connected with morality," compared Christians to "Muslim fundamentalists," and suggested churchgoers are more likely to commit rape and murder.

U.S. HOUSE PASSES BILL THAT UPHOLDS PRO-LIFE POLICIES

(EP News)--The U.S. House voted, 253-154, on Dec. 17 in favor of a \$515.7 billion spending bill that preserves key pro-life provisions. The Senate was expected to follow suit this week. Democrats left intact the Mexico City Policy, which prohibits tax dollars from going to groups that fund or promote abortion overseas. Also preserved in the spending bill were the Hyde Amendment, which prevents federal funding of most domestic abortions, and the Kemp-Kasten Amendment, which allows the president to end funding for organizations that support coercive abortion programs. The spending bill holds the line on funding for Community Based Abstinence Education.

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA SUED AFTER CHRISTIAN GROUP IS SILENCED

(EP News)--The Alliance Defense Fund has sued the University of Montana School of Law for failing to recognize a Christian Legal Society (CLS) student chapter because of its beliefs. The law school's student governing body has excluded CLS from receiving student activities funds, which are available to other student organizations. "The First Amendment shouldn't be applied differently based on a person's beliefs," said

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M. Casey Mattox, litigation counsel for CLS's Center for Law & Religious Freedom. "Of all places, a law school should understand that the Constitution forbids penalizing a student group because of its religious views. A student group cannot be forced to compromise its beliefs in order to maintain a presence on campus."

YOUNGER GENERATION MORE LIKELY TO FIND PORN ACCEPTABLE

(EP News)--College students — male and female — tend to find pornography acceptable. That's according to a study by Brigham Young University, to be published in the January issue of the Journal of Adolescent Research. The study, which included more than 800 students at six colleges, found 86 percent of men had viewed porn in the last year. Surprisingly, nearly half of the women said that was OK by them. Professor Jason Carroll, who authored the study, said the numbers speak volumes. "This might be an indication of the way porn is portrayed in the popular media," he said, "the way that they see it in the sitcoms, the shows, the way it's talked about, where it's so normative and mainstream." The study also found 37 percent of the fathers surveyed and 20 percent of the mothers agreed with their kids' acceptance of porn.

STUDENT COMPLAINS AFTER SHE IS KEPT OUT OF MEN'S LOCKER ROOM

(EP News)--A student is accusing Massachusetts' Northern Essex Community College of discrimination for not allowing her to use the men's locker room. Elizabeth Santiago, who is biologically female but calls herself "Ethan" and presents herself as a male, said she would feel uncomfortable using the women's locker room. The college said Elizabeth could be in danger of being sexually assaulted in the men's locker room. The student filed a complaint against the school, the "Eagle-Tribune" of North Andover, Mass., reported. Officials at Southern Utah University are facing a similar situation. Kourt Osborn, who was born a female but self-identifies as a male, is accusing the school of sexual discrimination for not allowing her to live in a male dormitory.

STUDY: MARRIAGE IS GOOD FOR THE PLANET

(EP News)—A new study out of Michigan State University shows that the growing divorce rate is hurting more than just the families and children — it's also bad for the Earth. By examining data from 12 countries, Jiangua "Jack" Liu, senior author of the study, and his associate Eunice Yu, found that married households are more efficient with water, energy and land use. On the other hand, divorced couples require an extra 38 million rooms and spend 46 percent more per capita on electricity and 56 percent more on water than married couples. Liu also found that if

divorced households had combined to have the same average household size as married households, there could have been a million fewer households using energy and water.

ATHEIST IN COURT TO FIGHT REFERENCES TO GOD

(EP News)--Atheist Michael Newdow is back in federal court, this time challenging the mention of God in the U.S. national motto and the Pledge of Allegiance. His demands will be decided by a court notorious for its liberal decisions — the 9th Circuit. A decision on the two cases could take several months. The reference to God on U.S. currency was authorized by Congress in the mid-1800s. But Newdow claims in court documents that "In God We Trust" violates the religion of his atheist church and makes it difficult for him to tithe. Doug Napier with the Alliance Defense Fund said references to "God" are constitutional. "America has a long tradition of recognizing beliefs and faiths, and our Founding Fathers attributed the nation's success in God," he said. "One atheist shouldn't spoil it for the rest of us."

FLORIDA MARRIAGE AMENDMENT HEADED TO 2008 BALLOT

(EP News)--More than 610,000 Floridians have signed a petition to put the Marriage Protection Amendment on the November 2008 ballot. "The people of Florida have spoken," said John Stemberger, president of the Florida Family Policy Council and chairman of the Florida4Marriage.org Campaign. "And they will speak again in November of 2008. Their message will be timeless and clear — marriage is the union of one man and one woman." Stemberger said more than 35 percent of the signatures came from Democrats. His coalition is gearing up for an intense campaign to get the 60 percent approval needed at the polls, and he is encouraging supporters to keep collecting signatures. "Protecting marriage is the best investment we can make in the lives of children and the future of Florida," said Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel, who drafted the language of the marriage amendment.

HEISMAN TROPHY WINNER WAS ALMOST ABORTED

(EP News)--If doctors had had their way, Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow wouldn't be here today. Pam Tebow, mother of the Florida Gators quarterback, was given drugs to counter amoebic dysentery she had contracted as a missionary in the Philippines. "They were telling her that these drugs were going to cause irreversible damage, that he was going to have devastating disabilities," said J.T. Finn, director of Pro Life America. "Because of her strong Christian faith, she chose life" rather than an abortion. Former New York Giant Chris Godfrey said it makes you wonder about the millions of Tim Tebows who aren't here today. "How many good things did not come into our world," he said, "because of our unwillingness to say 'Yes' and to trust in God?"

WOMAN SAYS SHE WAS KICKED

OFF BUS FOR READING BIBLE

(EP News)--A Fort Worth, Texas, mother of two said she was kicked off of a city bus for reading the Gospel of Matthew to her children on the way to church. Fort Worth Transportation Authority spokeswoman Joan Hunter told KRLD radio that Christine Lutz was being disruptive and was asked to get off the bus. Lutz said that's not what happened. "She (the bus driver) told me to stop reading the Bible, and that's what I refused," Lutz said. "If she had asked me to quiet down, that would have been a total different story." Lutz called the transportation office to settle the issue. "The dispatcher actually told me that I am not allowed to read the Bible on the bus," she said. "And I said, 'Well I guess you forgot what country you live in.'" Kelly Shackelford, chief counsel of the Liberty Legal Institute, said the government generally cannot stop the reading of the Bible. He said, "In public, on a government sidewalk, in a park, in a street, in a building, on a bus, this type of discrimination is clearly unconstitutional."

4-H CLUB TOLD TO LEAVE GOD OUT OF THE EQUATION

(EP News)--Thanks to a complaint from a single atheist parent, a 4-H club in Virginia has been told it cannot meet in a church, cannot pray and cannot read the Bible. And new guidelines from 4-H national headquarters restrict expressions of Christianity at every 4-H chapter in the country. The Pathfinders 4-H Club in Montgomery County, Va., has emphasized doing community service "for the glory of God" for 17 years. 4-H leader Karen Dawkins said, "The kids wrote the constitution, the kids are the ones that have the chaplain and they read from the Bible and pray before we start our club meetings," she said. "And they (National 4-H) told us we can't do that because it's too specific." National 4-H, which comes under the Department of Agriculture, is claiming "separation of church and state." President Bush has been asked to intervene. "I would like National 4-H to change the policy," Dawkins said, "and say that each club is autonomous and can decide what their program area is and if there is a religious background."

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE CONSIDERS FETAL-PAIN LEGISLATION

(EP News)--The California Legislature is expected to hold a hearing next week on a measure that would address the pain preborn babies experience during an abortion, LifeNews.com reported. Supporters hope the bill will educate the public on the destruction of human life and help to convince abortion-minded women to choose life. AB 1009 requires abortion practitioners to provide women with information about fetal pain and the ability to choose anesthesia for the preborn child. Penny Harrington, legislative director for Concerned Women for America of California, said the measure needs to pass out of committee and through the Assembly floor by the end of January. "Abortion supporters will be out in force opposing AB 1009," she said, "as they continually seek to deny the personhood of the unborn."

MINISTERS LOSE JOB-TAX EXEMPTION IN KENTUCKY COUNTY

(EP News)--Ministers in a Kentucky county will no longer be granted an occupational tax exemption after a local atheist sued to challenge the practice. Edwin Kagin, national legal director of American Atheists Inc., filed his suit in 2005 to challenge Boone County's exemption of ministers from the tax despite a state law prohibiting such exemptions. Kagin, an atheist who sued the county jointly with American Atheists Inc., said the exemption was unconstitutional.

'IN GOD WE TRUST' TO RESUME PROMINENT PLACE ON \$1 COIN

(EP News)--"In God We Trust" will return to the front of the \$1 coin, thanks to pressure from the public. According to the U.S. Mint, the motto was moved to the edge of the coin to draw attention to the inscription — and it did. Some coinage made it through without being stamped with the motto. And experts say it could rub off over time. "It was a bad idea, followed by bad employment of that idea, and now finally they are correcting that mistake," said Brian Rooney, spokesman for the Thomas More Law Center. "That's good news." Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., sponsored legislation to move "In God We Trust" back to its proper home. It's waiting for President Bush's signature. "While it may not seem like much of a victory, I think it's significant," he said.

OREGON'S DOMESTIC- PARTNERSHIP LAW PLACED ON HOLD

(EP News)--A federal judge has placed on hold an Oregon domestic-partnership law that was set to take effect Jan. 1, pending a February hearing. The law would give some spousal rights to same-sex couples. After the Legislature approved the domestic-partnership law this year, supporters of traditional marriage began collecting signatures to suspend the law and place it on the November ballot. The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) filed a lawsuit on behalf of several Oregonians after the Secretary of State and clerks' offices in 12 counties invalidated their petition signatures.

ARIZONA FAMILY GROUPS FIGHT DOMESTIC-PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS

(EP News)—The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) and The Center for Arizona Policy have sent letters to the Arizona Department of Administration recommending the state reject Gov. Janet Napolitano's attempt to require domestic-partnership benefits for state employees. The issue will be decided by a six-member board appointed by Napolitano. The letters argue that the changes usurp the Legislature, undermine state policy in favor of marriage, ignore the impact on the budget and exceed the department's authority. "The government should promote and encourage strong families," ADF's Brian Raum said. "The evidence clearly demonstrates that creating 'domestic partnership' arrangements does not do that."

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HIGH COURT WON'T HEAR MICH. PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTION CASE

(EP News)--The U.S. Supreme Court has refused to hear a case that could have revived Michigan's partial-birth abortion ban, forcing the state to craft a new law. Michigan's Legal Birth Definition Act originally was struck down by the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals, which said it was too broad. Brad Snavelly, executive director of the Michigan Family Forum, said the decision does not kill pro-life efforts. "We have a strong pro-life majority in the Michigan Legislature and there's a lot of interest in moving ahead and, once and for all, outlawing something so terrible as partial-birth abortion," he said. Moving ahead means passing legislation modeled after the federal partial-birth abortion ban, which the Supreme Court upheld last year. "We do have a version in the House and Senate ready to go," said Ed Rivet, legislative director for Right to Life of Michigan. "I believe the chairman in the Senate committee is favorable to moving this bill in the immediate future."

FEDERAL JUDGE UPHOLDS TEXAS' MOMENT-OF-SILENCE LAW

(EP News)--Texas students will be allowed to pray at the beginning of the school day, thanks to a federal judge who ruled in favor of the state's moment-of-silence law. Atheists had argued that silent, private and voluntary prayer in school violates the U.S. Constitution. Texas Solicitor General Ted Cruz said prayer in school is voluntary — and constitutional. "It is perfectly consistent with the U.S. Constitution to protect prayer as a basic religious liberty," he said. The decision is encouraging to Andy Norman, who is defending a similar law in Illinois. "They're trying to get it declared unconstitutional," he said. "We've had a couple of successes in Virginia and Georgia, with statutes that are almost identical to Illinois' law." Kelly Shackelford, chief counsel of the Liberty Legal Institute in Texas, said atheists likely will continue to bang their heads against the judicial wall. "The idea that somebody is so intolerant that they cannot stand the idea that some other citizen, some other kid, might use the time to pray silently," he said, "to me that's the kind of intolerance I can't even understand."

INDIANA SENATE DROPS CHRISTIAN PRAYERS AFTER ACLU THREATS

(EP News)--Sen. Patricia L. Miller, R-Indianapolis, opened the state Senate's proceedings Jan. 9 with a nonsectarian prayer, following threats last month of a lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Indiana, The Indianapolis Star reported. The prayer lasted about a minute and did not mention Jesus Christ or any other "deity." The ACLU won a federal court case against the Indiana House on the issue in 2005. An appeals court overturned that decision, and the ACLU has asked the full 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to reconsider the case.

TEN COMMANDMENTS RETURN TO KENTUCKY COURTHOUSE

(EP News)--The Ten Commandments are back on display in a Kentucky courthouse. Last year, the Garrard County courthouse was taken to court and forced to remove its Ten Commandments display, which was part of a historical-documents collection. Now, the fiscal court has voted unanimously to place a different Ten Commandments display in the courthouse intended to educate the public on the history of the Ten Commandments.

Garrard County Judge Executive John Wilson said the new display documents the Commandments from the beginning to the current court battles.

DALLAS MAN CAN SHARE HIS FAITH AT TRANSIT STATION

(EP News)--A man told by police that he can't engage in free speech at a Dallas transit station without purchasing a ticket has been restored his First Amendment rights. Upon receiving a letter from the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) agreed to allow Daniel Bailey to continue his activities without buying a ticket. Bailey has been sharing his faith and handing out Gospel tracts at the station for two years. "Christians should not be treated as second-class citizens simply because they choose to exercise their faith in public," said ADF Senior Legal Counsel Erik Stanley. "We appreciate the quick and courteous response of DART officials in resolving this matter and are pleased that Mr. Bailey will now be able to return to his activities."

NEW JERSEY PASSES HATE-CRIMES BILL

(EP News)--New Jersey lawmakers voted Jan. 7 to give transgendered individuals special rights. If Gov. Jon Corzine signs the legislation, the state would be the 12th to grant such rights. The first section of the bill adds "gender identity or expression" to the existing hate-crimes law, which includes sexual orientation, race and religion. The bill also requires all new police officers to attend a mandatory, two-hour hate-crimes sensitivity training. The legislation also creates a Commission on Bullying in Schools, which has nine months to investigate and make recommendations to the governor. "New Jersey already has anti-bullying laws in place," Quinlan said, "but the bullying commission is set up to be totally sexually oriented."

IOWANS RALLY AT CAPITOL IN SUPPORT OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE

(EP News)--Hundreds of Iowans rallied at the state Capitol Jan. 16 to pray and ask legislators for the chance to vote on a state marriage amendment. Last summer, a Polk County judge struck down Iowa's 1998 Defense of Marriage Act — which defines marriage as between one man and one woman — as unconstitutional. The case is before the Iowa Supreme Court. Marriage advocates want to amend the

state Constitution to protect traditional marriage from judicial tyranny. First, the Legislature needs to pass the measure in two consecutive sessions. "We hope to get the message across that we the people have a chance to vote on something as important as redefining marriage for all 3 million Iowans," said Chuck Hurley, president of the Iowa Family Policy Center.

SURVEY SHOWS MARRIED PEOPLE TEND TO BE HAPPIER

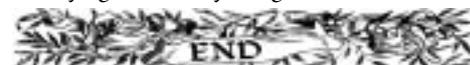
(EP News)--Two-thirds of Americans who are married or attend church regularly report being "very happy" or "very satisfied" with life, according to a Gallup poll. That comes as no surprise to Mike McManus, co-founder of Marriage Savers. "If you watch sitcoms ... it seems that the happiest are the people jumping in bed with someone new every Friday night," he said. "But the data shows just the opposite: People who are faithful to each other and to the laws of God are the happiest."

LAWSUIT TO STOP PRO-HOMOSEXUAL CALIF. LAW MOVES FORWARD

(EP News)--California has adopted a new definition of gender and, according to pro-family advocates, is forcing public schools to present a one-sided message about homosexuality, bisexuality and transgender issues. A referendum campaign to stop the new law — SB 777 — from taking effect fell short of the 434,000 signatures needed to place it on the ballot. But a lawsuit challenging the law is moving forward. In November, the Alliance Defense Fund and Advocates for Faith and Freedom sued California in federal court, on behalf of the California Education Committee, which is a project of the California Family Council. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed SB 777 in October, and it became effective in early January. The new law redefines a student's sex as his or her "gender identity," relying upon a student's feelings about whether the student is male or female rather than his or her biological sex. The lawsuit will come before a judge in February.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS COUPLE WELCOME QUINTUPLETS DESPITE PRESSURE TO ABORT

(EP News)--A Russian couple gave birth to quintuplets in the United Kingdom late last year after being told by Russian doctors they would not receive health care unless they aborted at least two of their preborn babies. Dmitri and Varvara Artamkin fled to Oxford's John Radcliffe Hospital in England, where a team of 18 doctors delivered five girls. The babies, who were born 14 weeks prematurely, each weighed 1 to 2 pounds at birth. They now weigh 3 pounds, 3 ounces. "We prayed to be given children, and God granted our prayer," Dimitri Artamkin told LifeSiteNews.com. "To kill them would be totally against everything we believe."



Is There A Difference

By G. E. Jones
(1889 – 1966)



I was visiting in Kansas. I found, by inquiring, that there was not a single Baptist church in that county where I was visiting. Why had Baptists ceased to exist in that part of the country? The Northern Baptist people had affiliated and compromised with other denominations until they had become completely swallowed up. Baptists must contend for their principles and their peculiarity of separation from other denominations. But, thank God, there will always be some churches that will contend for the truth once for all delivered unto the saints.

CAN DOCTRINES, WHICH ARE OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER, BOTH BE RIGHT?

If one church is as good as another, then doctrines which are opposed to one another, would all have to be right. Can this be true? Does God forgive the sins of some people before baptism, as Baptists and some others teach, and the sins of others in the act of baptism, as the Campbellites and others teach? If God forgives sins before baptism, then it is not an error to teach that they are not forgiven until baptism? If God forgives sins before baptism, the one who goes into the water expecting to receive remission of sins in that act will most certainly not receive remission of sins at all. His faith has been misplaced.

The same principle applies to all other doctrines. There can only be one kind of church that is right. "There is One Faith, One Lord, and One Baptism" (Eph. 4:5). The one faith means one system of doctrine. There can no more be two or more correct systems of doctrines than there can be two or more Lords. There cannot be more than one baptism any more than there can be more than one Lord. Several churches differing in doctrine from one another cannot all be right. If three men counted a flock of sheep, and they counted ninety-eight, ninety-nine, and one hundred, respectively, they could not all be right. They might all be wrong, but they COULD not all be right. Only ONE could be right.

So, a dozen or more churches, teaching doctrines that differ, cannot be all right.

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A Difference

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Only ONE can be RIGHT. If Baptist churches are right, others are wrong. If Baptist churches are wrong, then some other kind is right. Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Campbellites, and various others, cannot be all right. If Baptist churches are TRUE churches, then they are the ONLY TRUE churches. If Baptist churches are NOT true churches, then other churches are inconsistent in receiving Baptist baptism. If Baptist churches are true churches, then they are consistent in rejecting the baptism of others. This much must be conceded by other denominations.

All truth is narrow. Two and two make four and not six. Neither can we compromise the matter and make two and two equal five. If a man proceeded upon this principle in every day matters he would soon find himself in the greatest of confusion. If New York is twelve hundred miles away, and some one says it's only eight hundred miles away, it would be folly to compromise and say it is only a thousand miles away. Suppose I proceed upon that theory and borrowed enough money to take me a thousand miles and back. I would find myself four hundred miles away from home when my money was spent on the return trip. So it is with religious truth. It is narrow, like all other truths. The world likes to speak of those who stand ready to fellowship anything and everything that comes in the name of Christ as being broad. Those who refuse to fellowship, those whom they consider in error, the world terms as narrow. In reply to this I refer you to the words of Christ in Matthew 7:13-14: "**Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.**" Baptists accord to others the right to read and interpret the Bible for themselves, but at the same time we consider it our duty to expose what we believe to be error in others. To be consistent we must refuse to exchange pulpits or hold union meetings with them or accept their baptism.

If others believe themselves to be right and us to be wrong, then, to be consistent, they should expose what they believe to be wrong and refuse to fellowship the same. It is very inconsistent to say that a thing is wrong and then be willing to practice and support the same. If sprinkling is the baptism our Lord commanded, then it is a sin to practice any other. Why then will some practice sprinkling and other forms? The church that does that stamps itself at once as not contending for the truth, and therefore being unscriptural. In substance it says, "We believe in both truth and error and will uphold

both." All who sprinkle will also practice immersion. This eliminates all bodies that sprinkle for baptism and leaves the field open to those who practice immersion only, in our search for a New Testament Church. We do not have to go two hundred years back to find the

Missionary Baptists standing alone for immersion only. Campbellites, Free Wills, Advents, Christadelphians, and Hardshells had not come into existence at that time.



Watching Jesus on the Cross

By B. H. Carroll
(1843 - 1914)

"**Sitting down they watched him there**" (Matt. 27:36).

Jesus is dead! Malice has done its work. At last, "**It is finished.**" Envy, jealousy, and madness have fully glutted their vengeance. The lifeless Galilean hangs mangled and bleeding upon the Roman cross. The mild, loving eye that had wept o'er the sorrows of the bereaved sisters, and looked with mournful, penitential power at erring Peter in the judgment hall, is closed. Those gracious lips, sweet channels of God's great grace, are dumb. That voice that spake a world into being, that spake as never man spake, is strangely hushed. That authoritative tongue that spoke the magic "Talitha Cumi," that said "**Arise**" to the young man of Nain, that at the tomb of Lazarus, dead four days, cried, "**Roll ye away the stone**"---aye, that wooing tongue whose tones but yesterday were burdened with authority and salvation, is silent now, or only heard in the echo of that last, loud, wailing shriek, "**Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.**"

Jesus is dead! That brow that bore the crown of Heaven's majesty and power, is "**marred more than the visage of any man.**" The incarnate Logos is dead. Prophet, priest, and king all gone, at one fell swoop. Rest, Jerusalem, proud city of David, rest in security. The awful voice that in prophetic strains of woe pronounced thy doom, is speechless now. God, proud lineage of Aaron, glut your avarice against the widow and the orphan, widen the hem of your robe, bind your head with phylacteries, parade the "Urim" and "Thummin"; rejoice in rites and ceremonies, for the everlasting order of Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God, has found "**an end of days.**" Unsuperseded, unsubstituted, go make again the Father's house a nest of robbers and a den of thieves. Go, proud, rebellious people, and give your spiritual allegiance to Egypt, Greece, or Rome, for there over that still, dead body is written, "**Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.**" Oh, my soul, what mortal darkness fell on the world in that guilty hour.

*Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When Christ, the mighty Maker died
For man, the creature's sin.*

Thus, might I hide my blushing face,

*While his dear
cross appears;
Dissolve my heart
in thankfulness,
And melt my
eyes to tears.*

And Jesus is dead! "How are the mighty fallen!" But yesterday disease and storm and devil bowed before Him. "Now, none so poor to do Him reverence." The ladder which Jacob saw, whose foot rested upon the earth with summit touching the sky, lies prostrate now. Angels have no passageway from Heaven to earth, nor man a stairway to the stars. Communication between the worlds above and below is severed. The proud Pharisee wags his scornful head, and gathering up the rich folds of his spotless robe, lest he receive contamination from passing sinners, spits out his venom and says, "Save thyself." "**He saved others, himself he cannot save.**"

The infidel Sadducee, gloating over the bloody spectacle, shoots out his mocking lips and sneers, "There is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit." While even from dark perdition, the voice of the impenitent thief cries out in echo, "**If thou be the Son of God, save thyself and us.**" The "ha, ha's" of Hell are jubilant. Mark how the great foe sends his demons back over the four thousand years of time to blot out the beacon lights of those who died in hope, and to howl over the trusting dust of prophet, priest, patriarch, evangelist, and martyr, "There is no resurrection." Go tell Isaiah his burning prophecy is but a vain dream of the night. Tell Ezekiel and Malachi their books are empty scrolls. Go taunt that gory head upon the charger of Herodias, and ask the bloodless lips of the beheaded Baptist, why he pointed out and said, "**Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.**" Who saw the dove-like Spirit in sanctifying power rest on His head at the baptismal waters? Was it not an illusion? Who heard the Father's voice from Heaven, proclaiming, "**This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased**"? Was it not the muttering thunder? And did that voice so speak again at the transfiguration? Surely the eyes of those witnessing disciples were heavy with sleep, and they knew not

what they saw.

The Nazarene is cold and dead. Where now are the disciples of this son of Joseph? "**The sword is awakened, The Shepherd is smitten, and the flock is dispersed.**" Alienated from your brethren, despised by the Gentile, where is your hope? Will you go back to your nets, poor fishermen, and brave the malice of the Jews? Ah, gentle John, thy head has lost its pillow. Go, sons of Zebedee, and in Golgotha pitch your tents of woe. Go, Philip and Andrew, and hide your burning shame in the mournful shade of Gethsemane. Go, proud Peter, and borrow the mantle of Jeremiah, and "**wish your head were waters and your eyes a fountain of tears.**" But oh, virgin mother of our Lord, thy throes are too unspeakable for adequate expression. The prophetic sword of Simeon hath pierced thy heart at last. The shadow of apprehension, when he foretold thy portion was thy first grief. The flight into Egypt quickly followed. Again ached thy heart when the boy of twelve was lost three days. Thou didst weep again when He staggered under the burden of His own cross. And still more bitter tears now as the cross bears Him. Thou shalt weep again as His lifeless body is lifted tenderly down into thy loving arms, and yet again when He is buried out of thy sight. These are thy seven griefs, oh, Mary! Where now is the song of the angels, and the homage of the Magi? Where the glorious messages and announcements of greatness thou wast wont to keep and ponder in thy partial mother's heart? Thy poor words, burdened with thy woes, fall back on thy bursting heart. For thou and all these had trusted that "**this was he who was to deliver Israel.**" High over this scene of woe, so dark that the pitying sun refused to behold, infidelity rears its exultant head, and in mad triumph asks type for its antitype, shadow for its substance, and emblem for its signification.

Under the overwhelming circumstances thus imperfectly portrayed, it is stated that having crucified Him and sitting down, "**They watched him there.**" There on the cross; there, dead, they watched Him. This, then, is our theme: "Watching him there." Now, let us endeavor to isolate classes and individuals, and determine from the testimony what feelings were uppermost in the heart while contemplating the sublime spectacle of a dying and dead Jesus. For it is believed that by so doing a full portraiture of the manner in which the gospel is now, and has been received in all ages, will be clearly shown. And I pray God you may not drive away from yourselves any convictions that become personal.

First, then, with regard to the instigators of this bloody deed, the Pharisee, priest, scribe, and Levite. They gazed upon Him with gratified malice and hate. He had

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Watching Jesus on

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become by life and testimony, peculiarly odious to them. He had unmarked their hypocrisies, laid bare the rottenness of their worship, and held them up to the world as painted sepulchers or ravenous wolves, until they felt that unless His influence was effectually checked, the control they exercised over the people would be destroyed and themselves deprived of their iniquitous living. Hence, with gratified malice and hatred, they gazed on Him, dead; no more to rebuke, expose, or destroy. Extreme selfishness and conceit were their ruling propensities. Look well on this picture. They believed in a Saviour, but a Saviour of their own. Not so the Sadducees, a sect that arose many years after the last prophet, young Malachi, had spoken for God. In the long lapse of years that intervened between the national testimonies of Jehovah, men began to presume on the deprivation of prophets, and say, "There is no resurrection, no hereafter, no judgment, neither angel, nor spirit." Hence we say, that it was with emotions of profound evil the infidel Sadducee contemplated the cross. We might say a fiendish exultation characterized his joy in witnessing the death of the great exponent of God's love and justice. They were more allied to Hell than the Pharisees, from the nature of their faith. I believe there is no instance in the divine record of a Sadducee being saved. This world alone, present gratification, was the acme of their desire. The height of their ambition was to be foremost here, circumscribing within the narrow limits of time the joys and sorrows of existence. Not for ten thousand worlds would they believe in a judgment to come. Therefore they gloated and feasted their eyes on the death of One Who declared that even every idle word, together with the thoughts and intents of the heart, would be scrupulously weighed in the balance of God's unbiased and unswerving justice. Mark the Sadducee.

But there was a class much greater, numerically speaking, that watched our dying Lord. I believe their number retains its proportions of the sum total at this day. They watched Him with idle curiosity, with just the same feelings with which they would look on the scenes of a Roman amphitheatre, or any other unusual exhibition. With just such promptings, perhaps, as those that influenced certain Greeks to say to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus." These feelings were exemplified in the case of Herod, when he wanted to see Jesus perform some miracle. Our Saviour Himself seemed to sound the depth of this sentiment, when in regard to John's baptism, He said, "But what went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But

what went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?" This class of spectators thronged every hill and housetop to witness the death of Him Who made for Himself a great name among men by miracles and other manifestations of power. Do not forget this curious man.

Perhaps the only class that rivaled this last in numerical magnitude, was the one that followed Jesus, listened to Jesus, and watched Jesus, from a sheer force of example. The sons that followed fathers, the daughters that attended mothers, the pupils that went after teachers, and the great number that looked because everybody else looked. Mark the standard of this class, the fashion of the times. Men whiling away the idle hours contemplating the death of the Son of God because their neighbors do.

But I would to God that I could engage every interest of your nature in considering yet another peculiar group, also watching Jesus. Those that regarded Him with supreme indifference. Unmoved, while thousands were swayed by various passions. Unmoved, while rocks were rending, earth was shaking, graves were opening, and Heaven was darkening. Unmoved, while three worlds were battling. Unmoved, while Omnipotence and angels and devils were interested. Carelessly, listlessly gazing up at the dying Christ, while the awful battle of their own eternal interests is being fought in agony. And not only unmoved, but oh, staggering thought! Gambling at the foot of the cross. I have seen a cannoneer astride of his field piece, playing cards for a dollar in the intervals of a battle, calling out his trump even when the captain's foot is in the stirrup to order that section into combat. But oh, to see men crouching together, right under the cross, gambling for the seamless garment of the victim, is passing strange, and wonderfully fearful! Photograph this gambler, life-size, on your heart.

One more class and then we proceed to individuals. Professing Christians, let me kindly warn you beforehand to consider well this class. It is said His disciples watched Him afar off. Away from the danger, in exceeding sorrowfulness of heart, the poor, backsliding follower of God watched the fearful tragedy. One yonder in the judgment hall has thrice denied Him---before woman, before man, and before God, with an oath swearing, "I know not the man." Oh, Peter, don't know Jesus? Who was it that laid His healing hand on your wife's mother when sick with fever? Who was it, poor fisherman, that called you from your net, and made you a fisher of men? In whose presence, at the first interview, did you kneel and say, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man?" Don't know Jesus? Strange freak of memory. But notice the characteristic of this class. They watched Him afar off.

There are some special cases to which

I would now direct your attention. Let us notice next, yonder dark-browed man in his palace---the man who in feverish restlessness walks his floor, as the loud shouts from Calvary are borne to his ear, testifying that the work was done. He too, in his mind, is watching Jesus. He sees before him a pale, sad brow, crowned with thorns, exceedingly meek in sadness. Ah, this man, this Pontius Pilate, against his convictions of the innocence of Jesus, this man awfully responsible for the position he held, for fear of incensing Caesar, for fear of losing the place of procurator, released Barabbas, a vile robber, and delivered up the innocent blood to crucifixion. He watches Jesus and will watch Him with a never-dying remorse. I wish there were no darker pictures to be presented. But you must come and look down yonder precipice at the son of perdition, the despairing suicide. The blackness of Hell and the wrath of God gather over him and hide him from our view, but in the plutonian darkness we hear the echo of his cry: "I have betrayed the innocent blood!" It is too horrible to contemplate. But this we do know, that this man watched Jesus from the space of three years, walked in the environs of grace, talked face to face with salvation, and then sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. And Judas Iscariot is lost, fearfully, totally, everlastingly lost. He was a devil. At last, dear friends, the picture brightens. Yonder, super-intending the execution, stands a stern Roman officer, a man of war, intently watching the passing issues. At last faith bursts with its light upon his darkened soul, as the earth shakes to its center, and now watching Jesus in the light of a new-born conviction, he says: "Truly, this is the Son of God."

We might close these awful scenes just here, but there are yet two strange pictures that may be profitably presented. Two men watching Jesus in the hour and article of death. Two men to whom the world is nothing, for it is fast fading away. Two men leaving all earthly ties, associations, and interests, just entering into "the valley of the shadow of death." If the cruel nails did not hold their pierced hands, they might reach out and almost touch the dying Son of God. Their conditions are indeed peculiar. Oh, those two black hearts, throbbing there in the last agony, side by side with Jesus. The light of the dying Lord falls on them. To one it becomes the "savor of life unto life, to the other the savor of death unto death." They both watch Jesus still, but no longer alike. One prays with his unconquered selfishness still rank within him. Still desiring that he may live again to rob and murder the innocent. He watches in doubt, and in language remarkably similar to that ascribed to the dying Paine, he cries out in reproach. "If thou be the Son of God, save thyself and us." Condemnation

falls like a cloud upon him. The other---thank God the picture closes thus---meekly resigned, with no desire to live again on earth, but in the sweetness of an humble faith, slowly turns his agonized head to the dying Jesus, and in tones of incomparable sweetness that convey a profound recognition of His divinity, whispers: "Lord, remember me, when thou comest to thy kingdom." Never has the last expression of any dying man thrilled my heart to its innermost recesses as this sweet prayer. Never has the glorious gospel exhibited such love and power as in this dear place. I fear to comment on it, lest being carried away, I forget this occasion and digress from my present purpose. While these portraits might be indefinitely enlarged, we close them here, believing that the emotions that animated the hearts of those who looked literally at the dying Jesus, nearly two thousands years ago in Jerusalem, are virtually the same as the feelings that pervade the hearts of the people who watch Jesus at Waco, A. D. 1869; and that every one in the Divine presence today by the right exercise of a godly candor may class himself under some one of these divisions, as the Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed today. All over the land ten thousand pulpits, presses, Bibles, hymns, prayers, lift Him up for the healing of the people. And temples of the Holy Spirit, living epistles, known and read of all men, stand like sign-boards, pointing and saying: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Ecce Homo! Ecce Biblos! How lookest, how redest thou? Is the Pharisee here---the moral man, the "Worldly Wiseman," dwelling in the town of "Carnal Security," whose burden has been removed by "Legality" or "Civility"? Is there a man who deludes himself with the thought that worship of God consists in forms, ceremonies, tithes, and baptisms? Dear friend, let me say to you, "the kingdom of God comes not by observation." "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." Not in the hurricane, not in the fire, not in the earthquake, is the Christian's God, but in the "still small voice." For "though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." And though you have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though you have all faith, so that you could remove mountains, and have not love, you are nothing. And though you bestow all your goods to feed the poor, and though you give your body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth you nothing. Love to God and to your poor dying fellow is this: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself

♦ (Continued on page 278)

Watching Jesus on

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unspotted from the world. The divine prerequisite to this love, is that "you must be born again." You say you believe in a Saviour according to your own carnal promptings. You dictate to God. To you He will say, as He did to the Jews: **"I go my way and ye shall seek me, and shall not find me, and shall die in your sins, and where I go you cannot come."** Oh, how through two thousand years of woe and wandering have they kept this unblest vigil for their Messiah! Unhappy people! As a memorable instance of Divine wrath, without nationality, they exist in every nation, ever consulting the eastern horizon, listening to every **"lo here and lo there,"** and have not found Him, and have died in their sins. And though at the last tribunal they or those like them may say, **"Lord, we are Abraham's children, and have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works,"** yet He will say, **"Depart from me, you that work iniquity; I never knew you."**

Young students of Waco University, do I address a Sadducee? One who, if not openly, yet down in his heart has whispered, "No resurrection, no judgment, no hereafter"? One who lightly says, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die"? One who suppresses even the heathen conviction of immortality, and fails to see the real life beyond the confines of time? Oh, infidel, you must know that the deathless principle of glory or the deathless principle of woe enters into the soul and body at the final reception or rejection of Jesus. You can live again, you will live again, you must live again, and realize then that the boundless issues of eternity were compressed in this little hour of opportunity, prayer, privilege, and preparation. May God help you to pray and ponder.

But the curious man; "the evil and adulterous generation that seek a sign" and demand a miracle; the Simon Magus, yet "in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," who stands by and curiously watches, during a revival, the gift of the Holy Ghost; the man that contemplates the death agonies of Calvary with the same feeling that would attend him in looking at a modern circus or listening to the silly jests of a painted clown; how fearful to think that this "Didymus Dumps" gazes his fill and goes away from sermon after sermon as much unwashed, unabsolved, unsaved, unprepared to meet his God, as if he had never lived within the sound of a "church-going bell."

But what shall I say of that mighty throng that haunt the house of God as a "Broadway" of fashion? That "do as Rome does," "that follow a multitude to do evil," that are habitually forced to the

house of prayer by the sheer press of the crowd? What apostolic suasion did not do has been accomplished by one potent command from Mrs. Grundy. In other words the devil, finding he could not impede the gospel by using the rack and stake as a bar to church-going, has now changed his tactics and seeks to effect the same end by sending everybody to church. But even this character is preferable to the infidel; the man past feeling; the iceberg in a world of fire. Oh, how painful to walk right up to a dear friend, perhaps some loved one, and see his soul locked and barred and sealed. The man who is unconsciously miserable and poor and blind and naked, even sleeping, yea more, dead in trespasses and sins. In whose heart is Hell's Gibraltar, where "the strong man armed keepeth his good at peace." This is not Nero fiddling while Rome is burning, but Sardanapalus lighting his own funeral pyre. Go, young student, just look at him and beware. He sleeps amid the thunderings of Sinai; he is unawakened by the power of the gospel; truth flashes before his eyes, prayers burn all around him, tears fall all over him, but unmoved he wades through tears and blood, prayer and admonition, light and knowledge, and sitting down upon the verge of the fountain filled with blood, drawn from the Immanuel's veins, hears the dying shriek: **"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"** Aye, there, under the cross gambles away life, liberty, privilege, opportunity, prayer, mercy, and time; and wins his game in Hell. O, young man, young woman, God's Spirit does not always strive with the impenitent.

But we have not forgotten the backsliding Christian, who is even now watching Jesus **"afar off."** Is it incompatible with truth to assert that the erring Christian is the most miserable man in the world? One is here weeping like Mary at the empty tomb, and saying, **"They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him."**

Another, like the disciples coming up from Emmaus, saying, **"We had trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel."** Still others, like Bunyan's pilgrims, are housed and bound and beaten in old Giant Despair's Doubting Castle, forgetting that they hold the key of promise, while yonder is one crying out with the poet, "Oh, for a closer walk with God," and "Where is the blessedness I knew, when first I saw the Lord?" Some feel that they have sinned against the Holy Ghost, and tell you that Christ, Who was once "formed in their hearts the hope of glory," is now dead--- cold and dead. Oh, backsliding Christian, you feel that you do not desire to return to the weak and beggarly elements of the world, and yet you dare not claim those privileges and promises of the believer that give the sweet assurance of peace with God. Let us say to you that the first spiritual drought that fell upon

Meanings of the 13 Folds of the American Flag

Below is the text that has been recited by honor guards when folding the American flag at the funeral of America's heroes. The National Cemetery Administration has currently banned the recitation of these words. The reason given for the banning was, "creating uniform services throughout the military graveyard system." The writing of these words is attributed to an unknown military chaplain.

1. The first fold of our flag is a symbol of life.
2. The second fold is a symbol of our belief in the eternal life.
3. The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks who gave a portion of life for the defense of our country to attain a peace throughout the world.
4. The fourth fold represents our weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace as well as in times of war for His divine guidance.
5. The fifth fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right; but it is still our country, right or wrong."
6. The sixth fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.
7. The seventh fold is a tribute to our Armed Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that we protect our country and our flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic.
8. The eighth fold is a tribute to the one who entered in to the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor mother, for whom it flies on Mother's Day.
9. The ninth fold is a tribute to womanhood; for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great have been molded.
10. The tenth fold is a tribute to father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since they were first born.
11. The eleventh fold, in the eyes of a Hebrew citizen, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon, and glorifies, in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
12. The twelfth fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit.
13. When the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, "In God we Trust."

the disciples of Jesus was occasioned by neglect of prayer. By the cultivation of prayer they were able to say with Peter: **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by his resurrection from the dead, we who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."** The Pharisee said if He rise from the dead, then "the last error will be worse than the first." But when He whom your iniquities have buried and Who you fear is dead shall be raised again, it will be for your glorious confirmation in the grace of God.

We now recur to the character of Pontius Pilate for application. And even while dwelling on this theme we are impressed with the painful conviction that the name of the counterparts of Pilate is legion. That there are now living, remorseful men, whose very souls are rent in twain by conflicting passions and

principles. The world with its honors, smiles, and frowns, personates Barabbas the robber, and the awful colloquy ensues or has ensued, "Whom will I prefer, Barabbas or Jesus? Which shall I forego, religion or the world, Jerusalem or Babylon?" The pungent gospel thunders its demands and holds up its crowns. **"How long halt ye between two opinions; render unto God the things that are God's, and unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's."** The ambassadors of Jehovah lay down the ultimatum of Heaven, placing life or death before you. The Holy Spirit reveals to the doubting, God's Ebal and Gerizim. But mark this Pontius Pilate, with mind, soul, and conscience convinced of the necessity and propriety of closing in with the overtures of the gospel, yielding to the promptings of fame and position and preferring Barabbas, the acknowledged

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Watching Jesus on

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robber. And with what flattering unction does he solace himself! Why, he simply washes his hands of the matter by saying, "I have tried to do my duty, but circumstances have been too mighty for me." The man's hands were clean, but his heart was black. We may, dear friends, suppose that we have purified our hands and feet and tongue and brain, but God says, **"My son give me thine heart."**

But is there a man with soul so dead, with heart so hard, as to dare enter a church, complying with its visible and tangible requisitions, to walk up to the altar, to ascend to the pulpit, as the legate of the skies, to seek his gain from the silver on the shrine or the beaten gold of the "Mercy Seat"? Surely Jesus said, "Go, preach my gospel." Surely the Spirit burns on the heart, "Woe is me if I preach it not." The man who deliberately assumes this impression, and willfully prostitutes the name of God to the panderings of his own vile lusts, is a son of perdition, whose home is Aceldema; but we rejoice that while the good seed does fall oftentimes upon the shallow soil and stony ground, at intervals the Spirit of God, the great iconoclast, like a fire and a hammer, does break in pieces the stubborn heart, does send the shaft home to its lodgment, piercing asunder the joints of the harness, and divining the intents of the heart, makes the Word of God accomplish that whereunto it was sent. We rejoice that it pleases our Heavenly Father for some of the mighty multitude who watch Jesus on the cross to **"be made willing in the day of his power,"** and borne along by the overpowering tide of conviction, be made to cry out with the Roman centurion, **"Surely this is the Son of God."**

Passing on by way of brief application, we advert to those who, like the dying thieves, defer the day of preparation until the days are gone. These men, while the lighted candle of Christian example and the full blaze of gospel glory burn over their heads, revealing their erring ways and downward road, still whisper to their souls, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to rest," "There is time enough tomorrow," until death comes, and then if blessed with reason, they become impressed with the inefficiency of worldly means, and turn their dying heads to Jesus, to find out by watching Him their hope at last. Let no man cheat himself by saying "one thief was saved." The Word equally impresses us that one was lost. Our last hour is our worst hour for preparation.

Young ladies and gentlemen of Waco University, the endeavor has been made to place this picture, with its lights and shadows, faithfully before you. A subject more perhaps in consonance with your feelings might have been selected,

or according to your judgment more appropriate to the occasion; but when you consider that literary attainments, scholastic honors, and cultivated minds, unsanctified by the love of God, are instrumentalities of evil, you will pardon my pressing home just now upon your hearts and consciences the urgent necessity of **"seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."** Permit me then, as God's ambassador, to take you kindly by the hand and lead you away from present surroundings, away from yourselves, **"unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."** You, too, have been and are still watching Jesus. I ask you today, then, by your hopes of Heaven, by your fears of death, by the water and the blood, under which division just considered would a godly candor place you? Though you may not audibly answer me, forget not to answer to God and your hearts. Let not the impression be first in your minds that you go out from this university elevated, refined, and educated, but be impressed that you go out with responsibilities and requirements fearfully increased; that all that has been conferred on you by expenditure, sacrifice, and instruction is but for evil to you and others unless these acquirements are baptized in the love of God. "You can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." Look on Jesus, then, and you shall live; know Him, **"whom to know aright is life eternal,"** and "your faith shall be as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"; and you shall not be numbered with those whose battle of life is fought and lost, but with that band that shining as the stars forever, look forth as the morning, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners. (*Sermons and Life Sketch*, 1893).



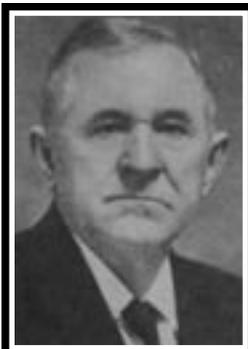
PRAYER

By J. W. Porter
(1863 - 1937)

"Behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:11).

In our great desire for organization and in magnifying methods, there is danger lest we forget the privilege and power of prayer.

All of God's blessings are conditioned on prayer and without faithful fervent prayer there can be no acceptable service. Perhaps, as never before, there is a crying need for a revival of the spirit and practice of prayer. A mighty revival, whether local



or world-wide, is impossible without prayer. If a multitude of our churches would cease trying to "work up" a revival and earnestly strive to pray one down, they would meet with infinitely more of success. The truth is, many professed Christians have lost faith in prayer, and hence in a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God.

Probably no more pertinent question could be propounded than--What is prayer? It is not, as some seem to surmise, an address to the people in the presence of the Lord. All too often we "say our prayers" instead of praying. Paul had been "saying his prayers" for many years, but the first time he really prayed God looked down from His throne on high and said, **"Behold, he prayeth."** Would God He might say the same thing of us, at this moment. Some of us are sadly conscious of the fact that many of our so-called prayers have been but perfunctory performances. There have been many definitions of prayer. One of the simplest and best perhaps is that it is "talking with God." Mr. Spurgeon has said that it is pulling the bell-rope and hearing the bell ring by the throne of God. Martin Luther, with his martial spirit, said that prayer was bombarding the heavens.

♦ (Continued on page 280)

BЕРЕА BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 12-1-2007 to 12-31-2007

Beginning Balance.....	\$12,675.91
RECEIPTS:	
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY.....	100.00
Berea M. B. C., West Point, TN.....	50.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY.....	100.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS.....	225.00
Calvary Ind. B. C., Everson, WA.....	100.00
.....	575.00
TOTAL.....	13,250.91
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time.....	530.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES.....	530.00
.....	\$12,720.91
Interest Oct.....	4.25
2 checks added back in which didn't clear account.....	320.00
.....	13,045.16
Less Corbin, KY des.....	-1,811.52
ENDING BALANCE.....	\$11,233.64

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance.....	\$1,771.52
RECEIPTS:	
.....	1,771.52
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT.....	280.00
.....	1,491.52
(2 checks to WCTT that didn't clear).....	+320.00
ENDING BALANCE.....	\$1,811.52

YEARLY REPORT 2007

Beginning Balance.....	\$8,754.46
RECEIPTS:	
.....	9,842.00
Interest earned.....	+33.92
TOTAL RECEIPTS.....	18,630.38
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time.....	4850.00
Tapes.....	123.87
Postage.....	411.35
Tape Production.....	520.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES.....	12,725.16
(2 checks that never cleared).....	+320.00
ENDING BALANCE.....	13,045.16

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance.....	\$691.52
RECEIPTS:	
.....	3,000.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS.....	3,691.52
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT.....	2,200.00
.....	1,491.52
(2 checks that never cleared).....	+320.00
ENDING BALANCE.....	1,811.52

BЕРЕА BAPTIST BANNER

Financial Report

12-1-2007 to 12-31-2007

Beginning Balance.....	\$7,659.17
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS.....	200.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL.....	60.00
Berea M. B. C., West Point, TN.....	150.00
Bethel M. B. C., Pasadena, TX.....	100.00
Bible Believers B. C., Naples, ID.....	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV.....	300.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY.....	150.00
Buffalo Valley B. C., Clay, WV.....	100.00
Cedar Grove B. C., Millport, AL.....	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL.....	25.00
Faith M. B. C., Lynn, AR.....	25.00
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME.....	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY.....	100.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC.....	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL.....	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK.....	35.00
Joseph Jurzec, Richmond, IL.....	25.00
L. H. Farrell, Des Allemands, LA.....	250.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM.....	100.00
Morris St. B. C., Hobbs, NM.....	500.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH.....	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN.....	50.00
Ocoonita M. B. C., Keokee, VA.....	40.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL.....	100.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS.....	25.00
South Park M.B.C., Seattle, WA.....	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Columbus, MS.....	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL.....	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Wake Forest, NC.....	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA.....	25.00
Walnut Creek B. C., Grove City, OH.....	50.00
Subscriptions.....	72.51
Anon.....	255.00
Dividing Checks.....	166.45
Sub Total.....	\$4,003.96
TOTAL.....	\$11,663.13
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing.....	597.51
Postage.....	859.23
Supplies.....	97.00
Wages.....	2,000.00
FICA.....	153.01
Dividing Checks.....	156.45
PO Box rent.....	70.00
Total Expenditures.....	3,933.20
.....	7,729.93
(MS state tax rounded to next dollar).....	-50
ENDING BALANCE.....	\$7,729.43

YEARLY REPORT 2007

Beginning Balance.....	\$5,841.84
RECEIPTS:	
.....	50,945.86
TOTAL RECEIPTS.....	56,787.70
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing.....	7,244.82
Postage.....	11,141.94
Supplies.....	2,004.86
Wages (1 full time, 3 part time).....	24,600.00
FICA.....	1,881.78
Dividing checks.....	2,051.30
PO Box rent.....	70.00
Order of checks.....	63.07
3rd Quarter ST tax (rounded).....	50
TOTAL EXPENDITURES.....	49,058.27
ENDING BALANCE.....	7,729.43

Prayer

(Continued from page 279) ♦

Another saint has described it as "begging and thanking." This definition would probably be more complete had he said it was praising, thanking and begging. A poet claims that prayer is---

*"The soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or expressed."*

"What is prayer? The converse of the soul with God. Faith speaking to God. As our senses put us in connection with visible things so does faith with things unseen; and prayer is the voice of faith. Faith pleading with God. The utterance of strong desire, pleading with prevailing arguments and irresistible warrants."

It is worthy of note that man is the only being that prays. The lower animals are blessed with instinct, but not with the instinct to pray. Yet man prays instinctively, even the unregenerate man. It is natural for the little child to pray and just as natural for the aged man or woman. We may repress the instinct to pray, but when all else fails we turn to prayer. The origin of prayer was probably with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. We know that there were sacrifices in the time of Abel and there could have been no sacrifice without sacrificial prayers. As it has been said, we do not read that men began to "call upon the name of the Lord" until after Seth was born, but we may be quite sure this was not the origin of prayer. There has been no nation where prayer of some kind has not been known. Pythagoras said:

"In all thou dost, first let thy prayers ascend,

And to the gods thy labours first commend;

From them implore success, and hope a prosperous end."

The Christian finds ample authority for prayer in the fact that Christ commands it and commends it, and is ever ready to listen to the supplications of His children. In the Kensington Museum there is a picture of Dr. Johnson waiting outside in the anteroom of royalty, waiting his turn for an audience. The King of kings never keeps us waiting, but will give us a hearing at any moment. Martin Luther says: "I have so much business today that I shall not be able to get through it with less than three hours' prayer." Many of us, under like pressure, would have been disposed to have made the three hours three minutes. If we expect God to guide us we must ask His guidance. The pillar of cloud and fire await us for the asking. In *The Victory Life* there appears the story of Dr. J. J. Lucas, who was for forty-five years a missionary in India. Dr. Lucas says: "The most real thing in my life is the sense and presence of God's guidance." In 1870 he was under appointment to go as missionary to India. Word was sent to him and ten other missionaries

who were to accompany him to be ready to sail October 8th on the steamship *Cambria*. Passage had been engaged and all were ready to go. It was then urged that they remain over Sunday and be given a farewell service. The missionaries listened to the entreaty and agreed to remain. The party finally sailed on October 12th. The *Cambria* went down at sea and all were lost save one, and he, when rescued, was demented.

"Chinese" Gordon used to put a handkerchief at the opening of his tent when he prayed, thus saying to the world he must not be disturbed when he was talking to God. Let the soul alone in the "closet" whisper its longings into the listening ears of the Eternal.

"The way is dark, my Father! Cloud on cloud

Is gathering thickly o'er my head, and loud

*The thunders roar above me. See I stand,
Like one bewildered! Father, take my hand,*

And through the gloom

*Lead safely home,
Thy child."*

Well may we ask how should we pray. First of all, and above all, we should entreat the Lord to "teach us to pray." We may cultivate the act of praying; but God only can teach us the science of prayer. There are, however, some things that are absolutely essential to prevailing prayer. Among these faith probably deserves the first place. Whatever else prayer may require, faith is absolutely essential. It is at this point that a multitude of our prayers miscarry. Probably the greatest surprise that could come to some people would be for God to answer their prayers. Many even forget what they pray for. It is hardly reasonable to expect God to remember what we ask for when we ourselves forget it. As faith without works is dead, so is prayer without faith. God will not regard the prayer that is not made in fervent faith. If we would exercise the same faith in our Heavenly Father that the child has in the earthly parent, God would hear and answer our prayers. We should confidently look for and expect an answer to our prayers. Just as one writes a letter and expects an answer, so should we expect

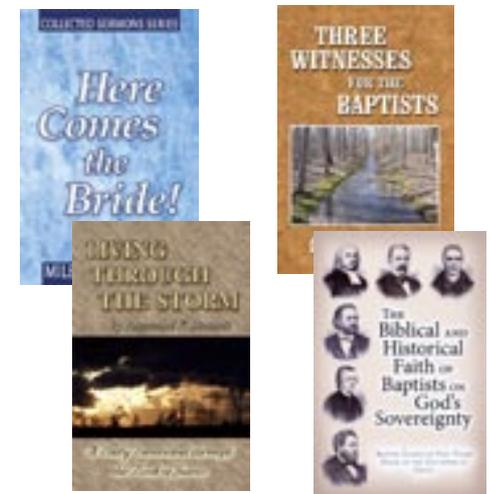
a reply to our prayers. The little girl that prayed that God would send her brother and then went home and brought him, demonstrated a real faith in her prayers. It is told of an engineer that a woman asked him what time his train was due at a certain station. He told her the time the train was due, to which she replied, "My daughter is dying and that will be twenty minutes too late." The old engineer went to the telegraph office and obtained permission to run twenty minutes ahead of time. Passing the woman on the way to his engine, he said, "Get aboard; if God will give me ten minutes, I will make up the other ten minutes." It is our duty to pray according to our ability and to get up from our knees and help God answer our prayers.

We should pray in real earnest. Cold prayers never warmed a human heart or moved the heart of God. It is said that one went to Demosthenes and asked him to plead his cause. He heard him without attention while he told his story without earnestness. The man, noting his inattention, cried out, "It is true." "Ah," said Demosthenes, "I believe you now." Jacob wrestling with the angel through the lonely night is a splendid example of earnest prevailing prayer. Daniel, in spite of the royal decree, with his windows opened towards Jerusalem, inspires us to faith in earnest prayer.

Martin Luther heard that Melancthon was dying. When he approached the bedside the symptoms of death were quite apparent. Melancthon aroused himself and seeing Luther said: "Oh, Luther, is this you? Why don't you let me depart in peace?" "We can't spare you, Philip," was the reply. Luther fell upon his knees and wrestled with God for more than an hour for the recovery of his friend. Again Melancthon said, "Dear Luther, why don't you let me depart in peace?" The reply was, "We cannot spare you yet." Luther then ordered some nourishment, which was refused with the question, "Dear Luther, why will you not let me go home and be at rest?" Luther then added, "Take this soup or I will excommunicate you." He took the soup and soon regained his wonted strength. When Luther returned home he said to his wife, "God gave me my brother Melancthon back in

direct answer to prayer." Who will doubt but that his life was graciously spared in answer to the prayer of his friend?

*"Oh, how praying rests the weary,
Prayer can turn the night to day;
Ere you left your room this morning,
Did you think to pray?"*



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