

The Berea Baptist Banner

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

The Dangers of Sin - The Chastisement of God

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia



"Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him" (Deut. 8:5-6). The God that we serve is a fearful and awesome God. He demands (and deserves) our utmost fidelity and service.

Sin is dangerous. Sin can affect our relationship with our Father in Heaven. When we fail to serve our God; or when we sin against our God; the Scriptures (and experience) teach us that God will chastise His children. Let me refer you to the most familiar New Testament passage that speaks directly concerning the chastening of God: **"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth"**

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The Gift of Salvation

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma



Today, in the minds of those who class themselves as "evangelicals," the meaning of the word "gift" has become muddled to say the least. Partially, at least, this misunderstanding is the fault of popular preachers whose goal in preaching is not merely to proclaim the Gospel, but rather whose goal is to psychologically motivate people to make some kind of public demonstration by which they are said to have "been saved." This is the fault of their theology. They are of the opinion that a spiritually dead sinner can do something which will cause the Holy Spirit to regenerate him. It is clear to those who understand the issues that these preachers believe in decisional regeneration. By that term is meant that the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth is brought about by a lost person making a decision for Christ. Without a doubt, some – perhaps many – of these preachers are sincere. I would hope that they all are, but that does not change the fact that they are **"...deceiving, and being deceived"** (II Tim. 3:13).

How many times have misguided preachers told their hearers something like this: "God offers you the gift of salvation." This is an oxymoronic statement. But the idea has been advanced by so many and for so long that many people

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The World by Wisdom Knew Not God

By Alexander Carson
(1776 - 1844)

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21).

The powers of the human mind, though puny in comparison with the divine wisdom, are great in themselves. Though unequal to the task frequently assigned them, their efforts, when legitimately employed, are truly astonishing. The great intellects of Des Cartes and Leibnitz, when employed hypothetically on the formation of worlds, are lost in an abyss. Their theories are only the ingenious reveries of leaned madmen.

But when we behold in Newton the lawful direction of the human faculties, we are constrained to admire their wonderful capacity. What an amazing depth have the intellects of that single man penetrated into the works of God! The worlds formed by the imagination of other philosophers, he overthrew with a touch, and discovered the admirable simplicity of the laws that govern the works of creation. Has the sagacity and patient exercise of the faculties of the human mind determined the motions, dimensions, and distances of the heavenly bodies? Look into the discoveries of natural philosophy, and admire the extent of human intellect. On the foundation of a few axioms what a stupendous fabric has been reared by mathematics! In every human science where the powers of man have been properly directed, there success has been superior to the most sanguine anticipation. The inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding.

But let us try these wise men on things that relate to God. Have they discovered the glories of the divine character? Have

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The Ascension of Jesus Christ

By Frank B. Beck
(1921 - 2007)



Scripture reading: Ephesians 4:1-15.

I am going to speak on the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into Heaven. It is to be regretted that we have ignored the importance of this event in the life and work of our Saviour. Yet, as Dr. Louis Berkhof remarks: "In a certain sense the Ascension may be called the necessary complement and completion of the Resurrection" (*Systematic Theology*).

THE REPORT OF THE ASCENSION

It was reported by Mark who was an associate of Paul and Barnabas and other of the apostles. Of the Ascension of Christ he writes: **"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God"** (Mark 16:19).

It was reported by Luke, both in his gospel and in the Book of Acts. He writes: **"And it came to pass, while he blessed them,"**

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God Is Seeking Men to Stand in the Gap

By Nathaniel Hille
of Caldwell, Kansas



Ezekiel 22:23-31

We take our lesson from verse 30, and I want you to note this question: "Is God able to find men?"; but "not just any man is He looking for, He is looking for a certain kind of man." He is looking for a man to fill in the gap!

A **"gap"** is "a hole, a breach, an opening." A **"hedge"** is "a wall to separate and defend against." The phrase "standing in the gap" means "to expose one's self to and for the protection of something; to make defense against any assailing danger."

Beloved, I declare that we are in want of men who will stand in the gap; men who will expose themselves for Christ's sake; men who will defend the truths of God's Word; men who will fill the breach against assailing men and doctrine. Recall what Christ said: **"Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest"** (Matt. 9:37-38). Yes, brothers and sisters in the Lord, we are in great need of men; but not

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*The more rare an item is, the greater its value;
such is the worth of a man of wisdom.*

"With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding" (Job 12:12).

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

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

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he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb. 12:4-13).

Some folks are hesitant to attribute any evil in our lives to God. Some folks seem to believe that, if anything evil or untoward or difficult or troublesome comes upon us, then it must be because God is not able to prevent it. However, I like to look at the subject of evil and difficulty and persecution and problems in our lives this way: In reality, it is only because of God that we enjoy any peace, pleasure, health, or strength at all in this life. In other words, if it were not for God, then every second of our lives would be swallowed up in trouble and distress. I believe that, without fail, Satan, his demons, or our own wicked flesh would constantly mire us in evil and sorry times – if it were not for the merciful and gracious God that we serve. So, far from making God evil or mean-spirited when trouble comes upon us; I prefer to just envision that God is, for a while, allowing to happen to us what would always happen to us, if it were not for His grace and goodness in our lives.

Consider the man Job as an example. He loved God and was faithful unto Him. And God blessed him and cared for him. In fact, Job was blessed and rich in this life beyond our imaginations. When Satan considered Job and his faithfulness unto God, he claimed that God had built a hedge around him – and this was literally true. So, when God allowed Satan to afflict Job, all that He did was just remove the protection for a little while. Now, I am not saying that Job was being chastised – in his case the trouble and trials that came upon him were meant by God to try and improve Job's relationship to and understanding of God, and to be an example unto us. But, in regards to our topic today, I

believe that God does nearly the same thing when He allows Satan, demons, or the flesh to afflict us and to try us. In other words, for just a little while, God allows breaches to develop in the hedge that does surround us.

When we look at our lives from this perspective, we can see that the chastisement from God that comes upon us, is not so much that God is actively and purposefully and spitefully hurting us; it is simply that He removes His protection from us, so that we might suffer or struggle for a while, and return to Him better prepared to continue in our service unto God.

SIN BRINGS CHASTISEMENT FROM GOD

The chastisement from God that we are speaking of today, is not meant for the wicked, but rather for the righteous. "And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied. And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins" (Lev. 26: 26-28). We see from this passage that it is the children of God that will be chastised by God. He will not allow our sinfulness to go unchecked.

Sin is dangerous. And, in this life, God will chastise His people so that they will not continue in sin. We read in I Corinthians 11:27-32, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

CHASTISEMENT FROM GOD PROVES GOD'S LOVE

From time to time, in this life, we have all seen children that do not obey their parents and that are rowdy and obnoxious and seem to be out of control. Now, some might say that the parents have spoiled those children. Others might say that the parents are just allowing their children the freedom to develop and experience life to the fullest. I tend to believe that the parents are not doing their children any favors, if they refrain from chastening their children when they are disobedient or when they are ill-behaved. Children need to be brought up in such a way that

they know the bounds of good behavior, and so that they know that there are rewards for goodness – and punishment for wickedness. In fact, any parent that does not discipline and chastise his child, is in danger of losing that child to a life of sin and degradation. We read in **Proverbs 22:6**, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

This same principle is true in our relationship with our Father in Heaven. Certainly He loves His children. Since He loves His children, doesn't it follow that He will chasten His children when they fail Him? I mean, if it is right and profitable for us to chastise our children after the flesh, how much more ought we to expect our Father in Heaven to chastise His children after the Spirit? We read in **Hebrews 12: 6-9**, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"

CHASTISEMENT FROM GOD BRINGS HIS PEOPLE CLOSER TO HIM

Sin is dangerous. And we have noticed from our previous studies on this topic, that sin can separate us from our God. Therefore, if the intent of chastisement is to punish us for our sins, and to bring to our attention the sin in our lives; then can't we say that, ultimately, from God's perspective, chastisement is a means to bring the children of God closer to the Father in Heaven? Isn't it true, that once we are aware of our sins, and once we have removed these obstacles from our lives, won't God be closer and clearer to us all?

We read in Psalm 118:14-20, "The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter." Maybe we can say that since God doesn't strike us down dead when we sin, we are brought closer to Him through chastisement. What I mean to say, is that I am sometimes amazed that the Lord allows me to

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GLEANINGS



How Grace Reached Jim Tracey

Jim Tracey lived in the Providence of Quebec, Canada, and was what most people call "a hard case." Churches and Christians he had no room for, and made drinking and fighting the chief business of his life. The desperate character of the man was proved by his leaping for a wager from the high bridge at Huntingdon into the rapids of the river below. Few could surpass him in deeds of wild recklessness. A friend told me that he saw him running half a mile stretch in his bare feet in mid-winter, over the ice and snow.

As might be expected, such a course brought him to a comparatively early end, and at the age when most men are in their prime, Jim was dying of consumption. Ministers who knew him sought to get into his little cabin to talk with him, but he would not have them. He did not wish anyone to speak to him about his soul or God. One day, however, a simple, godly Christian man called to see him, and after sitting by his bedside a while, talking about his poor, fast-decaying body, he put his hand in his pocket and drew forth a Bible. Seeing what it was, Jim said, "Stop! I don't want any of that. I will have no preaching here."

"I won't preach, or even speak, if you object to it, Jim," said his visitor, quietly, "but I should like to read you a little from the Word of God." "It's no use," said Jim. "I'm past all mercy, and God's Word can only mock me." "No, it won't," said his visitor, "just let me read one or two of the beautiful stories in it, anyway, and if you think it is mocking you, then tell me to stop."

"The consumptive man made no reply, so the Bible was opened at Luke 15; the skillful "fisher of men" read the lovely stories of "the lost sheep," the "lost coin," and "the lost son." The story of the woman who was a sinner was also read. Jim seemed to listen attentively as his visitor read of the blessed Lord's conduct towards the fallen woman. He did not utter a word until the 48th verse of the seventh of Luke was read--"And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven." Jim instantly cried out: "My sins are forgiven. Thanks be unto God!" He was soon out of bed going around the room, delighted with his new found treasure.

God had by His Holy Spirit led the poor sinful man to see his need, and as the Word was read Christ revealed

Himself to poor Jim, as his own personal Saviour. "For the son of man (Jesus) is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Jim said to his visitor, "Let us kneel down and thank God for saving my soul from the pit of Hell." And there they knelt by the little bedside and poured out their full hearts in thanksgiving to the God of all grace for His mercy to another of the chiefest of sinners. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15).

Jim appointed a day and had all his old companions in sin visit his little home, so as they also might hear those words which had been used of God to lead him to Christ. The same Scriptures were read to Jim's chums, and they wept as they heard for the first time God's message of love to sinners. They knew right well that Jim, though coughing his lungs away, was the happy pardoned prodigal, the freely forgiven five hundred pence debtor. He loved much because he was forgiven much. (News & Truths, 1929).



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continue in this life, especially when I consider how I have failed Him. Now, He will chasten me from time to time; but, He has "not given me over unto death." Therefore, "I will praise the LORD."

CHASTISEMENT FROM GOD IMPROVES HIS PEOPLE

As I have said before, sin is dangerous, and sin will bring about the chastisement of God. But, in the end, it is not God's goal to just punish us in this life. I mean, God is not a glutton for punishment - Who desires to reach out and inflict pain and suffering on His people. But, rather, it is His goal to improve and lift up His children, so that we all will be better and more faithful servants. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb. 12:11-13).

We read in Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." I suppose that we could apply the principle of this verse to our relationship to God, and to the chastisement that He administers to His children. It may seem, sometimes, that the hand of God that administers chastisement is as hard as "iron." But, sometimes it is necessary for God to chastise us, in order that we will see

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the sin in our lives. And, very often our attitude towards God, and the hardness of our heart may be as hard as "iron." In these situations, God will not be reluctant to break our hard hearts and our stony resolve to sin, with some chastisement that will seem as hard as "iron." And, in the end, these hard times and difficult situations will improve our usefulness unto God. We will, after these times of chastisement, arise to serve God even more!

CONCLUSION

So, I hope that you have learned from this message that sin is dangerous. And, I hope that you have also learned that chastisement will come, when those that are the children of God will transgress against their Father in Heaven. I have, of course, pointed out some positive results from the chastisement of God. But, I don't want any of us to go away from here thinking that we ought to sin, just so we can receive the benefits that might accompany the chastisement of God. It is not a pleasure to go through chastisement! Remember, the writer to the Hebrews said, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous..." (Heb. 12:11).

In the end, God will make a way for us in this life. We will persevere, and we will be preserved. At the end of our lives - and hopefully sooner - we will understand that God works all of these things out for good and for the glory of God. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).



The Gift of Salvation

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find no fault in such statements as this. Hitler's propaganda minister is credited with saying something like this: If you tell any lie long enough and loud enough, no matter how big it is, some people will believe it. Because of a hundred years or so of such popular Arminian preaching among Americans, including most of those people called Baptists,

the definitions of "offer" and "gift" have become muddled in the minds of the people. They think that God is holding out what they call a "gift" of salvation, pleading with lost people to accept His "offer" - to "take His gift." They confuse the two terms "gift" and "offer." They present these two words as meaning the same thing when they do not. They go further and tell their hearers things that we have no record in the Bible as having been said by Christ's apostles or any other New Testament preacher. These are unbiblical statements thought to be necessary because of these preachers' unbiblical theology. For instance they tell lost people that God loves them - never found in the Bible. They tell them that He has done everything that He can do toward saving them, but that the rest is up to them - never found in the Bible. They tell them that as lost people, there is something that they can and must do on their own to bring about the new birth - never found taught in the Bible. They say lost people must take the first step toward God and He will do the rest - again never found in the Bible. This is their "gospel." Such a message is not good news at all to men who "...are in the flesh" and thus "cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). They think that if lost men can somehow be persuaded to "accept" this gift - to somehow reach out and take it - they will be saved. Thus the new birth is reduced to doing a prescribed work in the strength of the flesh which causes God to be moved to save them. Salvation by grace has become salvation by works!

Perhaps the best thing to do is go to Merriam-Webster and let the dictionary help us settle the matter. The definition of "offer" is as follows: "to present for acceptance or rejection." A synonym is "tender" as used in the following sentence: All interested contractors must tender their bids by the end of the month. And indeed this is, as stated above, the prevalent view among "evangelicals" as being the way God saves sinners. According to them, God has done all He can do and offers salvation to all who will take it. Their universal

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atonement doctrine actually atones for no one unless and until a person adds his own work to Christ's. Thus Christ is powerless to save anyone unless they finish what He has done by adding to it their little bit. They only differ among themselves as to just exactly what it is that lost sinners must do in order to grasp in their sinful, selfish hands the salvation from eternal fire supposedly offered by God. Some require only "faith." Others require something they call "repentance." Still others require their special brand of "baptism." Others require a life of faithfulness to their church practices. All these kind of "evangelicals" require some sort of human action or effort on the part of the spiritually dead sinner in order that he "receive" God's "gift." Universally they teach that because the lost person has done whatever is required of them, God is obligated to save them. God has done all He can do in the matter of providing salvation: it is up to the lost sinner to do his part. This is their synergistic gospel. And so after a lost sinner has performed their required act, they falsely assure the sinner that he is saved.

Again let us go to Webster for help. We read there that "gift" may mean "a notable capacity, talent, or endowment" – or, "something voluntarily transferred by one person to another without compensation." Examples of this word used in sentences might be as follows: Her gift is painting. Or: He has a real gift for woodworking. Or: He is a gifted teacher. We use the word gift often in this sense. Notice that this meaning of gift carries nothing of the idea of an offer. No "evangelical" in his wildest theological fancies would suggest that sometime prior to the birth of a baby God came to the "fetus" and offered the unborn child a choice between the gift of artistic ability, sports ability or musical ability. Men have no problem understanding that some people have the gift of producing beautiful paintings while others have the gift of great musical ability and still others make millions by their gift for sports. They do not object to the idea that these gifts are bestowed upon individuals without their having done anything in order to possess them. They do not object that God sovereignly bestows such gifts upon humans when they, yet unborn, lacked any capacity whatsoever to either take or reject them. Babies were not even conscious of such things at the time such gifts were bestowed. They understand the meaning of the word gift used in this way. But they judge it would not be fair for God to act in such a sovereign manner with regard to the new birth. It violates their depraved sense of right and wrong. (God speaks of this depraved sense of right and wrong in Isaiah 55:8, 9 where

He says: "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").

Is it possible that the word "gift" as used relative to the new birth means an "endowment" or "something voluntarily transferred by one person to another without compensation?" When we read the following: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23), is it possible that the writer intended to present to his readers the contrast between "wages" and a "gift" rather than a contrast between "wages" and an "offer?" Does not the Word of God here present a contrast between something that is received based on having done something ("wages") and something that is received without merit? Is not the contrast intended between that which comes as a result of works of some kind and that which comes without any works? Is it possible that God regenerates dead sinners as a gift and not as a recompense for faith, prayer, repentance, baptism, et cetera? Wages are a recompense for human effort, but a gift is not compensatory at all. It comes without any effort on the receiver at all. All will agree that Charles Spurgeon had the gift of oratory, but he did nothing to receive or take that gift. He may have "improved his gift" as old Baptist writers used to speak, but he had nothing whatsoever to do with receiving it. It was a gift – not an offer!

Men are commanded to repent (Acts 17:30). Without a doubt that is true. And yet the Bible makes it clear that repentance is a gift (Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25). God does not "offer" repentance! He grants it! He gives it and He has chosen to whom He gives it! He works it in His elect children by means of "godly sorrow" (II Cor. 7:10). The same verse just cited speaks also of "the sorrow of the world" in contrast to "godly sorrow." When faced with the prospect of eternal punishment, probably deep in their depraved hearts all lost persons experience "the sorrow of the world." They are sorry for the consequences of their sins, but their sorrow, like that of Esau is not a product of God working salvation in them. Remember Esau? "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:17). Esau is here cited as one of those "profane" persons who have no interest in God or spiritual things other than a selfish interest in their own welfare. Dare anyone suggest that Esau is the only person who qualifies as a "profane person?" The Greek word translated "profane" speaks of "common



or "unhallowed." Such individuals who are unsanctified are common or unhallowed. These are they in whom God does not work, who are left alone by Him, and who willfully reject Christ because their will acts in harmony with their depraved nature. They receive the just reward of their evil deeds – for eternity.

The Bible says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:8-10). In this text we have set before us the whole gamut of what I am trying to say. May I give you my personal expanded paraphrase of these 3 verses? It is as follows: "We are saved by an endowment by the means of faith which is not a human effort, but which is also an endowment. This faith is an endowment from God and is not of any human effort lest any man should boast. For we who are saved are His work, created in Christ Jesus for the purpose of producing good works which God has determined beforehand that we the saved members of Christ's Churches should walk in them." Grace is an endowment and by its very nature is unmerited – that is, it comes to those who are undeserving of it in any fashion. Faith is an endowment

and is simply the means by which we are connected with the Savior. Faith is not a product of anything human. God has sovereignly chosen whom He will save and it is in these whom He has chosen that He works. What more needs to be said on the subject? Salvation in all its aspects is of the Lord.

The new birth, or regeneration, speaks of the beginning of that salvation in our experience. (This statement does not deny that God has been working in the matter of the salvation of His elect ones from eternity past. We speak here of our experience.) We ought to ask ourselves in what ways does the natural birth process portray our spiritual birth? What parallels ought we to see in our new birth experience and the birth of a human being? Are there illustrative contrasts also? It is not true that while both the unborn child and the unregenerate sinner are participants in the birth process, both are passive. Neither is causative. Neither brings about his birth – it is the mother who labors to bring forth a natural birth and it is God who labors to bring about a spiritual birth. A natural birth is the result of choices made long prior to the birth of the child and so also is a spiritual birth, but the choices were not made by the one being born in either case. The ones determining the birth are the parents in the case of the natural birth and the Holy

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The Gift of Salvation

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Spirit is the one determining the birth in the spiritual birth. Both the natural and the spiritual births occur at a specific instant in time, but both are the result of a lengthy process brought about by the actions of others. When, where and under what circumstances a baby is born is determined by others and so also the time, place and circumstances at which the spiritual birth occurs is determined by God and not by the lost sinner. In contrast with the natural birth, in the spiritual birth or regeneration, sinners are **"..born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"** (John 1:13). It is the Holy Spirit of God who, like the wind, **"..bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit"** (John 3:8).

May God enable His children to always think and testify clearly regarding how God saves lost sinners. May we be given grace to witness and preach the Gospel in such a way that lost men and women are told they are hopeless and helpless to do anything about their own lost condition. Let us tell them – and tell them – and tell them again that they must be born again in order to be saved and that the new birth is a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit of God. Tell them they cannot depend on their faith, their experience, their repentance or anything else of human manufacture. They must be saved by God. They cannot save themselves! How God saves sinners is in all its parts and aspects a gift sovereignly bestowed. Salvation is never a mere offer dependent on the whims, desires and fancies of depraved sinners selfishly looking for an escape from eternal punishment which they deserve. **"..Salvation is of the LORD"** (Jonah 2:9). All glory to the Lamb that was slain!



Ascension of Christ

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he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:51). And in the Book of Acts he writes: **"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight"** (Acts 1:9).

The Ascension of Christ was also declared by Spirit-filled Peter on the day of Pentecost. He said that Jesus was raised from the dead and was at **"the right hand of God exalted"** (Acts 2:32-33). The martyr Stephen witnessed that he saw the ascended Saviour **"standing**

on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). John, the beloved apostle, beheld Christ **"in the midst of the throne"** of God in Heaven (Rev. 5:6); and saw Him descending from Heaven to judge the quick and the dead (Rev. 19:11-21). **"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory"** (I Tim. 3:16).

THE REQUIREMENT OF THE ASCENSION

The ascension of Jesus Christ was required or demanded for several reasons, among them the following:

To prove His "acceptability" to God as our sacrifice for sin and as our priest. If you will read Hebrews 9:6-12 you will see that in order to propitiate God and atone for our sins, Jesus Christ must enter into Heaven itself and present His most sacred blood. The fact that He did proves that He has **"obtained eternal redemption for us."** This includes His ascension to the Father. Let us rejoice that **"when he had by himself purged our sins, (He) sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"** (Heb. 1:3). **"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God"** (Heb. 10:12).

The ascension was required to prove Christ's "authority." While on earth He claimed authority to forgive sin (Mark 2:10); to judge (John 5:22); to lay down His life and take it again (John 10:17-18); and after His resurrection He affirmed that **"all authority"** had been given unto Him in Heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18, R.V.). What greater proof can you have of such authority, in that God **"raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet. . ."** (Eph. 1:20-22)?

The ascension was required to fulfill the "assertations" of the Old Testament prophecies and the "affirmations" of Jesus Christ Himself, of the Ascension of the Saviour.

Where, in the Old Testament prophecies does it say that Christ must ascend to Heaven?

Does not Psalm 47:5 refer to it? **"God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with a sound of a trumpet."** The whole Psalm is applied, by some Jewish writers, to the times of the Messiah, and this verse particularly. He is the great King over all the earth (vv. 2,7), and more manifestly appeared so at His ascension, when He was made and declared Lord and Christ; and He subdued the Gentile world (v. 3) through the ministration of His gospel; by which, after His ascension, He went into it, conquering and to conquer; and

caused His ministers to triumph in it. . . And though the circumstances of His ascension, being attended with a shout, and with the sound of a trumpet, is not mentioned in the New Testament, in the account of it; yet there is no doubt to be made of it, since the angels present at it, told the disciples on the spot, that this same Jesus should so come, in like manner as they saw Him go into Heaven: now it is certain that Christ will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God; and also, since He was attended in His ascension with the angels of God, and with some men who rose after His resurrection; there is scarce any question to be made of it, that He ascended amidst their shouts and acclamations. . ." (John Gill). He was God, and He went up with a shout, and this found special fulfillment in the ascension.

Psalm 68:18 refers to the ascension. **"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."** This is applied to Christ's glorious ascension, by the Holy Spirit, in the New Testament (Eph. 4:7-12).

Psalm 110 refers to the ascension of Christ. **"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool"** (v. 1). This is applied by the Holy Ghost, through Peter, to Christ and His ascension (Acts 2:34-35).

The ascension of Christ was required to meet His own constant claims that He came from Heaven, that He would lay down His life, rise again from death and ascend to Heaven from whence He came. In answering the high priest, Jesus Christ said: **"..Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven"** (Matt. 26:64). There are many references to His ascension to the Father in John's gospel.

It was necessary that Jesus our Lord ascend to Heaven and home. What! Shall the conquering soldier and prince be done with his battles and not return home to receive the honor and praise due him? Shall a beautiful painting be made by a master artist, yet never be hung? Shall a soul-stirring song be composed and never be sung? Shall a machine be invented and created, but never be used? Shall the Son of God, like Samson, arise from the terrible, midnight darkness of the tomb, taking with Him the doors of the gate of the city of destruction and carry away the doors, gate, locks, posts, bar and all and lead captivity, captive out of the pit wherein there was no water; and Who, unlike Samson did no sin; shall He not ascend to the highest place that Heaven affords to be our eternal Judge, Saviour, and Strong Deliverer?

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors of

Heaven, and let this crucified, risen and ascending Saviour in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory!

But on earth we know Him as Jesus!



Stand in the Gap

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just any kind of men, we need men who will stand in the gap. We need them very desperately or else we be destroyed as our text says, **"And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God"** (Ezek. 22:30-31). We need men to stand in the gap now for our generation and the next to come else where will the next generation go? (Joel. 1:1-3; Deut. 6:4-13); Who will uphold and sure up those "ancient landmarks?" (Prov. 22:28; 23:10); for we have an ample supply of men who are removing the "ancient Bible landmarks" through their doctrine and practice devouring the flocks of God. **"Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof"** (Job 24:2).

We have forgotten, and we have neglected to tell our children of the whole counsel of God and it is manifesting in our lack of men who are standing in the gap. Abraham taught Isaac about worshipping the Lord when he was but a "lad" (Gen. 22:5-8). We do NOT teach our children about the Lord any more; and I reiterate...it is showing in the lack of stand for sound doctrine, worshipping God, and morals in the generation that now is and that which is to come.

WHAT KIND OF MAN IS GOD SEEKING?

We know God is seeking men to stand in the gap because He said He was (Ezek. 22:30). Beloved, the ministry is not a mere profession; it is not a job. It is work, but it is not a job. I never would have called myself into the ministry. When God called me into the ministry there was not anything in me that He saw that influenced His call to the ministry, but God's ways are past finding out. Now, God is looking for a certain kind of man and God gives us a description of the certain kind of man He is seeking to stand in the gap:

First of all, the man that God is seeking to stand in the gap must be pardoned of his sin(s). In Galatians 1:15-16, Paul wrote of his own conversion experience and we see Paul was first saved, pardoned and then he preached. Personally, I believe in a God-called ministry; and God has

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Stand in the Gap

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yet to call a man who was lost into the ministry without first saving him. A man in the ministry, in the pulpit who has not experienced the saving grace of God has nothing whereby he can preach...for **“we preach Christ crucified”** (I Cor. 1:23). Every man who has been born has been born wrong. He needs a new birth and until that happens, that man is not a man that God will use to stand in the gap.

Secondly, the man that God is seeking to stand in the gap is one whom God has called into the Ministry. Christ Jesus spoke unto some of His disciples in Matthew 4:19 saying, **“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”** The Bible states that men are “called by the Lord” into the ministry. It is not the will of the mother’s, nor of the father’s, nor of the pastor’s, nor of the grandparents’, but the will of God. Neither are men made fit for the ministry through education. One may have the grandest seminary, Bible College there ever was...but one will never be able to educate a man into the ministry. Man has produced well educated, very eloquent men; but unless the Holy Spirit of God is upon them as God has called and fitted them for the work of the ministry...they will never prosper their hearers, nor bring God honor and glory. For the Holy Spirit is He Who will lead you into all things (John 14:26).

We need men who are called into the ministry who will **“preach the word”** (II Tim. 4:1-2), not use puppets and fairy tales, joke telling, but a man who will stand in the gap and preach the Word of God which is **“quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”** (Heb. 4:12). We need men who will stand in the gap and “preach the word” of God and not their own views and opinions. This is the kind of men we need.

Thirdly, God is seeking a man who is submissive to the Will of God. Jesus spoke in exemplary fashion in Matthew 26:39 saying, “...not my will but thine be done.” This is the hardest thing in the world to do: submit to the will of God. This takes as much grace to do as it does to save a person. Pulpits are filled today with men who use it for their own personal agenda, but we are in want of men who will be submissive to the will of God. Many pastors wonder why the church members they have been set over are not under subjection to the will of God. Perhaps it is because many of us Pastors are not setting the example that should be followed. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth saying, **“Wherefore**

I beseech you, be ye followers of me” (I Cor. 4:16). And in another place he wrote, **“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”** (I Cor. 11:1). Paul understood the necessity of being submissive to the will of God.

Fourthly, God is seeking a man who is living a separated life. Paul wrote unto Timothy saying, **“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work”** (II Tim. 2:19-21). Beloved, God has never used a “dirty vessel.” Those who wish to be used by God are those who must first separate themselves unto the Lord.

When God saves a person, He sanctifies them, or sets them apart for His service. We call this “positional sanctification” or “instantaneous sanctification.” This is shown in Colossians 1:13-14, in that we have been delivered from the power of darkness and been translated into the kingdom of Jesus Christ at the time of our redemption and new birth.

However, there is another sanctification that must take place; a daily sanctification, an hourly sanctification. Every child of God must grow in holiness. We use the term “progressive sanctification” or “continuous sanctification.” Throughout the life of the born-again child of God, he or she is to live a life of godliness for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. Simon Peter wrote, **“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy”** (I Pet. 1:13-16). The word **“holy”** carries the meaning of being consecrated, separated, and sanctified for the Master’s use. And we are to be living a life that is fit or meet for our Lord and Savior’s use.

This is a great failure of modern-day Baptists. We are in too much agreement with the world. Where is that difference that God hath made? (I Cor. 4:7). Too many children of God live like the world, dress like the world, talk like the world and have no spiritual fruit just like the world. It raises the question in our minds: are these individuals even regenerated in Christ Jesus?

Why is it that not even 50 years

ago you could not find a Baptist in a liquor establishment and today Baptists are thought ill of for abstaining from this appearance of evil? Why is it that Baptists once did not participate in modern day apparel, but wore clothes pertaining to their gender and as well dressed modestly? Why is it that Baptists of old would not attend services of the “Mother of Harlots” but now view it “okay” if it is a funeral or a wedding? Why have we disregarded **“Thus saith the Lord”**? For God did say, **“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you”** (II Cor. 6:17), as well as when God told His people to remove themselves from the Great Whore and her harlot children saying, **“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues”** (Rev. 18:4). Baptists of old did not participate in reveling (dancing) whether it was at a school or a wedding, but now Baptists are encouraging their children to participate in such profligate behavior. Why is this happening? It is because we have too much friendship with the world; it is because living like the world is the norm!!!

There are so many examples of children of God who were not used until they were separated from worldliness and ungodliness unto the Lord: Samson and Jonah come to mind. But, we are lacking in men who are separated unto the Lord. Thus God is looking for men who will stand in the gap and He has found none.

Fifthly, God is seeking a man who will endure hardness. Paul wrote unto Timothy telling him to **“...endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”** (II Tim. 2:1-3). We need men like Joshua whom the Lord told, **“Be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest”** (Josh. 1:9). Children of God endure very little today. Men like Joshua, Paul, John the apostle, John the Baptist were men who endured. Today, Baptists get a “spiritual hang-nail” and they are ready to throw in the towel as the saying goes. Paul stated, **“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory”** (II Tim. 2:10).

Beloved, God is seeking a man to stand in the gap; a man who will sell out for the Lord; a man who will suffer reproach for His Name’s sake. Let us pray fervently and earnestly that God will raise up these men and set over His churches and that churches will call these kind of men and follow them as they follow the Lord!



Wisdom Knew Not

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they made a proper estimate of the character of man? Have they perceived the origin of the guilt and misery of the human race? Have they seen that men are by nature universally in rebellion against their maker, and, consequently, the children of wrath? Have they discovered the way to Heaven? Have they told us how God can be both just and merciful--the just God, yet the Saviour of the ungodly? Have all their searches after God discovered His nature, or given any light to the guilty, in order acceptably to approach Him? No; in all these things they are very children. In answering these questions, they are like shooting at a mark in the blackness of midnight.

That God might give a fair trial to the efforts of human wisdom on these subjects, and silence for ever the arrogant pretensions of philosophy; learning had been deeply cultivated for several centuries before the proclamation of the truth that saves the sinner. For a period of more than five hundred years, the subtlety of the genius of the philosophers of Greece had been diligently and enthusiastically employed in inquiries about God, virtue, and happiness. But in all these five hundred years, instead of discovering anything like the truth, they made not the smallest approaches towards it. Instead of pointing out the true way to virtue and happiness, their learned theories only bloated the mind with increased measures of vanity, and served to show the wickedness of the human heart increases with an increase of its wisdom. These wise men differed from the vulgar, only in the excess of their arrogance. Their investigations led to skepticism or atheism; and when they had not these results, they never raised an individual above the folly of polytheism.

It is usual with the learned men of modern times, to endeavour to cover the nakedness of their ancient brethren. In excuse for the worship of the gods by the sages of Greece and Rome, it is alleged that their compliance was only out of constraint or courtesy. If the excuse is founded in truth, it condemns their honesty, and robs these boasted sages of all pretensions to virtue. While they talked so much of truth and of virtue, how can they be justified in not confessing the truth, which they are supposed to possess? But, although they occasionally speak something rationally of some of the divine attributes, there is, in my apprehension, not the smallest reason to suppose, that any of them who were not atheists, were anything but polytheists.

The patriarch of the heathen world, (as Socrates is styled, I think by Lord Shaftesbury,) though ridiculed on the

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The World in the New Testament

By E. G. Cook
(1898 - 1986)

Since there is so much confusion concerning the meaning of the word "world" in the New Testament it behooves us to make a serious study of it. If you and I are not willing to accept the facts connected with this word, we are not honest with the Word of God. If I give this word a meaning that I cannot back up with the Scriptures just in order to make it comply with my preconceived ideas I am putting more value on my finite thinking than I am on the infinite Word of God.

In Romans 3:19 we read, "**Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.**" I firmly believe the world here means all of Adam's race. Then in I Corinthians 1:21 we read, "**For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God.**" Here again the world takes in all mankind. I do not believe anyone can deny that the world in these two verses includes all of the human race.

But when we come to Luke 2:1, we have a different story. Here we read, "**And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.**" No one in his right mind would dare say that "all the world" here included the people in China and India over whom Caesar Augustus had no authority, or the American Indians whom he did not know existed. The world here can only mean the Roman world.

In John 7:4 we see the expression "**shew thyself to the world.**" Most certainly this means the Jewish world. At that time the Jews had no desire to show anything to the Gentiles except contempt. Then in verse 7 our Lord said, "**The world cannot hate you.**" It would be ignorance personified for anyone to say the world in this verse included the people Christ was talking to. In John 12:19 the Pharisees said, "**behold, the world is gone after him.**" Surely no one would say the world here included the Pharisees. And in John 14:17 we read, "**Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive. . .but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.**" Here are two groups of people, the world that could not know the Holy Spirit, and Christ's disciples who did know Him. Then in verse 19 we see two groups, the world that seeth Christ no more and His disciples who will see Him. And in verse 22 Judas asks, "**How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?**" Here these two groups are still before us.

In John 15:18 and also in verse 19 we see the world pitted against the Lord's people. And in John 16:20 we are told that the saints will weep and lament when Christ goes back to the Father, but the world will rejoice. And in John 17:9 Jesus says, "**I pray for them**" and in verse 20 He says, "**Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.**" He prayed for His people who were living at that time, and also for all of us who have believed on Him since that time. But if you notice in verse 9 He says, "**I pray not for the world.**" Here are some people He prayed for, and a world of people He refused to pray for. In verse 14 He says, "**I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them.**" And in verse 16 He says, "**They are not of the world.**" Then in verses 21 and 25 we still see the world and the saints as two separate groups of people. In John 1:10 John says, "**He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.**" We know that many believed on Him, but the non-elect world did not know Him.

In Acts 19:27 Demetrius, the silversmith says that all the world worships the goddess Diana. But this world certainly did not include the Lord's people. In Romans 1:8 Paul says, "**First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.**" Everyone should know that the people in China, India and in America were not going around talking about the faith of the saints at Rome. In Romans 11:12 and 15 we see the fall of the Jews being a blessing to the world. Here it is the world of Gentiles. In I Corinthians 6:2 we read, "**Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?**" Here the world is the non-elect world.

In Hebrews 11:38 speaking concerning the Lord's people we read, "**Of whom the world was not worthy.**" This is also the non-elect world. In James 4:4 we learn "**that the friendship of the world is enmity with God.**" This world is made up of God's enemies. In I Corinthians 4:9 Paul speaking concerning the apostles says, "**For we are made a spectacle unto the world.**" This world is also made up of our Lord's enemies. And in II Peter 2:5 we see a world that Peter calls "**the world of the ungodly.**" This world does not include the Lord's people. Then in I John 3:1 John says, "**Therefore the world knoweth us not.**" The non-elect world does not know, or understand the Christian. And in verse 13 John says, "**Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.**" This world could not include the brethren whom it hates. Then in I John 4:4 John says, "**Ye are of God, little children**" and in verse 5 he

says, "**They are of the world.**" Here the world does not include the little children. And then in I John 5:19 we read, "**And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.**" The whole world here does not include the we who are of God.

In Revelation 3:10 we are told that God will keep the church at Philadelphia from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world. All the world here does not include the church at Philadelphia. Then in Revelation 12:9 we see that Satan deceiveth the whole world. But the Lord's people are not deceived by him. That means that the whole world in this verse includes only old Satan's crowd. In John 17:6 no one can say that the men whom the Father had given to Christ and the world out of which they had come are one and the same. And in John 17:23 the world and the them who have Christ dwelling in them cannot be one and the same people. Then in Revelation 13:3 we see all the world wondering after, or about the beast. But in the next verse we are told that "**they worshipped the dragon.**" The dragon is old Satan, so these people can not be the Lord's people.

Up to this point we have pointed out two places in the New Testament where the word "world" means all mankind. Then we have pointed out thirty-six places where no one with a straight face can possibly say this word means everybody. Now let us consider fourteen other places where it is impossible to know the right meaning except in the light of other Scriptures. And if we are not willing to abide by that light we can only give them the meaning we want them to have to make them fit our own theology.

In John 1:29 Jesus is called, "**the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**" Now if this world means all mankind then there is no sin left for anybody to suffer for. But since the majority of mankind ends up in the lake of fire this world simply has to be the elect world. Then in John 3:17 God sent His Son into the world in order that the world might be saved. If all the people in the world were to be saved, God's precious Word would not just be broken, it would be shattered into a thousand pieces. In John 4:42 Jesus is called "**the Saviour of the world.**" If He were the Saviour of all mankind, then everybody would be saved and the greater part of the lake of fire would not be occupied.

In John 6:33 Jesus is said to give "**life unto the world.**" Since the lost have no spiritual life this world has to be the elect world. In verse 51 He is said to give His flesh for the life of the world. This too can only mean the elect world. In John 8:12 Jesus says He is the light of the world. Since the lost are in spiritual darkness this has to be the elect world. The same goes for John 9:5. In John 12:47 Jesus says He came to save the world. If He came to

save all mankind He has proven to be a miserable failure, but Matthew 1:21 says "**He shall save His people from their sins.**" So this world can only mean His people. In John 14:31 He says, "**That the world may know that I love the Father. . . Arise, let us go hence.**" The lost world knows nothing of the Son's love for the Father, so this world is the elect world.

In Romans 3:6 Paul says, "**God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?**" In verse 5 he asks the question, "**Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?**" He takes vengeance on the lost, so this has to be the lost world. In Romans 4:13 Abraham and his seed are to inherit the world. This can only mean the land of Canaan. In Genesis 17:8 God told Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to him and his seed for an everlasting possession. And in Ezekiel 37:25 these people are to live in the land of Canaan forever. The Arabs just as well move out. In II Corinthians 5:19 God is reconciling the world to Himself. The lost will never be reconciled to God. So this world is made up of the Lord's elect people. In I John 2:2 Jesus Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. The word "propitiation" means to cover their sins and send them away. The sins of the non-elect have not been covered and sent away, and they never will be. So this is the elect world.

I have deliberately saved John 3:16 until the last. This verse, in all probability, is the most abused, mistreated and misconstrued verse in all the Bible. It is to be feared that 99% of the people called Baptists in the world argue even to a fisticuff that the world in this verse includes all mankind. In the light of the precious Scriptures, why do they do this?? Psalm 5:5 tells us that God hates all workers of iniquity. And it does not say He hates their works. It says He hates the workers. Then in Romans 9:13 God says He hated Esau. So if I say God loves everybody I would be calling Him a liar, and I do not believe He would like it. I can assure you of one thing, and that is, you and I will both stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for the way we have dealt with His precious Word.



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From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



Blood on the Mercy Seat

“And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel” (Ex. 25:17-22).

The words of my text are a description of the Mercy Seat found in the Holy of Holies in the Jewish Tabernacle. It was made of a slab of pure gold, and it served as the lid of the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 26:34; 30:6; 31:7; 40:20). The Mercy Seat differed from the Ark which was made of Shittim wood. The only other article in the Tabernacle made solely of gold was the candlestick, which was smaller in size and weight. Therefore, the Mercy Seat was the most valuable of all the holy vessels. Hence it must have typically taught the most important truth about salvation by Christ.

New Testament Scriptures make it plain that the Mercy Seat foreshadowed God's acceptance of Christ's atoning blood in the heavenly Tabernacle. Christ is the Mercy Seat by virtue of the propitiation He offered God. Romans 3:25 says of Christ: **“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.”** An improved translation of the first part of this verse would read: **“Whom God hath foreordained to be a Mercy Seat through faith in his blood. . .”** The word **“propitiation”** in our KJV is the same Greek word translated **“Mercy Seat”** in Hebrews 9:5).

The purpose of this message is to show the meaning of the blood upon the Mercy Seat in the light of New Testament gospel

truth. I believe we are going to find the Mercy Seat to be filled with gems of the gospel of God's saving grace. In a typical manner it declares how a righteous God can justly save a lost sinner.

THE MERCY SEAT SHOWED MAN WAS A SINNER

The atonement for the holy place was **“because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins”** (Lev. 16:16). If the whole nation of Israel were not sinners before God there would have been no need for the Mercy Seat on the Tabernacle. It was necessary that there be a Holy Place to represent Israel before God, for the Israelites were utterly unfit to represent themselves. They had rebelled against God, transgressed His holy law and brought guilt upon themselves. This guilt could only be expiated by blood on the Mercy Seat.

Like the Israelites of old, the whole human race is sinners before God. We are unclean before a holy God from the time of our conception and birth. We have the nature of the children of wrath. These dying bodies are the outward evidence of the evil disease which pervades us. We are all perishing sinners without an atonement for our sins in our natural state. Unless Christ is our Mercy Seat we are doomed for Hell.

Even the atonement of Christ does not improve our old Adamic nature. It is so irremediably bad that all God can do with it is to utterly condemn it. In the death of Christ for sin, God **“condemned sin in the flesh”** (Rom. 8:3). Our old man was crucified with Christ **“that the body of sin might be destroyed”** (Rom. 6:6). The uncleanness of the believer must enter the Sanctuary of God and be met by the cleansing blood of Christ. This is the truth taught by the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat.

THE SEAT OF GOD

The lid of the ark was called a “seat” because it was the Mercy Seat of God. This was the only seat in the Tabernacle, and it was occupied by Jehovah Himself. The Mercy seat was God's throne on earth. The fact that it formed the Divine throne in the midst of Israel was often declared in the Old Testament. Jehovah said in Leviticus 16:2: **“I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.”** King Hezekiah prayed: **“O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou**

alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth” (II Kings 19:15). (See also I Chron. 13:6, Ps. 80:1; Isa. 37:16).

In the Tabernacle there was a table, but there was no chair for Aaron or any of the priests to sit upon. This was because their work was never finished. It had to be constantly repeated from day to day and from year to year. This proved that in the old dispensation the great Sacrifice which would provide rest and satisfaction was future. It pointed to Christ Who would offer one sacrifice for sin and then sit down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

When we think about a seat we associate it with the idea of rest. The Mercy Seat was a resting place for God. There He sat between the cherubims. This foreshadowed the grand truth that God would find a resting place in the finished work of His incarnate Son. It also speaks of the gospel of Christ. It shows there is no other place where the weary soul of man can find rest from sin, but where God has found it, in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE PLACE OF BLOOD

The Mercy Seat as well as the Ark could be seen but once a year and that on the Day of Atonement. On that important day each year the high priest slew a bullock and caught the blood in a basin. This blood was given to another priest to stir that it might not thicken while the high priest was gone into the most Holy Place to offer incense.

First, the high priest went within the vail with incense and burning coals of fire. The incense was put upon the coals so as to burn before the Lord whose seat was between the cherubims. The whole house was filled with smoke so that the cloud of the incense covered the Mercy Seat (Lev. 16:13). After this the high priest came out again and took the basin of blood out of the hands of the priest and went in a second time and sprinkled the blood of the bullocks with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat seven times (Lev. 16:14).

Following these two entrances into the Holy of Holies, the high priest killed a goat for a sin-offering in the court of the tabernacle. The blood of the goat was caught in a basin as the bullock's was. The high priest took this blood and entered the Holy of Holies and did **“with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat”** (Lev. 16:16).

Jehovah could dwell in the midst of a sinful Israel because the Mercy Seat was sprinkled with the blood of atonement. The blood of the sin offering was sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat where God rested between the cherubims. This blood was left there under His searching eye as an abiding witness that the demands of His law had been met and His justice satisfied by the innocent dying for the guilty. The

Mercy Seat was the place where the abiding value of the propitiation was borne witness before God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the type exactly. On the day Christ arose from the dead as our great high Priest, He ascended to Heaven and put His blood on the throne of God. It was written in Hebrews 9:11-12: **“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”**

The symbolical atonement of the high priest was not complete until the blood of the victim was carried into the Sanctuary. Even so, the expiatory work of Christ was not complete until He Himself had risen from the tomb and entered into Heaven, carrying the blood of His sacrifice into the Divine presence. Christ bore the efficacy of His atoning work into the holy presence of His Father. He appeared there as the Lamb Who had taken away the sins of the world of the elect. How strongly this is attested by John's description of Christ in Heaven: **“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain. . .”** (Rev. 5:6).

The high priest in Israel had to enter the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement. Christ as our great high Priest entered the Holy Place in heaven but **“once,”** having by that single act **“obtained eternal redemption for us.”** Christ did not obtain a temporary deliverance, but a permanent deliverance--a salvation for His people which would endure for eternity. Hebrews 9:24-26 declares: **“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”**

Some deny that Christ ascended to Heaven, taking His blood within the vail and placing it on the throne of God the very day He arose. But I believe the words of Christ to Mary confirm that what I have said is so. In the dawn of the resurrection morning when she came to the tomb the following conversation took place:

“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardner, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him

◊ (Continued on page 29)

Blood on the Mercy

(Continued from page 28) ◊

hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rab-boni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:15-17).

Mary was forbidden to touch Christ because He was on His way to Heaven and the Holy of Holies within the veil. Christ had an errand to run which required no touch of mortal hands. But that same evening in the upper room where the disciples had assembled, He came and stood in their midst and said: **“Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see. . .”** (Luke 24:39). In the morning Christ could not be touched because He was on His way to the heavenly Tabernacle, and in the evening of the same day He commanded the disciples to handle Him. The only sensible explanation to this is that sometime between the morning and evening Christ ascended to Heaven and presented His blood to the Father and returned to earth.

The atonement for our sins is the glorified blood of Jesus Christ sprinkled on the throne of God in Heaven. The throne of God is a blood-sprinkled throne. This shows how that atonement, properly speaking, is Godward, and it was all accomplished by Jesus presenting His blood to the Father in the heavenly Tabernacle (Heb. 6:19-20). Within the veil Christ **“offered himself without spot to God”** (Heb. 9:14).

ATONEMENT DEPENDED UPON ONE MAN

The atonement for the sins of Israel was dependent upon one man, the high priest. He alone must fulfill all of God's requirements. Leviticus 16:17 says of him: **“And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for all the congregation of Israel.”** When the high priest came out of the tabernacle alive Israel knew he had accomplished their redemption for another year.

In like manner the work of our spiritual redemption is solely dependent upon Jesus Christ, our great high Priest. From beginning to end our salvation is something accomplished by Christ alone. You may look at its commencement on the cross, or its completion in His resurrection as our great high Priest, and in His entering by His blood once for all into the presence of God, but in each case you can see it is all the work of Jesus Christ. The sinner who is atoned for has

no part in the work of his redemption. He is passive and ignorant of the fact until God reveals it to him by His Spirit and Word.

The Bible often speaks of spiritual redemption as a solitary work of Christ. Hebrews 1:3 reads: **“When he had by himself purged our sins.” “This he did once, when he offered up himself”** (Heb. 7:27). **“He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself”** (Heb. 9:26). He died alone upon the cross. He alone rose for our justification. He alone by offering one sacrifice for sins forever has perfected the whole work of reconciliation which God committed to Him in the Covenant of Redemption.

The sinner cannot reconcile himself to God by good works such as baptism and church affiliation. Every attempt of his own of this kind is the expression of an unbelieving heart, calling in question the eternal redemption which Christ has obtained for us. To be saved the sinner must believe in a reconciliation accomplished, an atonement completed and a salvation finished all by Jesus Christ alone.

ITS DIMENSIONS

Exodus 25:17 says: **“And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.”** There is a deep spiritual meaning here. We are told the length and breadth of the Mercy Seat, but we are not told its thickness. The thickness is omitted to magnify the greatness of God's mercy. Psalm 103:11 declares: **“For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.”**

Its length and breadth speaks clearly of the strict limitations which God has set on His saving grace. Certainly God's mercy is wide to take in every sinner who meets God at the appointed Mercy Seat, but it extends no farther than that. The doctrine of a limited atonement is seen here.

A. W. Pink has well said on this subject: **“There are some who count upon the love of God apart from Christ and His atoning death, which is virtually to devise a Mercy Seat which is wider than the Ark. But this is a vain delusion. God's grace reigns “through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord”** (Rom. 5:21). No grace can be shown unto any sinner apart from the redemptive blood of the Lord Jesus. **“A just God and a Saviour”** (Isa. 45:21). Saving mercy is extended to none except those for whom Christ met the demands of Divine justice. There is much so-called evangelism today which is condemned by the strictly defined dimensions of the Mercy Seat! Christ died not to make possible the salvation of the whole human race, but to make certain the salvation of the elect of God: He made **“Propitiation for the sins of the people”** (Heb. 2:17 R.V.).

THE MERCY SEAT COVERED THE LAW

As the Cherubims stood there with their faces downward, they could not see the tables of the law at the bottom of the ark (Deut. 10:1-5; 31:26). The Divine Being could have a seat over the Ark which contained the law because atoning blood was sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat. There was soul-atoning blood between the law and its righteous Executor.

Had there been no Mercy Seat, the law would have been uncovered. Nothing would have restrained its punishment of the sinner. Nothing would hush its thundering cries for vengeance; nothing would prevent its cursing every lawbreaker. A Just God has said: **“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”** (Gal. 3:10).

Jesus Christ did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. By prophecy Christ said in the Psalm: **“Thy law is within my heart”** (Ps. 40:8). The Prophet Isaiah said of the coming Redeemer: **“He will magnify the law, and make it honorable”** (Isa. 42:21). By His active obedience Christ kept the law to perfection for the elect, and by His passive obedience He suffered the penalty which was due His people for having broken it.

The Mercy Seat exactly covered the law within. Even so, Christ met all the claims against the sinner. A lost soul could never stand before the naked law and live. God killed over 50,000 men of Beth-Shemesh for looking into the Ark at the law (I Sam. 6:19). By removing the Mercy Seat and looking within the Ark at the law they were uncovering what God had covered. Hence to remove the Mercy Seat is to expose the law and to expose the law is to die. To sever mercy from judgment always results in death.

A PLACE OF COMMUNION WITH GOD

Please consider carefully the words of Exodus 25:22: **“And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony. . .”** What a marvelous truth! Sinners are permitted to commune with God through the Mercy Seat. At the blood-stained Mercy Seat God meets and communes with those who approach Him on the basis of the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus on the Mercy Seat turned the throne of God into a throne of grace (Heb. 4:14-16).

Ever since the day man sinned in Eden he has been shut out from communion with God. But it is our privilege as believers to ascend by faith to Him Who is on the throne, both as our mercy Seat and Priest. **“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. . .”**

(Heb. 10:19-22). God grant that we shall draw near and listen while He speaks to us. Oh, how sweet and pleasant to meet Him and have communion with Him in Heaven itself by faith and the Holy Spirit!

*From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat---
“Tis found beneath the Mercy Seat.*

*There is a scene where spirits blend,
Where friend holds fellowship with friend;
Tho' sundered far, by faith they meet
Around one common Mercy Seat.*

*Ah! whither could we flee for aid,
When tempted, desolate, dismayed?
Or how the hosts of Hell defeat,
Had suffering saints no Mercy Seat?*

*O Let my hand forget her skill,
My tongue be silent, cold, and still;
This bounding heart forget to beat,
If I forget the Mercy Seat.*

THE SEAT OF GOD'S MERCY

The lid of the Ark was not called the Mercy Seat for nothing. A God of mercy sat there because His broken law was covered over by blood. Mercy reigned there because the blood satisfied the justice of God. Today God rests upon a blood-sprinkled throne to bestow His favor upon those who approach Him by way of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. There in the blood atonement of Jesus Christ the sinner can meet the God of mercy. There God the Father rests waiting to meet with a convicted sinner. There is no other appointed meeting place. The sinner must meet God at the throne of grace, or meet Him later at a throne of judgment.

Oh, sinner you can only approach God on the basis of the blood atonement of Jesus Christ. God admits no one except those who come on this basis. Without the cleansing blood of the Savior, the sinner is forever shut out from the presence of God. The sinner deserves to die for his sins, but there is blood on the Mercy Seat for him. Oh, unsaved friend, come as an awful sinner to the Mercy Seat. Come confessing your inherent corruption, come with all your sins, your vileness, your uncleanness, your pride and your undone condition. Come and lay all your sins upon the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat.

The Mercy Seat is for sinners. It was for sinners that Christ shed His precious blood. Do not delay. Do not raise questions, Come to the Mercy Seat as a vile, guilty sinner. There is immediate pardon for every sinner who rests upon the finished work of Christ.

*To the Mercy Seat with eagles' wing soar,
And you will find sin and guilt no more;
Heaven will come down your soul to greet,
And glory will crown the Mercy Seat.*



The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. In II Kings 2:19-22, what was the purpose of the cruse of salt that was used for the healing of the waters? - Mississippi

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“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Matt. 5:13).

The Scripture quoted above is a beautiful description of a truly born again believer as salt, which can help meet the needs of this lost world. Salt adds flavor, (my wife says I use too much, but I love salt), it acts as a preservative (some still use salt today for curing meats), melts coldness (we northerners use it to melt the ice), and it heals wounds (salt can take the sting out of and heal a cut, that's after you run around the room and jump up and down for awhile). My study Bible says, “Thus it is a very appropriate description of the believer in his relationship to the world in which he lives.” Also, as we'll see a little later, salt is used as a purifier, that is why companies who sell water softeners use salt.

So taking the above into consideration the question asked is “What was the purpose of the cruse of salt that was used for the healing of the waters?” To find the answer we need to understand what God intended salt for:

“And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering; with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt” (Lev. 2:13).

“All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the LORD, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the LORD unto thee and to thy seed with thee” (Num. 18:19).

“And thou shalt offer them before the LORD, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt offering unto the LORD” (Ezek. 43:24).

A covenant is a joining together, W.E. Vine states concerning the word covenant which is quite beautiful, “The Bible relates God's ‘covenant’ purpose, that man be joined to Him in loving

service and know eternal fellowship with Him through the redemption that is in Christ.” Here is another verse of Scripture that bears this out; **“Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt”** (II Chron. 13:5)?

Joshua had put a curse on Jericho which could have still affected the waters there, **“And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it”** (Josh. 6:26). And now we see Elisha the successor to Elijah performing one of two miracles which establish him as a prophet and showing the spiritual power of his ministry here in our text, **“And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is nought, and the ground barren. And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake”** (II Kings 2:19-22).

So the salt was for purification of the water and it also, to me anyway, is a showing in type, the curse of sin mankind is under and with the salt of the covenant of God we are made pure, joined together with Him in Christ Jesus **“Ye are the salt of the earth.”** I hope the questioner and the reader see the wonderful beauty of God's love toward His elect in this. God Bless!

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The setting of this miracle performed by Elisha the prophet is very interesting. The inhabitants of Jericho lived in a city that had previously been cursed (Joshua 2:17-27) during the times of Joshua. The residents felt as though they lived in a

very pleasant city with one exception, they had bad water. The water was not merely bad to the taste, it was actually noxious. The Hebrew word for barren in the text means to cause to miscarry. The trees would not bring forth fruit and according to Josephus the Jewish historian, women and cattle became abortive who drank of the water. How this speaks of the condition of the natural man! He thinks he lives in a pleasant place of sin which is pleasurable for a season. Yet he finds himself dead in trespasses and in sins (Eph. 2:1) drinking of the poisoned streams of the world unable to bring forth any spiritual fruit that is acceptable to God (Rom. 8:7-8).

God awakened the men of the city to recognize that there was a prophet with a message in their midst which provided them some hope. They went to Elisha perceiving him to be a man of God and asked him what he could do about the corrupt water that plagued their city. Elisha instructed them to get a new cruse and to put salt therein. He then cast the salt into the water and the waters were healed and became fruitful. There was no special power in the new cruse or the salt. In fact salt makes water brackish and distasteful. Salt usually makes the soil barren as well. Elisha was demonstrating the power of God by using the most unlikely means to heal the waters. John Gill, the Baptist expositor said: **“..but this method contrary to nature, was taken, that the miracle might appear the greater: or, as the Jews express it, be a miracle within a miracle”** (Gill's Expositor, Vol. 2, p. 776).

You will notice that Elisha pronounced the waters healed by the power of **“Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters”** effectively declaring that God was the One who performed the actual miracle. Elisha did not take any personal credit nor did he call for the men of the city to pass around an offering plate to collect a love offering. Elisha, a true prophet of God, pointed the people to the power of Jehovah who is able to do **“..exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us”** (Eph. 3:20). Our world is barren, unfruitful, unholy and corrupt. The men and women of the world are drinking from the impure waters of false religion, human philosophy, and godless immorality. The only hope they have comes from an unlikely source, Christians acting as salt and light spreading the Gospel of the grace of God, pointing sinners to Jesus Christ alone for healing and reconciliation. When a sinner is saved the glory does not go to the salt, but to the God of all grace in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ who **“..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).

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Good question that merits some study! Like many miracles, prophecies, and events, the Bible teaches us something from the elements and actors that we would do well to ponder upon.

“..but the water is nought, and the ground barren.” Let's look at the other famous healing of 'bitter' waters. **“So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them”** (Ex. 15:22-25).

So the first deduction we can make is that the cruse of salt, in and of itself is not going to be crucial (at least to God) in the healing of 'naughty' waters. Moses was shown a tree to cast in and sweeten the water!

So why the salt? Maybe a couple of reasons. Unlike leaven in Scripture, salt has both good and bad implications. It is a preservative- **“Ye are the salt of the earth...”** (Matt. 5:13). It is a seasoning agent, **“And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering; with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt”** (Lev. 2:13).

But when conquering nations wanted to make sure that their victims never rebuilt, they sowed their fields with salt to effectively ensure that the farmers would never again be able to utilize the goodness of the ground. **“And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath”** (Deut. 29:23). Certainly not what one would think the LORD would use to sweeten the waters at Jericho through Elisha. That would lead us to the main reason perhaps that the LORD caused Elisha to use salt. It might be comparative to when

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Just what is exclusion from the church? Are you out of the church completely or just under a temporary separation, but still a part of the church? – Mississippi

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Exclusion, or purgative discipline (also known as excisive discipline) changes the affected person from a “member in good standing” to a “disciplined” or “excluded member”, thereby losing all the privileges of a “member in good standing”. These losses would include participation in the Lord’s Supper, voting rights, leading in prayer, or singing specials, etc. **“Purge out therefore the old leaven... But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any MAN THAT IS CALLED A BROTHER [Emp. TMS] be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat...do not ye judge them that are within? ...Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person”** (I Cor. 5:7, 11-13).

A church should never exercise purgative discipline for any other purpose than love. First, love for the offender, in that this is necessary until he or she understands the gravity of their sin or heresy that caused the exclusion. Secondly, love for the remainder of the body of Christ. That they would be 1) protected from the sin and 2) that the body of Christ be kept free from schisms, heresy and moral iniquity. **“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”** (I Cor. 1:10). Even the world should be able to see that God’s true Baptist churches are diligent to keep themselves unspotted from the taint of worldly and heretical sins. A misunderstanding of this desire of God’s New Testament churches to keep the body pure has resulted in the appellations throughout the centuries of “intolerance” and “bigotry.”

“To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (I Cor. 5:5). The disciplined member should be encouraged to attend and all love should be shown toward them, while still maintaining the distance required by the abrogation of God’s Holy Law. **“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God,**

and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:2). The offender **MUST** repent!

The Lord’s church is the highest authority in the universe, concerning her members. You can’t appeal to a higher court in this present age. **“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, WHATSOEVER YE SHALL BIND ON EARTH [Emp. TMS] shall be bound in heaven: and WHATSOEVER YE SHALL LOOSE ON EARTH [Emp. TMS] shall be loosed in heaven”** (Matt. 18:17-18).

So to finish the answer to the question—yes, the excluded member is still a “part” of the church, in that they are **STILL** under the authority of the disciplining church. This is evidenced in that no other true New Testament Baptist church will take them in as a member! The previous offence **MUST** be rectified and then, and only then, will the “reinstated” member be taken by letter. But their “part” in the body is limited until they come before the congregation in repentance and submit to the authority of God’s church by seeking forgiveness and reconciliation.

If they never come back? **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us”** (I John 2:19). Three possible outcomes of exclusion: 1) God’s true members will endure discipline and **WILL** come back... 2) Saints of God might endure punishment and not come back—**“...saved; yet so as by fire.”** Spending all of eternity in Glory, but not part of the Bride of Christ in New Jerusalem. 3) Bastards that never see real chastisement because they are mere ‘professors’ of Christ, not real ‘possessors’ of the God of Glory! **“Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended”** (Matt. 13:21). **“...My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons”** (Heb. 12:5-8).

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I have struggled with this for years and I finally have come to somewhat of an understanding, but I know there are differences of opinions on this subject and I respect that, and would not be dogmatic on my view. With that said I can only offer an answer on how I view exclusion from the church.

There are two questions and I will answer them one at a time starting with the first one; “Just what is exclusion (sometimes referred to as church discipline) from the church?” The word “exclude” from Webster Dictionary is defined as: 1) To shut or keep out; prevent the entrance of. 2) To shut out from consideration, privilege, etc. 3) To expel and keep out; thrust out; eject. Now, the word exclude is only found once in the book of Galatians and excluded is only found once in the book of Romans, these are the only two places they are found in all of Scripture, and neither one of these words has to do with church discipline.

I believe one reason why we use the word exclude is that a disciplined member is excluded from (have not the privileges) to take of the Lord’s Supper, or take any part in the church service, pray, teach, vote, etc. In that sense then they are excluded. But they are more than welcome to come into the church and sing, hear the message preached in hopes they will repent of their offence, or offences. If they are kept out and not allowed to even come into the church building, how then can they repent? I will show Scriptures later to prove my point. I believe that both exclusion and discipline are correct, we just need to understand how they are meant and used in dealing with a member that has been caught in their sin.

Now the second question is a little more complex (at least for me) to try and answer. I would like to answer the second question in two parts, and then elaborate on my answer. First half of the question, “Are you out of the church completely?” My answer would have to be No! Second half of the question, “Or just under a temporary separation, but still part of the church?” My answer would have to be Yes and No!

Now let me explain. You are under a temporary separation in a sense, if you come back to the church right away and repent, and ask the church for forgiveness, that would be temporary, but if you say I’ll never go back there again, then how is that temporary? I would not consider temporary, years and years before you

would repent. Now, if you have been disciplined by a New Testament Baptist Church, as far as I am concerned you are still a part of the church in the sense you are still under the authority of that church until you make it right, you can’t join another church of like faith while being under discipline. But you are not still a part of the church when it comes to the (as I said earlier) praying (this would be the man’s privilege to lead the church to the throne of grace), teaching, voting, and most important, you can not have any part in taking of the Lord’s Supper while being under church discipline.

Again let the reader understand my point, you can not possibly come back and repent if you have been shut or kept out; prevented the entrance back into the church building as would be implied by the full sense of the word exclude (my opinion). But you would be excluded from all the privileges a member in good standing would have and enjoy.

Before we look at some Scripture that shows discipline, let me say I have been a member of various clubs over the years and I have never seen any of them not have a set of rules, and if those rules were broken they were disciplined in some way. People think because it has Christian in it that it is all about love and forgiveness, and they are right to a point. We must handle each case out of love, and not do it maliciously. God loves His children; **“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons”** (Heb. 12:6-8), and I love my children (that’s why they got whippings) and that love shows most when there is discipline. If there wasn’t any love or caring there would be no discipline (have you noticed the behaviour of our young people these days?). There must be some kind of order in the Lord’s church, if not it would be full of sin, and chaos would reign. Discipline means: 1) To regulate one’s moral and mental training according to strict rules. 2) To develop his character. 3) To cause him to render strict obedience to the teachings of God’s Word. 4) To inflict punishment for disobedience.

We see in Matthew 18 that Christ instructs those who have trespassed against another must be dealt with, and as you will see the final resolve is, tell it to the church, and if they will not hear the church they are to be disciplined, **“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the**

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Forum #1

(Continued from page 30) ◊

Elijah soaked the offering on Mt. Carmel with water before he called down fire from Heaven to burn it. No matter how wet the offering, God's fire was going to burn it. And here at Jericho, no matter how much salt Elisha was going to throw into the already bitter waters- God's purity was going to sweeten it!

The ultimate purpose of Elisha's request "**And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him**" (II Kings 2:20) was to obtain the complete obedience and trust of the men of Jericho. No matter if they scratched their heads and wondered what putting salt in the bitter waters would do---if the man of God says get salt---get it! If the man of God says put it in a new cruse- look past all of those old ones and find a new one! If the man of God says set aside the Sabbath for your God, bring your tithes to His church, pray for your enemies, forgive your brother 490 times--just do it! That's what God requests and demands from His people... Implicit obedience! And that's the only way our bitter waters will be turned sweet- Selah! Think about it!

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The cruse of salt was used for the purpose of the demonstration of the power of God and the confirmation of Elisha as a prophet in the absence of Elijah.

The amount of salt contained in a cruse is tiny in comparison to the waters it was poured into. The salt by itself would have no healing properties at all, thus the power of God was seen in Elisha and he was accredited for it being healed and given the respect due unto a prophet.

The same can be said for the apostles of the New Testament "**And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen**" (Mk. 16:20).

MIKE DEWITT



Forum #2

(Continued from page 31) ◊

mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear

the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:15-19).

We believe the main Scripture that, to me, answers the question is 1 Corinthians 5-6. 1 Corinthians 5:13 says put such a man away from among yourselves, some other translations say cast him out... either way, it is a putting out or excluding him from the church. And this is where I have always had a problem with the belief that one should be excluded and shunned, and cast out of the church forever, and that he or she is no longer the church's problem (I have felt that way sometimes, but it is wrong thinking); Paul told the church at Thessalonica in II Thessalonians 3:15 "**Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother**" (please read verse 14, also).

The whole idea of exclusion and discipline is that the one being disciplined will see the error of his or her ways; come back to the church and repent and get on with their life serving God. We see this in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians; "**But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him**" (II Cor. 2:5). Too many times we are so upset and angered that we don't seek the Spirit's leadership to handle each case in the proper way.

I am not sure I answered the question asked, but I will try to sum it up. Again, if it's a temporary separation it's because the one disciplined was grieved enough to come back and repent, outside of that

I would say no, there is no temporary separation. Are they still part of the church, yes, they can still come to church, but, no, they can't do anything but sit there and listen. There are many other Scriptures that could be looked at so I would ask the questioner and the reader, as we always do, search further, and I think the Banner carries the little book "Church Discipline" by L. S. Walker and E. C. Gillentine. God Bless!

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When a church withdraws fellowship from a disorderly member (II Thess. 3:6), purging them as harmful leaven (I Cor. 5:7), by putting them away (I Cor. 5:13), and regarding them as a heathen publican (Matt. 18:17) they are in essence excluding them from all the rights and privileges of church membership. As such they are no longer regarded as a member in good standing and hence not qualified to be in the Bride of Christ.

After studying the passages relating to church discipline I have come to the conclusion that the individual who is "put away" for immorality, heresy, or unfaithfulness is out of the church's fellowship altogether until they bring forth fruits meet for repentance and are restored by vote of the body of Christ. There are several scriptural reasons why I believe this to be true:

First, when Jesus Christ, the Head and Founder of the church set forth the teaching of church discipline in Matthew 18:15-18 He plainly stated that an individual who would not hearken to the scriptural admonitions of the church should be regarded as a "**heathen man and a publican.**" His Jewish hearers regarded heathen Gentiles as being morally impure, defiled, and unfit for worship. They were required to separate themselves from an individual of such character. In my mind when a church takes action against an unrepentant member they are separating themselves from him. Separation necessarily involves stripping the impenitent individual of all rights and privileges of membership. If you have no rights or privileges in an organization how could you possibly still be regarded as a member of that organization until such rights were restored to you?

Secondly, the church at Corinth was instructed by the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to "**Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump**" (I Cor. 5:7) and

to "**Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person**" (I Cor. 5:13). The Greek word for "purge" is ekkathairo which means to cleanse OUT (emphasis mine, TWR), to cleanse thoroughly. The word is also used in II Timothy 2:21 in the sense that a person must remove or separate themselves from those who utter "**...profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness**" (II Tim. 2:16). It stands to reason that if you purge or put away something it means you effectively remove it from you. If a church must "purge" or "put away" an unrepentant member it means that they must be removed or put out of the church membership.

Thirdly, the church is commanded by the authority of Christ to "**withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly...**" (II Thess. 3:6). What are you doing when you withdraw from someone or something? Does it not imply that you are separating or removing them from your company? When a church withdraws the right hand of fellowship from an impenitent member they are in essence publically declaring that the said individual is no longer recognized as part of their congregation.

Fourthly, I believe that a majority of those church members who are disciplined and never restored to fellowship were never truly part of the Lord's body to begin with in light of I John 2:19: "**They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.**" Judas Iscariot was a member of the First Baptist Church of Jerusalem, but he was lost, died in his sins, and will spend an eternity in the Lake of Fire. Can we honestly say that he was still regarded as a member of the body of Christ under discipline until his death? I don't think so.

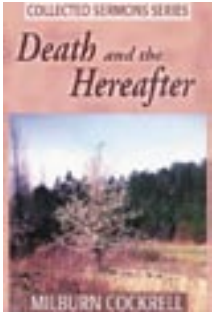
Finally, when someone who has been excluded, sees the error of his way and repents we use the phrases "restored to fellowship" or reconciled to the church" when the church votes to reinstate him. The fact that they are restored, reconciled, and readmitted to the fellowship of the church necessarily implies that they had been previously removed or excluded.

Though some may strongly disagree with what I have written the fact remains that the person who is put away, purged, withdrawn from, is effectively removed from all rights and privileges of church membership. Call it what you will, the end result is the same. A disciplined or excluded member is barred from all rights and privileges enjoyed by faithful members in good standing.

TOM ROSS

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Forum #2

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A church I am very familiar with once had members that would not attend. Seems a strange statement, does it not? Would you consider them to be in fellowship and a member in good standing? No? Not in fellowship then? What does God's Word say about this purposed situation? **"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"**(I Cor. 1:10). So then, there would be what the Apostle warns against. **"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another"** (I Cor. 12:25).

What I am trying to get at here is, that, it's bad enough when a member will not work in the church and be in one accord with the body, but for the church to initiate the schism or for the church to allow the schism to continue by a temporary separation is absolutely against the Scriptures.

God's Word is very plain on this subject (Matt 18:17). When was the last time your church had a **"heathen man,"** (here is the definition: *Strong's Concordance*, 1482 *eynikov ethnikos ethnee-kos'* 3) in the NT savouring of the nature of pagans, alien to the worship of the true God, heathenish; 3a) of the pagan, the Gentile) that was a member of your church? Would you consider this man as a member of your church just as long as he could not partake of the Lord's Supper or vote?

The subject at hand is very plain indeed, either you are included or you are excluded. You cannot be, kind of be, in between. "Is you is, or is you ain't" a member of the Lord's New Testament Church?

MIKE DEWITT



Wisdom Knew Not

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stage by Aristophanes as an atheist, died in the sincere profession of the worship of the gods. Before his death, he ordered his friend to sacrifice a cock to Esculapius. What were the gods of the Epicureans?

Lazy, voluptuous sensualists, who lived at a great distance above the clouds, and took no concern about the affairs of men.

What a poor view of the divine character was entertained by the stoics, is seen in every line of their philosophy. Their man of virtue was superior to their Jupiter. Instead of needing mercy from divine clemency, he scorned to crouch under all the effects of the unprovoked rage of Heaven. The wise man might be happy independent of Jupiter, and even as his opponent; yet, as the Pharisees among the religious sects of the Jews, the stoics were the strictest sect among the philosophers.

That the highest efforts of human wisdom might be exerted, there was nothing wanting to stimulate their genius. They were divided into different sects, who were perpetually at war. Each philosopher was roused by all the strongest passions, to labour for the honour of his system. Philosophy was not merely the ornament, but the very business of life for thousands of the acutest men. The approbation of numerous disciples increased the exertions of the heads of sects, and the perpetual discussions among their followers, could not but sharpen the penetration, and increase the vigour, of the human mind. As war increases the courage and prowess of nations, controversy undoubtedly increases the energy of the mental powers among warring sects.

And what was the result of all their inquiries, of all their intricate discussions? Let us receive an answer to this question from the mouth of God Himself. **"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"** (I Cor. 1:19-21). So far from discovering the divine character, and the plan of salvation, God testifies of these sages, that **"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools"** (Rom. 1:22).

That the wisdom of this world is still not only unequal to the discovery of divine truth, but in dreadful opposition to it, when discovered, is seen in the doctrines of our modern philosophers. In many things respecting the perfections of God, they speak more rationally than their ancient brethren, owing to the light of revelation, which sheds some of its rays on those who are blind to its true glory. They have rejected polytheism, and ascribe immensity, and eternity, and many other attributes, to their god. But he is a god, perfect neither in mercy nor in justice. He neither saves the guilty, nor condemns every transgressor.

With the above exceptions, the god

of the philosopher is not materially different from the god of the ancient sage. Their man of virtue is in every essential point the same. Modern philosophers are even found to acknowledge this. They are willing to give a just theme of praise to the happy tendency of the labours of their great predecessors. Mr. Dugald Stewart, the greatest living philosopher in the science of mind expressly asserts, that some of the ancient systems were rather defective than erroneous. Philosophy has never changed her tone. The soul of her systems in every age is the same. She is every where known by her hatred of the true character of

God, and her encomiums on the virtue of human kind. If ever she succeeds in bringing men to find happiness, it will be by storming the gates of Heaven by the artillery of moral worth. Learn, then, proud philosopher, that your wisdom is folly in the estimation of God. Renounce your atheistical delusions---submit to the wisdom of God---receive the atonement of Jesus. **"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise"** (I Cor. 3:18).

(Works of Carson, Vol. I, 1847).



THE

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NORTH KOREA TOP PERSECUTOR OF CHRISTIANS

Two of the most notorious and restrictive regimes in the world top the Open Doors 2010 World Watch List (WWL) of 50 countries which are the worst persecutors of Christians, released in January. In the No. 1 spot for the eighth straight time is North Korea, the country where every religious activity is recognized as an insurrection to the North Korean socialist principles. In 2009, the North Korean regime of Kim Jong-Il targeted Christians all over the country. That resulted in arrests, torture and killings. North Korean leaders are desperately trying to control society in order to eradicate all Christian activities. There are an estimated 200,000 North Koreans in political prisons, including 40,000 to 60,000 Christians. Iran is now No. 2 on the list. Iran was previously No. 3 on the WWL for many years, behind Saudi Arabia. Of the countries on the top 10 list, eight have Islam as their dominant religion -- Iran, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Maldives, Afghanistan, Yemen, Mauritania and Uzbekistan. North Korea and Laos are communist countries. Also, 35 of the 50 countries on the list have Islamic governments.

PERSONHOOD BILL INTRODUCED IN THREE NEW STATES

Personhood has expanded into three new states, including Iowa, Virginia, and Kansas. On Jan. 13, Virginia introduced HB 112, a bill to guarantee the constitutional rights of preborn children. Shortly after, Iowa introduced HJR 2003 proposing a joint resolution for an amendment including a right to life for all men and women, irrespective of age. The same day, Kansas introduced a personhood amendment to the revisor's office. "Personhood is a revolution of the pro-life movement," stated Keith Mason, co-

founder of Personhood USA. "It challenges what's been done in the past, stimulates the movement's present, and eradicates the need for pro-life efforts in the future. Personhood is the best hope to end abortion in America."

BLACK CHILDREN ARE AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

Georgia Right to Life and the Radiance Foundation on Feb. 4 announced the launch of the Endangered Species Project, an initiative to increase awareness of the impact of abortion on Georgia's minority communities and women. The campaign began with the placement of billboards in Dekalb and Fulton counties where the majority of abortions occur. According to Catherine Davis, Director of Minority Outreach, over 67 percent of the abortions in Georgia occur in those two counties. Davis maintains that this is by design. "Planned Parenthood's Negro Project is succeeding," Davis said. "They targeted blacks in order to control their birthrate, limiting the growth of populations they 'don't want too many of as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg revealed was the goal behind Roe v. Wade (Women on the Court, New York Times Magazine, July 2009)." Georgia leads the country in the number of reported abortions performed on black women, 18,901 in 2008 alone. Davis maintains the impact of abortion is so great that black children are an endangered species.

ALASKA JUDGE GUTS PARENTAL-NOTIFICATION LAW

(EP News)--Planned Parenthood won a partial victory today as Alaska's parental-notification law took effect without key provisions included. Superior Court Judge John Suddock refused a request from the abortion giant to block the entire law, but

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ruled that abortionists will not face fines or prison time if they fail to notify parents before a minor gets an abortion. He also ruled that "designees," instead of physicians, can notify parents. The law passed in August with 55 percent of the votes. Jim Minnery, president of the Alaska Family Council, told NBC's KTUU that Suddock's ruling has made the law useless because abortionists will not be held accountable.

"What's the incentive for a physician?" he said. "It's basically a suggestion." Minnery also pointed out that the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld similar laws on nine occasions.

TEEN BIRTH RATE FALLS TO RECORD LOW

(WNS)--The U.S. teen birth rate in 2009 was down 6 percent and the lowest on record -- 39 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19. Abortion statistics for 2009 have not been released. Valerie Huber, president of the National Abstinence Education Association, said the impact of abstinence-until-marriage education can't be ignored. "These trends show that the risk-avoidance message of abstinence has 'sticking power' for young people," Valerie Huber, executive director of the National Abstinence Education Association, told *The Washington Post*. "This latest evidence shows that teen behaviors increasingly mirror the skills they are taught in a successful abstinence-education program." The Obama administration has significantly reduced funding for abstinence-based programs. "With a change in policy away from abstinence education, we may expect to see a reversal of the teen pregnancy birth rate in the years to come," Jeanne Monahan, director of the Center for Human Dignity at the Family Research Council, told *The Post*.

STATES IN SOUTH, WEST GAIN CONGRESSIONAL SEATS

(WNS)--In the first report from the 2010 Census, released Dec. 21, the South and the West gained congressional seats, while the Northeast and the Midwest lost some. The changes will be used to redistrict congressional districts in 2011, which will affect the makeup of the House of Representatives as well as the Electoral College. Analysts said the changes, which will take effect for the 2012 elections, likely will benefit Republicans. Texas gained four seats, Florida gained two, while New York and Ohio lost two apiece. Gaining one seat were Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, South Carolina, Utah and Washington. Losing one seat were Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. State legislatures are responsible for redrawing the districts.

MIDWEST STATES SEE PRO-LIFE PROGRESS

(WNS)--Indiana lawmakers are working on measures to ban late-term abortions

and defund Planned Parenthood. In Iowa, lawmakers in the House — which returned to Republican control last month — also are drafting legislation to further protect preborn babies. And in Ohio, Planned Parenthood is headed to trial after it reportedly failed to notify a girl's parents before performing an abortion. Lawmakers in Indiana and Iowa are working to mirror Nebraska's new pro-life law, which protects babies after 20 weeks unless the mom's life is in danger. Nebraska's law has prompted notorious abortionist LeRoy Carhart to make plans to leave the state and set up clinics in Indiana and Iowa.

FEDERAL JUDGE RULES HEALTH CARE LAW UNCONSTITUTIONAL

(WNS)—On Dec. 13 President Obama's health care overhaul was dealt its most significant setback yet as a federal judge in Virginia ruled key portions of it unconstitutional — specifically the section that requires individuals to carry health coverage. U.S. District Court Judge Henry E. Hudson said that Congress cannot order Americans to buy health insurance. "Neither the Supreme Court nor any federal circuit court of appeals has extended Commerce Clause powers to compel an individual to involuntarily enter the stream of commerce by purchasing a commodity in the private market," he wrote. "In doing so, enactment of the [individual mandate] exceeds the Commerce Clause powers vested in Congress under Article I [of the Constitution]." The ruling was in response to a suit filed by Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, and comes after another federal judge in Virginia and one in Michigan upheld the health care law as constitutional.

FLORIDA JUDGE CONSIDERS MULTI-STATE CHALLENGE TO HEALTH CARE LAW

(WNS)--A federal judge heard arguments today in a case brought by governors and attorneys general from 20 states that challenges the constitutionality of the health care law. "The act would leave more constitutional damage in its wake than any other statute in our history," David Rivkin, an attorney for the states, told Judge Roger Vinson of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida. The hearing comes just three days after a federal judge in Virginia ruled key portions of the law unconstitutional — specifically the "individual mandate" that requires people to carry health coverage or pay a fine. The states that signed on to the suit are Florida, South Carolina, Nebraska, Texas, Utah, Louisiana, Alabama, Michigan, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Washington, Idaho, South Dakota, Indiana, North Dakota, Mississippi, Arizona, Nevada, Georgia and Alaska.

THIRTY-FIVE STATES TAKE STEPS TO KEEP ABORTION OUT OF HEALTH CARE PLANS

(WNS)--Five states have passed laws to prevent plans in the new "health insurance exchanges" from covering abortions. And

more than 30 states have introduced an opt-out bill, are planning to introduce a bill shortly or are laying the groundwork to introduce a bill. The health care reform law requires states to operate and maintain the exchanges. Health insurance plans offering abortion coverage are allowed to participate in a state's exchange and to receive federal subsidies unless the state Legislature opts out of offering the plans. "I predict that we will see changes in President Obama's pro-abortion health care plan and in other pro-life measures as a result of pro-life leadership taking their places in Washington," said Charmaine Yoest, president and CEO of Americans United for Life (AUL). AUL has developed "The Federal Abortion Mandate Opt-Out Act" to assist state legislators in opting out of providing health insurance plans with abortion coverage.

CONSTITUTION FRAMES CONTROVERSIES IN CONGRESS

(WNS)--The U.S. House of Representatives launched the 112th session of Congress Jan. 6 with a recitation of the U.S. Constitution. It was the first time the document has been read in its entirety on the House floor. "This historic and symbolic reading is long overdue and shows that the new majority in the House truly is dedicated to our Constitution and the principles for which it stands," said Rep. Bob Goodlatte, R-Va., who proposed the idea. Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, said the reading of the Constitution "demonstrates a renewed commitment to following our nation's charter text." Not everyone, however, was pleased with the reading. "They are reading it like a sacred text," Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., told *The Washington Post*. He called the "ritualistic reading" on the floor "total nonsense" and "propaganda" intended to claim the document for Republicans.

REPEAL OF "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL" BRINGS CHALLENGES FOR MILITARY CHAPLAINS

(WNS)--The first casualties of the congressional repeal of the ban on homosexuals serving openly in the military may be chaplains and religious liberty. That is the concern of both retired and active duty military chaplains after the successful push to end the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy that has ruled the armed forces for nearly two decades. President Obama signed the repeal of the policy into law on Dec. 22. "To say we are just repealing a 17-year-old law is highly inaccurate," says retired Navy chaplain Mark Jumper of Illinois. "We are repealing a military practice that goes back to George Washington and the American Revolution." Now chaplains are afraid conservative denominations eventually may pull their support for the U.S. chaplain program, allowing the influential posts to go to more liberal denominations. Inside the military, chaplains who are open to gay unions may be the ones promoted to important positions.

NEW MEXICO MAY RECOGNIZE

OUT-OF-STATE SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

(WNS)--The New Mexico attorney general says the state can recognize same-sex marriages performed elsewhere, but that it "cannot predict how a New Mexico court would rule on this issue." The legal opinion, which was issued by Gary King on Jan. 4, is not legally binding. A spokesman for incoming Gov. Susana Martinez, a Republican, said the governor "made it clear during the campaign that she opposes gay marriage. It's important to note that no New Mexico court has ruled on this issue." Thirty states protect the definition of marriage in their constitutions. Several more have state statutes that prohibit same-sex marriage. New Mexico has neither.

9TH CIRCUIT UNDERMINES MARRIAGE, RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

(WNS)--In a pair of decisions handed down today, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sidestepped the issue of marriage and undercut religious freedom. A three-judge panel sent the Proposition 8 case — which focuses on California's marriage protection amendment — to the California Supreme Court to weigh in on. At issue is whether marriage advocates have the right to defend Proposition 8 in court. Marriage advocates stepped into the case after outgoing Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and outgoing state Attorney General (and Governor-elect) Jerry Brown failed to defend Prop. 8. Incoming Attorney General Kamala Harris has already said she will not defend the marriage amendment either. In a separate case, the 9th Circuit ruled that a veterans memorial cross in San Diego is unconstitutional. The Mount Soledad cross was built in 1913. The current cross, which stands 29 feet tall atop a 14-foot base, was erected in honor of veterans of both World Wars and Korea.

RHODE ISLAND HOUSE TO CONSIDER SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BILL

(WNS)--Legislation introduced Jan. 6 in the Rhode Island House would make the state the sixth in the country to allow same-sex marriage. According to The Associated Press, sponsor Rep. Art Handy has at least 27 co-sponsors, including House Speaker Gordon Fox, a fellow Democrat. Democratic Senate President Teresa Paiva Weed opposes gay marriage, but her spokesman said she would not block a vote on the bill. Incoming Gov. Lincoln Chafee, formerly a Republican and now a registered Independent, has expressed his desire to redefine marriage. "When marriage equality is the law in Rhode Island," Chafee said, "we honor our forefathers who risked their lives and fortune in the pursuit of human equality."

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS IRELAND'S PRO-LIFE LAWS UPHELD BY EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

(WNS)--In a mixed ruling on Dec. 16, the

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European Court of Human Rights upheld the right of individual states to determine sovereign laws on abortion and ruled that the European Convention on Human Rights does not contain a right to abortion. Three women who had traveled out of the country to obtain abortions in 2005 later sued, claiming Article 8 of the convention — the right to private and family life — had been violated because Ireland does not allow abortion except when there's a "real and substantial risk" to the mother's life. The ruling puts pressure on Ireland to liberalize its life-of-the-mother exception. However, abortion advocates had hoped this case would be the Roe v. Wade of Europe. Pro-life leaders are relieved that did not happen.

AUSTRALIAN COUPLE WITH THREE SONS ABORT TWIN BOYS CONCEIVED WITH IVF

The *Scottish Daily Mail* reported that a married couple undergoing fertility treatment aborted twin boys because they wanted a girl.

The husband and wife already have three sons and said they now want to have a girl since their baby daughter died soon after birth.

The couple has taken their case to a legal tribunal after an independent medical body rejected their bid to choose the gender of their next child using IVF.

The couple said they had made the decision to terminate the lives of the twin boys because they could not continue to have an unlimited number of children.

And they warned that if their bid to have a daughter fails, they said they would go to America for IVF treatment in a bid to conceive a girl.

"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate" (Ps. 127:3-5).



Our Lord Emphasizes that Life is the Important Thing

By Willard Willis
of Monroe, Ohio

"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature" (Matt. 6:26-27)?

Our Lord, in verse twenty-five, advised us to take no thought (anxious thought) for our life. We, however, are very slow to hear and heed, so our Lord continues to cite solid examples as to why we should not worry about tomorrow. His first example is that of the fowls. They don't worry about tomorrow; yet they live every one of their allotted days. They don't sow or reap and yet they are fed.

We have also been allotted a prescribed number of years, months, weeks, days and seconds to live upon the earth. I assure you, on the basis of God's Word, that there is no way for us to change that which our God has prescribed for us.

Our Lord emphasizes that our life is the important thing, rather than food, clothing or water. The very fact that we are alive is all the proof we need from God regarding the fact that He will continue our lives until they have run their course.

Do we need further assurance from God relative to the fact that He will continue our lives until we have lived our allotted days? There is proof and that proof is to be found by our observation of the fowls of the air. We will do well to sit at their feet and allow them to teach us how well our Father cares for them. Let us sit at their feet and hear them sing even though they don't have any grain planted or any in the barn. Let us hold one of them in our hand and observe its beautiful feathers even though they have no money or any other means to purchase apparel.

It may be thought that fowls have every reason to sing praises to the Almighty, and, of course, they do have every reason, but how many more reasons have we? We have a multitude of reasons concerning why we should trust Him and sing His praises continually. We, however, are the very ones who are prone to doubt His goodness. He died for us and yet we are less jubilant, in many cases, than are the fowls.

The fowls, when they are hungry, do not go to the market, nor to a place where they have laid aside extra food. They, in fact, expect God to supply all their need. They expect Him to lay up for them. They expect God to open His hand and feed them.

"The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season" (Psa. 145:15).

"He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry" (Psa. 147:9).

The fowls, then, are as they were in the beginning, that is, looking to God and depending completely upon Him who made them. We may add that they are also content with that which God has given them. Man, on the other hand, is constantly demonstrating that he is a fallen creature. This is true of man even though he is endowed with the ability to reason and has the use of means---

means which the fowls do not have. It would appear, therefore, that man would be the one who would always be content and never given to doubt the God who made him. We find, however, that the very reverse is true. It is man who rebels against God's laws and even works his fingers to the bone and ruins his health in an effort to store up beyond that which he needs. Man also, in many cases, is very selfish and will not allow the poor to have even one crumb which falls from his table (see Luke 16:19-21).

The birds sing through the summer time when there is plenty, and when the first frost falls upon the ground and the leaves begin to fall, the birds continue their singing. Their songs declare that they are not frustrated and filled with doubt, for they know that the God who made them is greater than the problems which winter brings. They believe that which is stated in Romans 8:31: **"What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"**

May we, when we are prone to worry and doubt, consider the birds? May we take one of them into our hand and consider how healthy it is? May we observe its beautiful coat of feathers? We, in so doing, will allow the bird to teach us as we sit at its feet. God, in fact, admonishes the sluggard to learn from the ants and He admonishes the doubter to learn from the birds.

It is very obvious to the right thinking person that our God will take better care of His children than He does His birds. **"Are ye not much better than they"** (Matt. 6:26)?

Even we take better care of our children than we do our animals. God in like manner deals in a very special way with His children---children who have been purchased with the precious blood of His dear Son. He, in fact, works all things for our good and will not withhold any good thing from them that love Him.

"And we know that ALL things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28) (Emph. WW).

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature" (Matt. 6:27).

Our Lord, in this Scripture, gives us a third reason for our not becoming overly concerned for the things of this world. The strongest, wisest or richest individual cannot add one cubit unto his stature. This is because our height has been determined by the Almighty. We see, then, that we did not bring ourselves into existence or determine our own height. God has taken care of these matters for us. May we learn from these facts that He will also resolve the other problems which His children are confronted with. God, in fact, has not only determined our existence and height, but He has also

set the bounds of our habitation. He has also determined whether we are to be rich or poor and He has determined our afflictions.

"The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low and lifteth up" (I Sam. 2:7).

"No man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto" (I Thess. 3:3).

"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep" (Psa. 127:1-2).

There are many who are not enjoying a full measure of our Lord's blessings. This is because they are not hearing and heeding the Lord's Word. Let it be remembered that Romans 8:28 declares that all things work together for good to them that love him. Those who do not hear and heed the Word are not expressing a full measure of love. They, therefore, will not receive a full measure of blessings. **"Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit"** (Hag. 1:6-9).



Joy

By John Harvey

*"How great the Christian's portion is!
What perfect joy, what worlds of bliss,
The Lord for them prepares!
Their boundless treasure who can know?
For all above, and all below,
And God, and Christ, are theirs."*

Mistaken notions have been entertained and expressed by many people respecting religion. They have viewed it as a gloomy, melancholy thing, and incapable of imparting to its possessors any real enjoyment or lasting pleasures. But we need not wonder at such views and opinions being formed and asserted, when we consider the character of those who venture to define religion. We might

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as soon expect a blind man to sketch a correct landscape of some nobleman's estate, paint an exact likeness of the person sitting before him, or pretend to teach a language he had never learned, as for the ungodly to judge correctly of the religion of the Bible, which they have never experienced.

But Christianity is joy inspiring, as the testimony of every true Christian fully demonstrates. Instead of creating gloom, and producing sadness and dejection, it inspires the believer with an inward satisfaction and external cheerfulness; a solid joy which nothing but itself can bestow, and of which all are totally destitute who are strangers to vital godliness. **"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart"** (Ps. 97:11).

In speaking of the Christian's joy as a fruit of the Spirit, let us notice---

I. ITS SOURCE AND CHIEF PROPERTIES.

Joy arises from the possession of present, and the anticipation of future good. Its origin and rise are on high. Jehovah is the highest object of the Christian's joy, as well as the infinite and inexhaustible source from which it proceeds. **"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb"** (Rev. 22:1).

There are many passages of Scripture which explain its nature, and reveal its source; better evidences and proofs than those furnished in the Word of God cannot possibly be adduced. It may not be unnecessary nor unseasonable to remind Christians occasionally of the source of their happiness and joy, in order to increase their courage, and inspire confidence in Him who is the fountain of all hope and blessedness.

When Ezra read the law of Moses, as he stood upon a pulpit of wood, and opened the book in the sight of all the people, all the people stood up. **"And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, and lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength"** (Neh. 8:6, 9-10).

David said, **"All my springs are in thee"** (Ps. 87:7). **"Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart"** (Ps. 32:11). Again, **"REJOICE in the LORD,**

O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright" (Ps. 33:1). **"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,"** saith Isaiah, **"my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels"** (Isa. 61:10). **"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour"** (Luke 1:46-47).

All are dependent upon God both for temporal and spiritual blessings. He is the source from which they are derived, and Christ is the medium through which they are communicated, having procured them by His death on the cross. How cheering is the promise: **"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"** (Phil. 4:19). In Him there is a fullness sufficient for the world, a never-failing spring of the purest joy, a fountain of richest consolation, an ocean of perennial bliss. This source is always accessible, free, and inexhaustible.

*"Its streams the whole creation reach,
So plenteous is the store;
Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough for evermore."*

Having noticed the source of the Christian's joy, we will now glance at a few of its chief properties. It is---

1. *Elevating and satisfying.* Worldly joy is often associated with sensuality and disappointment. Hear what Solomon says---**"I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom, and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded my houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards; and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasures of kings and of the provinces. I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on all the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun"** (Eccl. 2:3, 5, 8, 10-11).

The testimony of one so distinguished for his comprehensive views of men and things, his profound wisdom and long experience, is important, and clearly proves the incapability of earthly pleasures and worldly magnificence to satisfy the soul. The joy of religion is

real. By the term real you might infer that there is a feigned or counterfeit joy, and if so, your inference is correct. All is not gold that glitters. The real and the artificial are alike only in appearance, but the semblance and the reality are distinct things.

Worldlings and hypocrites may make an ostentatious parade of their happiness and buoyancy of spirit, indulge in bursts of laughter and emotions of delight, but it is only superficial and momentary. **"That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment"** (Job 20:5). That people are generally in pursuit of happiness, is a truth which will be readily admitted; but in many instances that search for bliss is in the wrong direction; a fact which accounts for the consequent disappointments and blighted hopes of numbers who are engaged in such a pursuit.

The miser is apparently elated with joy as he heaps up the coin of the realm; brass, silver and gold constitute the trinity he adores; but when the thought strikes him that the precious ore will shortly elude his tenacious grasp, and fall into other hands, his mind is sorely grieved, and he becomes feverish and agitated at the idea of such a deprivation. **"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God"** (Luke 18:24).

The man of pleasure and fashion revels in all the gay scenes and worldly amusements his circumstances will allow, but frequently sadness of countenance and heaviness of spirit succeed. The profane sceptic and unblushing infidel, while ridiculing the pious, and indulging a spirit of unbelief, may boast of their enjoyments, but inwardly they have no sacred and permanent joy. **"Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness"** (Prov. 14:13).

Jonah was highly delighted with the gourd which shed a refreshing shade over him, but it was of short duration. **"But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered"** (Jonah 4:7).

Earthly joy is carnal, unsatisfying, and fleeting. But how different is the joy of the Christian. It is spiritual, satisfying, and perpetual. It elevates, refines, and satiates. It emanates from a spiritual source, proceeds from a pure fountain, comes down to a believing heart and unadulterated, and is associated with an experimental knowledge of our interest in Christ. **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"** (James 1:17).

The Christian has no taste for carnal joy, nor is he attracted by the siren notes of sensual pleasure: these things are beneath his notice. His joy is spiritual in

its nature, and is of intrinsic value. **"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"** (Rom. 14:17). It is---

2. *Perpetual.* Not like the sunshine on the mountain tops, or the colors of the rainbow, which soon disappear. It does not pass away as a morning cloud, or like the early dew. **"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted"** (Ps. 89:15-16). **"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice"** (Phil. 4:4). **"Rejoice evermore"** (I Thess. 5:16).

From this you must not infer that the Christian is required to remain indifferent and insensible to every reverse emotion, as though he were destitute of affection and sympathy; for he must **"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep"** (Rom. 12:15). Listen to the language of the apostle Paul, amidst severe tribulations: **"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things"** (II Cor. 6:10). True, there are seasons of sadness and weeping which the most joyful saint may experience during his sojourn on earth, and which state of mind is more consistent and uniform with his profession than to be otherwise; but that does not destroy or diminish the joy of his soul.

The sun may be obscured by a passing cloud, and its splendour eclipsed by the intervention of other bodies; but it retains its glory unchanged, its luster undiminished. So with the Christian: there may be an occasional obscuration of his joy, but still it exists in the depths of his heart. It no more demolishes it than weeping over impenitent sinners, mourning over the loss of the first-born or an affectionate parent annihilates religion or obliterates the recollection of the past. There is a deeply fixed joy in the bosom which no outward occurrences or touching circumstances can remove so long as the heart is right with God. Deep waters cannot drown it, fires of persecution cannot consume it, the blast of adversity cannot wither it, age cannot enfeeble it, a stranger cannot intermeddle with it, demons cannot deprive us of it, nor death destroy it. Sadness was observed on the countenance of the pious Nehemiah, and Artaxerxes inquired the cause thereof: **"Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart."** He answered, **"Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire"** (Neh. 2:2-3)?

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The pious Jews, when carried captive into Babylon, wept on the banks of the rivers and hung their harps on the willows when they remembered Jerusalem. Jeremiah sighed over the wickedness and peril of his countrymen, and in plaintive accents exclaimed, **"OH, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people"** (Jer. 9:1)! So did the Saviour weep over Jerusalem and at the grave of His friend Lazarus.

Such emotions, however, do not supplant religious joy, nor are we at all times to dismiss them from our bosoms.

While earthly joy is inconstant, and incapable of supporting its advocates in declining health, in the day of trouble, and in the hour of death, the Christian can say with the prophet Habakkuk, **"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation"** (Hab. 3:17-18). Joy in all seasons---summer, winter, health, sickness, prosperity, and adversity; joy in all places---at home, when abroad, on the sea and in the desert, in the closet and in the sanctuary, in solitude and in company, in the dungeon and at the stake, in life and in death. We cannot but admire the intrepidity of the apostle Paul when he said, **"...none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy"** (Acts 20:24).

*"Should fate command me to the furthest verge
Of the green earth, to distant barb'rous climes,
Rivers unknown to song; where first the sun
Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam
Flames on the Atlantic isles, 'tis nought to me,
Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste as in the city full;
And where He vital breathes there must be joy."*

It is---

3. **Unspeakable and full of glory. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"** (I Pet. 1:8). It cannot be fully expressed. Thought cannot conceive it; the terms of speech are too feeble for the subject. It is unspeakably precious, and unspeakably full. **"And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full"** (I John 1:4). Religion imparts to its recipients the most refined, pure, and unaffected joy. **"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace"** (Prov. 3:17).

It is **"full of glory."** Its blessedness reaches beyond the present world---it reaches the world of glory; and this can

never be described. Paul was caught up thither; but what he saw and heard was unspeakable. However vast the capabilities of the human mind, or high its soarings, or lofty its flights, or towering its imaginative powers, it is still "in wandering mazes lost." It is full of all that is exquisitely beautiful and blissfully glorious.

It is **"exceeding joy."** The apostle Peter, when comforting believers in their persecutions, addresses them thus: ---**"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy"** (I Pet. 4:12-13). It exceeds every definition, however profound and philosophic; every description, however elaborate; and every earthly gratification that can be realized. It exceeds the flimsy laughter, burst of mirth, and worldly charms of the ungodly, as far as the sun exceeds the pale glimmer of the rushlight. It is the antepast of the fullness of joy in Heaven. All may possess this joy, from the monarch who rules the destinies of an empire, to the meanest subject in his dominions; the learned and illiterate; the refined and the rustic; the rich and the poor; the young and the aged. **"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost"** (Rom. 15:13). Observe---

II. THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN JOY.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (Rom. 5:10-11).

The joy of the Christian arises---

1. **From what God has done for him. "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil"** (Joel 2:23-24).

The privileges which Christians enjoy are great and many. They are delivered from the accusations of a guilty conscience. **"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"** (Gal. 3:10). None but Christians are free from this curse. The ungodly are frequently filled with remorse, gloomy forebodings, and bitter accusations; they have resorted to various means, have given themselves some trouble in order to soothe conscience, and evade

all reflection of death and a judgment to come. But unless conscience be seared, it is difficult to still its voice, it will speak out in accents of terror or in notes of alarm.

But the Christian, in whose heart exists evangelical principles, and who is distinguished by an exemplary firmness and constant love to Christ, is delivered from the guilt, pollution, and condemnation of sin. **"Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"** (Rom. 3:24). And, **"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"** (Rom. 8:1).

They are members of the family of God, sons of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. As such they share in the paternal regard of their heavenly Parent, who is ever mindful of His children---in His wise counsel, in His safe protection, and in His promised help. David said, **"Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me"** (Ps. 63:7-8). The Lord having been his helper in the past, inspired him with confidence of seasonable and necessary assistance in the future.

They have access to God; in prayer and the soul is brought into unison with the Almighty. **"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh"** (Heb. 10:19-20). The ordinances of religion are wells of salvation, out of which they draw water with joy. By waiting on the Lord they renew their strength, and are enabled to go forward in the path of the just. **"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God"** (Ps. 84:7).

The promises also belong to them They are exceeding great and precious; suitable to every occasion and all circumstances in this scene of probation. How rich with encouragement, how indicative of Divine love, how glorious in design, and how replete with hope and comfort! **"...all things are yours; Whether...life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's"** (I Cor. 3:21-23).

They have joyous prospects. They have **"respect unto the recompense of the reward"** (Heb. 11:26). The fear of death is removed, and crowns glitter through the skies. Many recoil and tremble at the thought of dying; no wonder, when they are without God and without hope of Heaven. But Christians rejoice in hope of the glory of God. They meet the last enemy with great fortitude and composure of mind; and when they are removed from this transitory state, they

will be introduced into the highest scenes of existence and inconceivable happiness reserved for the faithful. How animating are the prospects of victory over every enemy, the certainty of Heaven and the full assurance of endless joy at the right hand of God! Well may the children of Zion sing---

*"I'd part with all the joys of sense,
To gaze upon Thy Throne;
Pleasure springs fresh for ever thence,
Unspeakable, unknown."*

Christians rejoice---

2. **Because it is a duty they owe to God.**

---God designed man to be happy. His primeval state was one of happiness. The account of his creation, and the distinguished position in which he was placed, are on record. How pure the air; how rich the soil, how congenial the exercise, how interesting every object above, beneath, and around him! There stood the tree of life, blooming at the centre of the garden; a river went out of Eden to water the garden; all was **"pleasant to the sight, and good for food"** (Gen. 2:9). He was happy until the fatal day of his transgression, which was entirely voluntary. Much was forfeited and lost by the fall; but man may be restored through the sacrifice and mediation of Christ to the favour of God. It is the will of our Creator that man should be happy. This spacious earth is fitted up for the accommodation of man; the fruits of the earth are produced in abundance for his sustenance; the sun flames by day, the moon shines and the stars track the heavens by night; the rain descends, the wind blows, and the air is filled with melody by the feathered songsters. How, amidst such scenery, can the Christian be gloomy and sad? Should not his language be---

*"For me kind nature wakes her genial power,
Suckles each herb, and spreads out every flower;
Annual for me, the grape, the rose renew
The juice nectarous, and the balmy dew."*

"The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof" (Ps. 97:1). We have various instances of rejoicings on record. When the fathers, princes, and tribes of Israel offered gold, silver, brass, iron, and precious stones to the house of the Lord, **Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, . . . to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy"** (I Chron. 29:9). The wise men who went to Bethlehem in search of the Saviour, when they saw the star which had been their guide hover over the place where the young child was, **"they rejoiced with exceeding great joy"** (Matt. 2:10). The father rejoiced over the return of his profligate son. **"Let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found"** (Luke 15:23-24). After Philip had preached Jesus unto the eunuch, he confessed his belief in the divinity of

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Joy

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Christ; then Philip performed the rite of Christian baptism on the eunuch, after which he went on his way rejoicing.

When a penitent sinner is saved he invariably rejoices. This will occasion no surprise when we consider the nature of his deliverance, the imminent danger from which he is rescued, the safety and happiness he secures. What a contrast! An heir of Hell made an heir of Heaven; a child of wrath become a child of God; a brand plucked from the burning; the dead alive again; the lost found. His sorrow is turned into joy. It is the joy of salvation--a salvation from all sin, present, full, and free. **"And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation"** (Isa. 12:1-2).

Not only is there joy on earth when sinners are saved but also in Heaven; the conversion of one soul causes an additional burst of delight, and swells the tide of joy that rolls through Heaven. This is clear from the declaration of the Saviour. **"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"** (Luke 15:10); a fact which proves that "the redemption of the soul is precious."

When the seventy disciples, sent out to work miracles and preach the Gospel, **"returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name"** (Luke 10:17), although He had given them power over evil spirits, to tread on serpents and scorpions, and assured them that nothing could harm them, **"Notwithstanding in this,"** said the Saviour, **"rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven"** (Luke 10:20).

To be employed in promoting the prosperity of a nation, breaking the fetters of the oppressed, and befriending the destitute, is honourable; but the Christian's chief joy arises from the assurance of his name being on high, written in Heaven, written in the **"Lamb's book of life."** This thought encourages in difficulty, supports the mind in trouble, and brightens future prospects.

If the slave is obligated to the person who procures his freedom, the needy to his benefactor, and the drowning man to the individual who rescues him from a watery grave; how much more is the Christian obligated to his Maker, who has delivered him from the bondage of sin, supplied all his wants and saved him from perdition! Having experienced the blessedness of that man whose sins are

forgiven, and received the evidence of his adoption into the favour and family of God, it stirs the joy of his heart and awakens emotions of gratitude and praise. **"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord"** (Ps. 40:2-3). Christians rejoice,

3. *Because it is a duty to religion.* A gloomy, desponding, fretful, sullen, and discontented mind is inconsistent and incompatible with true religion; therefore, to profess religion, and manifest such conduct, is a libel on Christianity.

To be always sighing, repining, and fault finding is derogatory to religion, and argues, we think, imperfect knowledge of the system they professedly avow. What defects some discover, and what imperfections they can point out in the conduct of others. They see a mote in another's eye, but forget the beam in their own eye. They are like a gate off the hinges, a foot out of joint, or a ship without ballast. And how is this to be accounted for? Is there not a cause? Certainly, for there is a cause for every effect: it arises from a lack of religion, a deeper work of grace in the heart. They are in the shallows, too near the shore. We must not skim along the surface of religion, but launch out into the depths we have not sounded.

A ship sailing near the shore is in greater danger of being wrecked than when out at sea, in deep waters. So is the Christian more liable to make "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," by inclining too much to the world--steering too near the sand banks of pride, the rocks of unbelief, and the whirlpools of presumption, than he otherwise would be by raising to higher attainments in holiness, and pressing into entire sanctification.

When there is not much depth of religion in the heart, it is not surprising to find the thermometer of enjoyment very low.

Cheerfulness becomes us in the service of the Lord. **"O CLAP your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph"** (Ps. 47:1). **"MAKE a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious"** (Ps. 66:1-2). **"O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard"** (Ps. 66:8). Christians rejoice,

4. *Because it is a duty they owe to the world.* Pure religion is not merely to be enjoyed, nor pent up in monkish cloisters, but must be exhibited and recommended. But who are to do this? Not the men of the world, for they cannot consistently recommend in theory what they disapprove in practice. The duty therefore devolves upon professors of religion, upon those who assume the Christian character, and

enjoy experimental religion. They must, as social beings, hold intercourse with their fellow-creatures, and endeavour by a cheerful and happy state of mind to represent religion not so as to occasion suspicion, but so as to make favourable impressions, and produce conviction of the truthfulness of its representations. For there are some people who entertain skeptical notions of religion, and to change the views of such characters, a uniform and consistent deportment is essential in those who profess godliness. To promote religion, efficiently, we must throw into it the weight and influence of our own example. **"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"** (Isa. 55:12).

Having observed the source, chief properties, and grounds of Christian joy, I shall close this address with a few remarks.

1. *To those who neither possess nor desire the joy I have been describing.* You are probably seeking happiness in gambling, rioting, and scenes of dissipation on the race course, in the haunts of the debauches, at the theatre, the card table, the billiard room, or in the circles of fashion. Your search for real bliss in such objects and pursuits will be vain. Such amusements, such phantoms of enchantment, are not only illusive, but incapable of yielding permanent and inward satisfaction; for when the cup of pleasure is drained, the dregs are bitter, and the sediment is pernicious. "As one who labours to carry water in a sieve, and to catch the wind in a net, so is he who attempts to gain satisfaction by seeking it in the things of this world."

*"In vain we seek a heaven below the sky.
The world has false but flattering charms:
Its distant joys look big in our esteem,
But lessen still as they draw near the eye;
In our embrace the visions die;
And when we grasp the airy forms,
We lose the pleasing dream."*

You have no cause for rejoicing in reference to future prospects and destiny, no firm ground for mirth while you are at enmity with God. Dreadful denunciations and awful woes are out against you. **"Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep"** (Luke 6:25). Can a person be joyful who is gliding rapidly down the stream to a deep, fatal precipice, over which he is shortly to be precipitated? Can a condemned criminal rejoice on his way to the scaffold on which he must shortly expire? Can a man rejoice as he sets his foot on the threshold of a volcano, and soon may be covered with a shower of fire? Does the mariner see cause for rejoicing while clinging to the wreck of his stranded vessel, expecting every moment to be dashed against the rocks, or sink beneath the roaring breakers, to rise no more? To

these questions common sense answers, No. Equally perilous is your state, and that of all who are unconverted. The stream of time is bearing you on its bosom with an irresistible impetuosity; and, if you repent not, you will eventually be hurled over the precipice of time into the bottomless pit, where there is "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth." You are condemned already, and when the sentence is executed you will be "bound hand and foot," and consigned to dark despair. You are on the verge of a burning vortex, and soon may be enveloped in its devouring flames. You are on the ocean of time; but, although the elements are now calm, and the skies clear, in a moment the heavens may be darkened, a storm may arise, and hurl your frail bark on the rocks of ruin, where, overwhelmed with anguish, the frantic soul shall shriek, as it sinks amidst the storms of eternal indignation. "The wicked are driven away in their wickedness."

2. *I shall address a few words to those who earnestly desire the possession of that joy which is a fruit of the Spirit.* **"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure"** (II Pet. 1:10). Perhaps you have met with some discouragements, have stumbled at some difficulty, and have said, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost." Despair not! "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord" You need mercy: it is provided for you, and is attainable now. Hear the promises and invitations contained in the Scriptures. **"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."** ". . . **the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely"** (Rev. 22:17). You must accede to the Divine requirements. **"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out"** (Acts 3:19). **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"** (Acts 16:31). There is no joy that can equal the joy of the Christian--none so refined, none so pure--none so satisfying; and this joy you may realize.

3. *Let believers adore the Author of their joy.* **"Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased"** (Ps 4:7). None have greater cause to laud and magnify His holy name than they have. You may have to endure painful bereavements, and pass through great tribulations; but these things cannot diminish the luster of the crown that awaits you in the skies. The sorrows, sufferings and fatigues incident to the present life will make the pleasures and joys of Heaven more ineffable and refreshing. Exquisite and endless are the joys above. **". . . in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore"**

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Joy

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(Ps. 16:11). With such a glorious prospect before you, be cheerful, courageous, and faithful. Grieve not the Holy Spirit by neglecting your duty to your Creator. Live in the element of prayer; pitch your tent on "the mountains of frankincense and the hills of myrrh" labour in the Lord's vineyard; strive to be useful. In proportion as you are active in the cause of God will your own joy be increased, and your best interests promoted. **"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy"** (Ps. 126:5). There is joy associated with ministerial success. Hence said the Apostle Paul, ". . .that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (Phil. 2:16). To the Thessalonians he said, **"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy"** (I Thess. 2:19-20). When your work is done, the exhilarating plaudit will break on your ears---**"Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . .enter thou into the joy of thy lord"** (Matt. 25:21). What sights will then burst on your enraptured vision!

"For beneath

*A soul immortal is a mortal joy,
Nor are our powers to perish immature;
But after feeble efforts here, beneath
A brighter sun, and in a nobler soil,
Transplanted from this sublunary bed,
Shall flourish fair, and put forth all their bloom."*



New Year's Resolution: Stop the Fiscal Insanity

By Dr. Mark W. Hendrickson

(WNS)--As we enter the New Year, the financial landscape is littered with essentially bankrupt governments. Governments at every level are in dire financial straits. During the last decade's governmental spending binge, total state and municipal bond debt has nearly doubled to almost \$3 trillion, while federal debt rose over 150 percent from under \$6 trillion to almost \$14 trillion.

Several dozen cities, including Harrisburg, Los Angeles, and Detroit, teeter on the brink of insolvency.

Municipal bonds, once considered ultra-safe, are approaching junk status.

State governments from coast to coast are broke. From Republican Governor Chris Christie's New Jersey on the east coast to incoming Democratic Governor Jerry Brown's California on the west coast, the piper wants to be paid for years of fiscal profligacy. Illinois is six months behind in paying its bills. Cash-strapped Arizona sold the state capitol, supreme court, and legislators' office buildings to private investors. According to "60 Minutes," since the Great Recession started in 2008, state governments have spent a half-trillion dollars more than their revenues (despite constitutional prohibitions of deficit spending).

The federal government, of course, is the most indebted of all. In addition to the explicit debt of nearly \$14 trillion (current figure available at www.usdebtclock.org), Uncle Sam has tens of trillions of dollars in unfunded liabilities. Interest rates on Treasury bonds have risen sharply recently, as investors (most notably the Chinese) have started to dump them.

Given this grim state of affairs, states and cities are looking for ways to tighten their belts. Not Washington, though. Consider the December deal between President Obama and congressional Republicans to prevent tax rates from rising: This bipartisan deal blew a three-quarter-of-a-trillion-dollar hole in the federal budget.

In exchange for keeping personal income-tax rates unchanged for only two years, Republicans assented to an unaffordable spending splurge. Among other concessions, the GOP agreed to over \$50 billion for extended unemployment benefits. The deal doles out billions in subsidies to the economically uncompetitive and environmentally harmful ethanol industry at a time when even Al Gore admits that ethanol subsidies are indefensible. (The Obama-GOP coalition also propped up the wind-energy boondoggle.)

Even more shocking, Republicans acquiesced to Obama's reckless plan to reduce FICA withholding from workers' paychecks from 6.2 percent to 4.2 percent. Social Security payouts will soon exceed revenues within the next few years; yet, instead of measures to shore up cash flow, we get an agreement that weakens the system. I agree with Representative Earl Pomeroy (D-ND), who warned, "When you start to signal that the [Social Security] tax levels are negotiable, you end up in long-term trouble ... in terms of making absolutely certain that the entitlement funding streams are secure."

It's easy to understand why progressives (President Obama, ex-Speaker Pelosi, the labor unions, et al.) support reducing workers' Social Security contributions. Favoring a major redistribution of wealth, they intend to solve Social

Security's inevitable cash crunch by grabbing money from other sectors of society, perhaps even by nationalizing private retirement accounts, as some progressives already have advocated.

Why, though, did Republicans concede to Obama's unaffordable budget-busting spending wish list? It is because they are mired in the same political mindset that got us into our current bankrupt condition. The Republicans wanted to show that they are willing to give a little to get a little, to prove to critics that they aren't intransigent or obstructionist. This is a mistake.

With governments going broke, we literally cannot afford politics as usual. We face financial ruin accompanied by some catastrophic mix of monetary breakdown, economic collapse, and social unrest. When a maniac is about to drive the car you are in over a cliff, you don't make a deal to reduce your speed from 60 mph to 30 mph; you either stop or proceed onward to your doom.

Nobody knows where the point of no return is, or which spending straw will break government's fiscal back. The only way to find out is by hitting that point and plunging into the resulting vortex. I suspect that most Americans would rather not find out where that breaking point is.

It's time for a paradigm shift—no more Mr. Nice Guy, no more compromises with bankrupt and bankrupting policies. Reducing government spending before it is too late isn't a matter of political preference, but of economic imperative.

For decades, the political debate has been between those who want to expand government enormously versus those who wish to increase government moderately. That bankrupt political paradigm has produced bankrupt governments. A new paradigm for fiscal sanity would be a political contest between those who favor cutting government spending a little or a lot. The Tea Party movement notwithstanding, nothing fundamental has changed in Washington. We and our bankrupt governments are due for a day of reckoning.



Shipping Chart

Order Value	Add
Minimum	\$5.00
\$25.00-49.99	\$6.00
\$50.00-74.99	\$7.00
\$75.00-99.99	\$8.00
\$100.00 and Up	FREE

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 12-1-2010 to 12-31-2010

Beginning Balance\$8,123.92

RECEIPTS:

Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Berea B. C., Westpoint, TN	50.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
	475.00
TOTAL	8,598.92

EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time	1,630.00
Postage	99.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1,729.00
	\$6,869.92
Interest	+ 0.30
	6,870.22
Less Corbin, KY des.	-683.72
ENDING BALANCE	\$6,186.50

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance\$843.72

RECEIPTS:

TOTAL843.72

EXPENDITURES:

WCTT	160.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$683.72



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 12-1-2010 to 12-31-2010

Beginning Balance\$2,872.57

RECEIPTS:

Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX	25.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	200.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Berea M. B. C., West Point, TN	150.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	100.00
Bible Believer's B. C., Naples, ID	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	313.45
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	150.00
Buffalo Valley B. C., Clay, WV	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Faith M. B. C., Lynn, AR	25.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
L. H. Farrell, Des Allemands, LA	60.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM	100.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Bristol, TN	10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Philadelphia B. C., Birmingham, AL	500.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumersville, AR	50.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	30.00
Dividing checks	150.00
Anonymous	1,279.00
Sub Total	\$4,092.45
TOTAL	\$6,965.02

EXPENDITURES:

Printing	581.00
Postage	1,075.43
Supplies	131.48
Wages	2,401.50
FICA	175.96
Dividing checks	150.00
Total Expenditures	\$4,515.37
ENDING BALANCE	\$2,449.65

God So Loved the World

By E. G. Cook
(1898 - 1986)



To deny that God loved the world is to deny the precious Word of God. John 3:16 says plainly that He loved the world. But, on the other hand, if I affirm that God loved everybody would I not be denying other Scriptures that are just as true as John 3:16? Let me hasten to say there are no contradictions in the Scriptures. So, when I see Scriptures which appear to contradict each other, it behooves me to say, "Father, for the sake of thy great name, and for the sake of thy Son who became my great and wonderful Savior, and for the sake of thy precious Word which thou hast magnified above all Thy name, open my eyes that I may see, and open my heart and my mind that I may understand these Scriptures for I know they do not contradict each other."

Sometimes it seems that we prefer to just jump over certain Scriptures, which appear to contradict some other passage, rather than run the risk of having to admit that we have been wrong. But is that not a point of weakness rather than one of strength? Do we not honor our Lord by admitting that we have been wrong, and by giving Him credit for having opened our eyes to our error? If you know all there is to know on this subject it will be a waste of your valuable time to read any further, because this little Bible teacher admits freely, and without any fear of contradiction, that he does not know all there is to know about it. But, if you have an open mind and a receptive heart may it please our dear Lord to bless our study of this subject together.

May we begin our study of this subject with the question, if God has ever hated just one person among all of His created creatures, can we say that He loved everybody? Then let us turn to Romans 9:13 where God says, "**Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.**" I know the popular teaching on this verse is that God loved Esau a little less than He loved Jacob. And in years gone by, I could swallow that teaching as if it were a pod of boiled okra. But as time went on, I came to see that this word "**hated**" comes from MISEO which means "to hate." It has no other meaning. So how could I make the word "**hate**" mean "love" to any degree? The Greeks have two words for love. Their word AGAPAO is the one used in the case of God's Divine love. Then they have another word PHILEO which is a much weaker form. This word

PHILEO expresses the love of parents and children. Now if God meant to say that He loved Esau a little less than He loved Jacob, why did the Holy Spirit not use the weaker word PHILEO in regard to Esau rather than the word MISEO, which always means to hate? Then in Psalms 5:5 the Psalmist says, "**Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.**" The time was when I could jump over a couple of letters in this word "**workers**" and make it just plain old "work." Then I could put just a little imaginary lobe in the word "**hate**" in Romans 9:13 and go on my merry way. But, when I became willing to throw all of my preconceived ideas concerning God and His precious Word in the waste basket where they belonged and let my beliefs be in accord with the Scriptures rather than trying to make the Scriptures be in accord with my beliefs, I had to go back and put the two letters back in the word "**workers**" in Psalms 5:5. And then when I looked a little closer, I found there was no niche, nor cavity in the word "**hated**" in Romans 9:13 in which I could squeeze the least tiny little bit of love. So, today, thanks be unto His Holy Name, I can believe Romans 9:13 and Psalms 5:5 just as they were written, and at the same time believe John 3:16.

But, before I could believe those three Scriptures just as they were written I was forced to make a sincere study of the word "**world.**" I had been giving it the meaning I wanted it to have. Now I must either substantiate my definition of this word, or else throw it away. Well, I had to throw it away. I learned in II Peter 1:20 that no Scripture is of any private interpretation. By that is meant that we must interpret John 3:16, or any other Scripture, in the light of other Scriptures. So for the sake of your time, may we study this word "**world**" in the light of other Scriptures found just in John's writings. First, in John 1:10 how could the world that knew not our Lord ever include His disciples who

did know Him? Then in John 1:29, if the Lamb of God took away everybody's sin, why did Hell enlarge herself, and open her mouth without measure in Isaiah 5:14? Since a saviour is one who saves, why is not everybody, how can anybody be dead in trespasses and in sins? Here we are told that He "**Giveth life to the world.**" Could the world that is gone after our Lord in John 12:19 ever include the Chinese, Japanese, American Indians, of the savages in Africa, or even the great majority of the Jews by any stretch of the imagination? Let us notice, they are talking about the world that was in existence at that particular moment of time. They say "The world is gone (not will go) after "Him." If the world that Christ came to save in John 12:46 includes everybody, would you say His coming was a success, or a failure? Is old Satan, who is the prince of this world the prince, or ruler, of our Lord's own people? Could the world that hated our Lord in John 7:7 and 15:18 ever include His precious saints who loved Him so much? Would you say that the world that our Lord refused to pray for in John 17:9 included the ones He did pray for in the first part of this verse, and the others for whom He prayed in verse 20?

There are so many other references, even in John's writings, to prove to any open minded person that the word "**world**" in Scripture almost always means a certain group of people. In I John 5:19 for instance, "**The whole world that lieth in wickedness**" cannot possibly include the "**we**" who are of God. Our better dictionaries will give you something like twenty different meanings of the word "world." No one seems to object to such expressions as, the new world, the free world, or the religious world. And no fair minded person would dare say that the whole world in I John 5:19 includes everybody. So, in the light of that great array of evidence which proves beyond a doubt that the word "**world**" usually means only a part of the people, how can I ever again contend that John 3:16 means that God loved everybody? If God does

not love everybody, does He tell us in His Word who it is that He does love? Since God is the only one competent to answer our question, let us turn to John 13:1 and listen closely as He says, "**Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.**" Here He says plainly that He loves His own. I am waiting patiently for someone to give me the book, chapter and verse where He says He loves the devil's crowd.



This book was originally published in 1970. It has been out of print for many years.

The book is paper back and consists of 197 pages. Also, included in this reprint is a short biography of Bro. Cook by Elder Milburn Cockrell.

The retail price of the book is \$11. See postage chart on page 39.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Citrus Missionary Baptist Church of Inverness, FL and Pastor Troy Sheppard would like to announce their Bible Conference scheduled for February 4th - 6th.

Planned speakers are Elders Leroy Pack, Eddie Bowen, Paul Jackson, Dwight Brooks, John Pruitt, Al Malo, Lewis Kiger, Andy Proctor, Doug Newell IV, Paul Sandelin, and Troy Sheppard.

Meals will be provided by the Church. All are invited to attend. For more information call Pastor Troy Sheppard at (352) 464-1636 or (352) 860-1636.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Galena, OH is in need of a pastor. Any interested candidates should contact either of the following: Bro. Randy Coffey at (614) 871-2406 or Email recaffeypot@aol.com or Bro. Joe Vass at (614) 846-8699 or Email jamijoe@wowway.com.

The Bethel Bible Baptist Church, PO Box 85, Mansfield, LA is in need of a pastor.

Any interested Elder should call Connie McMellon at 318-872-1647.

The Landmark Baptist Church of Collinsville, IL is in need of a pastor.

Any interested Elders may call (618) 288-4236 for more information.

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