

# 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 Church at Thyatira

By Milburn R. Cockrell  
(1941 – 2002)

**"And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of god, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against**

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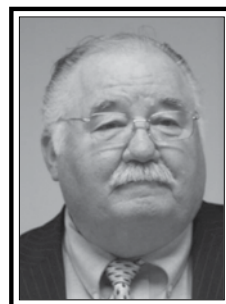


## Distinctive Faith

By Larry J. Killion  
of Tacoma, Washington

How do you know what you are looking at? Well, you usually use your physical senses and make a judgment as best as you can by what they tell you. What does it look like? What does it sound like? What does it smell or taste like? What does it feel like? You know – if it has feathers, webbed feet and walks and quacks like a duck... it must be a duck. Right? There are certain distinctive characteristics or traits that people,

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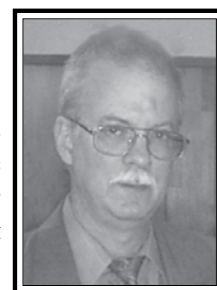
## Making Too Little of Grace

By Lucien J. Le Sage Jr.  
of Pride, Louisiana

Recently I came across a statement that read, "One caution of grace! Never make so much of grace that you make light of sin!"

While I understand what the person was trying to convey yet there is something wrong with this statement. Is it possible to make too much of grace? Is it making too much of grace that leads one

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## None Saved But Those Who Believe

By Timothy J. Hille  
of Ashland, Illinois

**Matthew 13:53-58**

**Text: vs. 58 – "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."**

Many of you have, doubtless many times, sought to witness to some of your nearest and dearest kindred, acquaintance, and friends. Some of you have



sought to bring your parents, siblings, children and grandchildren and other close relations to the Lord. Some of you have done so, and yet it seems that they are no nearer the kingdom of God

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## Salvation of the Saints: Both Then and Now

By Donnie Burford  
of Irvine, Kentucky

**"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:8-9).**

The allusion of the title is to that of the saints of the Old Testament, "then," and to the saints of the New Testament



era, even and especially concerning those of today, "now," and how that in both those dispensations, whether the Old or the New Covenant time, these saints were and are saved.

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**He who falls in the dirt,  
the longer he lies, the dirtier he is.**

Quick repentance comes none too soon. This is the mark of a child of God, that he may fall into the mire, but he will not lie there.

The sheep slips, and is up again; the sow lies down, and wallows.

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

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

# Thyatira

(Continued from page 1) ♦

**thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put unto you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"** (Rev. 2:18-29).

In the circle of the seven churches thus far, we have been going north from Ephesus to Smyrna to Pergamos. Now we are turning south and east in the geographical circle. Thyatira was what we might call a lax church. This is the longest letter of the seven, and it is written to the church in the least important city. Thyatira is also the only church in the seven in which a woman's

name is mentioned.

In the first three letters the churches were seen in conflict with the world, but they, in the main, were victorious over it. They had a few who taught false doctrines which encouraged a worldly life, but these were a small minority. Beginning with the Thyatira Church, the scene has changed. The immoral and heretical minority has suddenly become the majority. The "some" have become the "many," and the faithful have become the "few."

## THE CHURCH (v. 18)

We can be certain there existed a congregation of baptized believers in Thyatira in A.D. 96 when the Book of Revelation was written by John. The notion held in Epiphanius's time (300 years after this epistle) that there was no church in this city until after John wrote is absurd. All Asia heard the gospel in the first century (Acts 19:10, 26; Col. 1:5-6).

When Paul and Silas visited Philippi they preached to some women on the river side, who had gone there for the purpose of worship. Among these women was "Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira" (Acts 16:14). The Lord opened her heart to receive the gospel preached unto her, and she was baptized. Lydia may have returned to Thyatira, taking the glad tidings about Christ with her. Paul could have possibly later visited this town and founded the church there. This may have been the case, but there is no real proof that Lydia returned to Thyatira, nor that Paul founded a church there.

## THE CITY (v. 18)

Thyatira first appeared in history about 290 B.C. It was situated on the border between Mysia and Lydia, a little south of the Hyllus River, and at the northern

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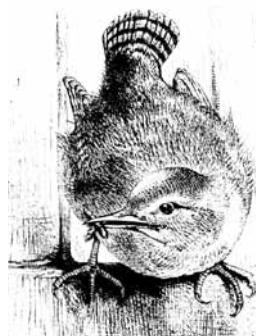
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# Thyatira

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extremity of the valley between Mount Tmolus and the southern ridge of Temnus. It was 27 miles from Sardis and a day's journey from Pergamos, and about the same distance from the sea coast. The Roman road from Pergamos to Sardis passed through it.

Thyatira was one of the many Macedonian colonies established in Asia Minor. It was built as a sentinel block to guard the capitol city of Pergamos. Being situated on the boundary line between Mysia and Lydia, it was one of those military outposts fated to flight a delaying action while Pergamos prepared for the attack.

The waters of Thyatira were well suited for dyeing cloth. The costly purple or the "turkey red" dye was obtained from two sources: one, from the madder root which grew around this city; second, from a little seashell fish called the murex. Lydia was a seller of purple from Thyatira as I have already mentioned (Acts 16:14).

The principle deity of the city was Apollo, worshipped as the sun-god under the surname Tyrimnas. This god was introduced by the Macedonian colonists as the name is Macedonian. Coins found some years ago in Thyatira represented this god with a battle-ax on his shoulder upheld by a blacksmith's bar. A priestess of Artemis is also mentioned in the inscriptions. This may have been the woman Jezebel mentioned in this letter. It appears from this epistle of Christ, Thyatira was an early center of the women's liberation movement, seeing the only two times it is mentioned in the Bible it is connected with two women.

The city was noted for its "trade guilds." These controlled the social, political and religious life of the

whole town. The artists, artisans, merchants and industrial workers found membership in these trade brotherhoods absolutely necessary to success in their profession. These trade unions were brotherhoods based on pagan religions and idolatrous rites and ceremonies. Gross immoral practices were associated with these heathenish worships. The common meal, of which every member of the brotherhood partook, was a sacrificial and religious meal in honor of the pagan deities. Anyone not a member of these clubs was considered an enemy of mankind, and he could expect failure in the business world. These trade brotherhoods were a great deal like the labor unions and lodges of our generation.

## THE CHRIST (v. 18)

Christ is called the son of man in chapter 1, and the Son of God in our text. The term "**the Son of God**" denotes Christ's oneness with the Father in nature and essence. God is the Father of Jesus Christ in a sense in which He is not the Father of anyone else. Christ is the only begotten of the Father by an eternal generation. This title was awarded Christ by His Father, and He here appropriates it by Divine right in defiance of all His enemies.

The Speaker to this church is said to have "**eyes like unto a flame of fire.**" This implies His searching and consuming Divine observations in which the evil in men is seen as it is. Christ has the power of penetration into the very reins of the heart of a man or church. There is no hiding of anything from Him.

It is also said of the Speaker that "**his feet are like fine brass.**" Here are feet which trample down everything unclean and hostile.

## THE COMMENDATION (v. 19)

**"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first."**

What a wonderful eulogy! They had not only worked for Christ, but they were working more for Him than they did in times past!

This church was busy for the Lord. Age had not dampened their zeal nor diminished their efforts. They had "love" to both man and God; they worked out of pure love for Christ. All this activity sprang from faith. They had patient endurance in serving and suffering for Christ. They were acting more and more in accordance with the nature and claims of the Christian profession. Oh, that such could be said of every church in the world today!

## THE COMPLAINT (vv. 20-21)

**"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols."**

Jezebel was a female of great rank and influence in the church at Thyatira, who seduced the members of the church to mix heathen impurities with the worship of the true God. In the language of today she was a liberal, loud-mouthed, broad-minded modernist. She had great charm and attraction by which she won many followers. Jezebel claimed her teaching was given by inspiration of God and deeper than the teaching of the apostles. She called her false doctrine "the deep things of God" whereas Christ called them "the deep things of Satan!"

Jezebel may not have been her real name. It may have been given her as expressive of her character and influence. The Old Testament

Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab, exerted great influence in Israel. She introduced her native idols, and Ahab became an idolater himself. The Jezebel of the New Testament had demoralized the church just as the Old Testament one did the nation of Israel. Just as King Ahab permitted this in Israel the Thyatira Church allowed it to go on without rebuke. This lady preacher had the servants of God conducting themselves as if they belonged to the Devil.

This church, like so many churches today, permitted low moral standards to go unprotested. They said, "Why not be broad-minded and tolerant in the church? Why stir up a fuss over a few thousand liberals and infidels in our seminaries, who deny the deity of Christ and repudiate the inerrancy of the Scriptures? Let us have peace at any price. Let us permit the ladies to be ordained as preachers and deacons." Without doubt this liberal attitude made the church at Thyatira popular with the world, but it cost them the blessings and favors of Christ. Jesus Christ plainly said He is "**against**" such a church.

**"And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not."** Jezebel had been warned of the evil of her course and told to repent. But she showed no disposition to abandon her course. It may have been that Christ warned her through the godly element of the church, but the church took no disciplinary action when she failed to repent. They went on permitting her to teach in the church, a thing forbidden for a woman to do (I Tim. 2:11-12). Such an attitude on the part of the church was sinful; it constituted false charity.

## THE COMMAND (vv. 22-23)

**"Behold, I will cast her into**

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# Thyatira

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**a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.**" Most take this in a figurative sense. However, I believe it should be taken in the literal sense. This verse proves to me that Jezebel was a literal woman and not a religious sect.

Jezebel had committed adultery with some of the male members of the church. Base-born children had come into the world because of these adulterous relations, called **"her children."** Sexual promiscuity was quite common in those days in heathen religious rites. If indeed this Jezebel had been a heathen priestess as I think, it is easy to see how she kept a part of her pagan rites while professing Christianity.

Christ is soon to turn the harlot's bed into a sick bed. The place which had been the scene of her sin is to be the place of her punishment. The bed of pleasure is about to become the bed of pain. Physical adultery results in disease in the body. Such diseased bodies could only be avoided by sorrow for the past and abandonment of the evil course of life.

Jesus Christ was determined to kill her base-born children like He did the first child born to David and Bathsheba: **"And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searchest the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."** The Lord would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children (Ex. 20:5; Rom. 5:19). This judgment was designed to convince all the churches that Christ knew the inner parts of men and all their unclean deeds.

Our modern churches are in the

main like the church at Thyatira. Open sexual sins are committed by church members without any protest from the church. It is not uncommon to hear of a deacon who left town with the preacher's wife, or a preacher who left town with the deacon's wife. Marriage and divorce are the order of the day among professed Christians who boldly claim it is a mere exercise of "God-given rights." Young girls in the church leave home to spend a weekend with their boy friends, and vice versa. Shotgun weddings are held in churches and even church folks see no wrong in such things.

## THE CONSIDERATION (v. 24)

**"But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden."** Christ shows His compassion in these words toward the consecrated few members in this compromising church.

Some had not embraced the doctrinal errors which were so deep that they almost exhausted the talent of Satan himself. The godly people suffered greatly because they had failed to purify the church of such members. They would share some of the punishment sent by Christ upon these corrupt members since they had not excluded them. But the loving Savior would add no weightier burden on this remnant of faithful believers than what would arise from His purpose to inflict judgment on the guilty church members.

## THE COUNSEL (v. 25)

Wise counsel is given to the faithful members in this lax church: **"But that which ye have already hold fast till I come."** Christ is saying to the faithful few: "Your Bible, your Christ, your

gospel is sufficient. Let no man or woman deprive you of your simple faith. You know not the time of my second coming. Keep the faith until I return."

The proper attitude of any church is to hold fast the faith in view of Christ's imminent return. The second coming of Christ is the ultimate objective point of Christian anticipation. "It is a very just observation, that the Scriptures never exhort us to prepare for death, but always for the coming of the Lord" (LECTURES ON THE APOCALYPSE by William Jones, p. 86, 1830 edition). Christ spoke plainly to this church about His return. He would have spoken plainly if He had said: "Hold fast till the Antichrist comes." Christ's words in Revelation 2:25 are clearly pre-trib, not post-trib.

## THE COMFORT (vv. 26-29)

**"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."** Christ is destined to receive the right to rule the earth from the Father. These words from Christ look back to Psalm 2:7-9: **"I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."** In Revelation 2:26-27 Christ says the overcomer will share in that same rule which is given to Him by the Father.

Speaking to His church Christ said: **"And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath**

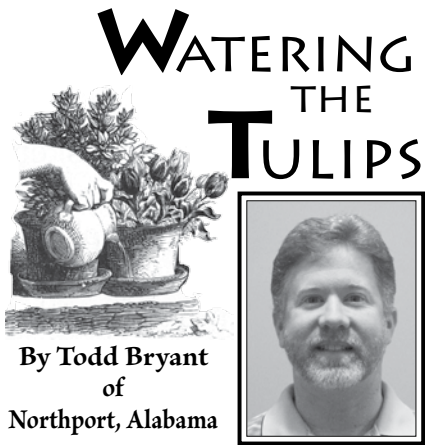
**appointed unto me"** (Luke 22:29). Here is seen the saints' share in the reign of Christ on earth. Those who hold fast to the faith until Christ comes shall share in the kingdom promised to them before the foundation of the world. The Bible teaches that when Christ receives the authority to rule the nations with a rod of iron, and enters into that rule over the nations, the overcomer will also rule with Him over those same nations (II Tim. 2:12). In Revelation 19:15 we see Christ coming from Heaven with **"a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron."** In Revelation 20:4 it is written: **"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them. . .and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."**

Second, Christ promised the overcomer **"the morning star."** There can be no doubt as to the meaning of this, for Christ said in Revelation 22:16: **"I am. . .the bright and morning star."** Christ is called **"a Star out of Jacob"** (Num. 24:17). Thus the meaning is that Christ will give the believer a personal interest in Himself. The morning star signals the dawn, it heralds the promise of full day. When Christ comes for the overcomer He will turn all his darkness into day.

The morning star comes before sunrise. Even so Christ will first come as the Morning Star to take His churches out at the rapture before the tribulation. When He returns to earth some seven years later He will come as **"the Sun of righteousness"** (Mal. 4:2) to Israel at the beginning of the glad Millennial Day. **"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."**







By Todd Bryant  
of  
Northport, Alabama

## Lovingly Drawn

**“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44).**

In a way, the inability of the natural man seems so strange to those of us who have been drawn to Christ. Though we can all surely remember when we had no interest in the things of God, we can also remember the heartfelt desire to know Christ...when the Father drew us. It is difficult for many on this side of regeneration to comprehend the inability of the lost because they judge the salvation experience by their feelings rather than the infallible Scripture. Do not misunderstand; we, as believers, surely had a desire to come to Christ by faith and it is easy to assume this is a natural feeling. However, the Bible says this desire was a gift from God.

God's Holy Word tells us that **“the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”** (I Cor. 2:14). Child of God, you can most certainly look back to a time when you did have a desire to know Christ in a personal way. However, you must see that the Bible affirms that this desire was not “natural.” It was not a part of your wicked heart (Jeremiah

17:9). In fact, the Scripture here tells us that you could not know the things of the Spirit of God because you naturally considered them foolish. The Spirit of God was not present inside of you in your depraved condition. But, praise the Lord, He lovingly drew you to Christ. Your faith in Christ is a super-natural gift (Eph. 2:8)!

The Scripture surely paints a miserable picture of the natural man. Romans 8:7 says, **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”** Perhaps man is not as bad (morally) as he could be. We know God is restraining sin. However, man is as bad off (spiritually) as he can possibly be. He is totally separated from God. He is God's enemy by nature and practice (Col. 1:21). He cannot save himself. But, it is worse than that. He does not want to save himself. He is an enemy of God and rejoices in it. What can bring a person from this state to a desire to know Jesus? Simply, the grace of God! Child of God, you were surely at enmity with God. However, He drew you to Christ!

It can be so easy to base our theology on our experiences. I could easily look back to the time that I was 21 years old and became convicted of my sins. I could easily recall my desire to know Christ and believe that this desire came from somewhere inside of me due to my conviction. Considering this, I could hold to the belief that this is something all men naturally possess. However, the Word of God tells me differently. God's Word tells me that He saved me in spite of what I wanted.

Child of God, perhaps you have never considered that God gently led you to the cross. Perhaps you have never understood that the change wrought within you was

not from you. It may be that you are just now realizing that the Scripture teaches that you trust Christ today because God, in His infinite grace and mercy, lovingly drew you to Christ. Take this very moment to thank Him for His wonderful gift of faith right now.



## Distinctive Faith

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places, and things have whereby we may identify them for what they are. This premise is true with just about everything we can imagine.

As we move into the realm of religion, we understand that this same principle also rings true. All of the various different religions in the world have their distinctive marks that set them apart from all the others and identify them as what they are. For example, if you see a man bowing down toward Mecca and chanting a prayer to Allah, you may reason that he is a Muslim. If you see a woman cross herself and begin her prayer with, “Hail, Mary, Mother of God,” you may conclude that she is a Catholic. If a couple knocks on your door and wants to give you some literature from their briefcase that is published by the Watchtower Society, you may conclude that they are from a group known as Jehovah's Witnesses. If two clean cut nice looking young men come to your door and give testimony that, they believe that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God; you may believe that they are products of the LDS movement.

Examples like these could go on and on. Of course, we can also be fooled. Con men and crooks often pass themselves off as decent law abiding citizens when in fact all

they really want to do is rip you off. Criminals print counterfeit money and pass it off as real. They steal identities and empty bank accounts of unsuspecting victims at the expense of retailers and credit card companies and so on. This happens all too often and unfortunately, it is not that rare in the area of faith. There are a lot of counterfeiters and identity thieves in the world of faith. That is what we want to consider.

There is a lot of confusion among Christendom today regarding the body of Christ. The most popular teaching on the subject is a very creative idea from the imagination of depraved hearts. Rather than taking God's Word at face value and believing the Bible for what it literally says, man has invented an imaginary new meaning for words like BODY. Now we know and we understand that a properly put together assembly of parts makes a body. There are many properly assembled bodies throughout creation. I know you could name several kinds of bodies in the world if you were pressed to do it. Wherever you are in creation, if there is a body of some kind there, and if you are not blind, you can see it. It is not invisible. The Bible also tells us about a certain kind of body that is one of a kind. It is called the body of Christ. As far as the basic definition of the word is concerned, the body of Christ is not that different from any other body in the world. It is local, it is visible and it is fitly framed. In other words, when the right parts are properly put together, there you have it. Let us consider three things about the body of Christ in Ephesians chapter four.

First, let us consider the ONENESS of Christ's Body according to Ephesians 4:4, **“There is one body, and one Spirit, even**

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# Distinctive Faith

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**as ye are called in one hope of your calling."**

The one body is the New Testament "kind" of body that met in the upper room and took the Lord's Supper the night before our Lord's crucifixion. It is what Christ called "my church." It is a local, visible assembly of scripturally baptized believers in Christ who were fitly framed for doing the will of Christ in the great commission. If it meets these New Testament criteria, it is the body of Christ wherever you find it in this world.

The one Spirit is the "kind" spoken of in the New Testament that has all of the same divine attributes as the Father and the Son. He only does the will of the Father and the Son according to the full and complete Word of God. If He meets these New Testament criteria, He is the one true Spirit.

The one hope is the "kind" in the New Testament that has its foundation on Christ and His finished work of redemption. If your hope meets these New Testament criteria, you have the one and only hope that really matters for eternity.

Second, let us consider the GRACE of Christ's body according to Ephesians 4:7, 11-12, **"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."**

Grace is the New Testament giving of a gift or gifts to the undeserving. The gifts that Christ gave to His local church were for

the perfecting and edifying of her members in particular. This is always the way it is and the way it should be understood according to the New Testament.

According to Ephesians 4:13-14, it is our Lord's design that the members of the local New Testament body of Christ, like the one in Ephesus, should mature into the fullness of Christ in the unity of the faith. This can only happen in His kind of local New Testament assembly. It is absolutely impossible for this to happen in some imaginary mystical so-called "body of Christ" or universal bride. Remember, Paul is writing to the local church at Ephesus. The truth that he is talking about here can only be scripturally applied to that kind of church – local, visible. **"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive"** (Eph. 4:13-14).

The so-called universal invisible church could never have this New Testament kind of unity and love. The only way for a true believer to possibly strive for the fullness of Christ is to first of all follow the Lord in scriptural baptism and be added to a local New Testament body of Christ. All those who are not so joined to one of the Lord's assemblies shall be tossed and carried with every wind of the doctrines of men and devils. Christ's church is the house of God today and the pillar and ground of the truth. **"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself**

**in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"** (I Tim. 3:15).

Third, let us consider the LOVE of Christ's body in Ephesians 4:15, **"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."**

The love of Christ constrains us to be truthful. The New Testament way to truth and maturity is to be fed from the Word of God as a member of one of the local New Testament bodies of Christ as taught by the Holy Spirit. On this point of LOVE, the writer wishes to remind the reader that this work is offered as a labor of love. First to the Lord, secondly to his fellow laborers in the truth and thirdly to those who in the providence of God have not yet had these truths presented in a clear and understandable way apart from negative characterizations of the distinctive doctrine and practice of the Lord's true local churches.

According to Ephesians 4:16, the body of Christ is one that is fitly joined together and compacted with every member supplying his part according to the effectual work of God in him by the love of Christ unto edification. **"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love"** Eph. 4:16).

This is STRICTLY local New Testament church doctrine and can in no way be realized by the heresy of the papal hierarchy or the imaginary invention of reformed ecclesiology. The great whore is wrong on the nature of Christ's body and so are all her harlot

daughters. The same goes for the false cults and the Johnny-come-lately crowd with their so-called self-authorized pop-up churches.

We should fear for the souls of many in the world today who name the name of Christ. Most of Christendom consists of professors of Christ who do not actually possess Christ. This is a bold statement. It has force because so many professed Christians are not willing to serve Him the New Testament way in a true New Testament church and I would ask you, are you truly a follower of Christ? Do you know what it means to follow Him according to His word?

**"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"** (I Tim. 1:15).

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

**"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"** (I Cor. 15:1-4).

If you are a true believer, the first act of loving obedience, according to the New Testament pattern, is to submit to Christ's authority in baptism and be added to the membership of a true church, that is, one of His New Testament local

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# Distinctive Faith

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assemblies.

**“And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen”** (Eph. 3:19-21).

Salvation puts you in the family of God. As a believer, God is your heavenly Father and all true believers are your brothers and sisters in Christ. After salvation comes service and in order to scripturally serve the Lord, you need to do that as a baptized member of the body of Christ – a local body of scripturally baptized believers that was fitly framed to do the will of Christ in the great commission. It is out of this institution (the local New Testament church) that Christ elected His bride. AMEN.

(The author has written two books prior and contributed to a third. In each book, the topic of church truth and the Bride of Christ was touched on lightly. As he begins his next book dealing with the distinctive faith, doctrine and practice of a true New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bride of Christ, he does so with fear and trembling. He knows that he will have to say things in this book that will not set well with a lot of folks in Christianity. Our motive for publishing it is not for financial gain. We hope to be an encouragement to those few who are in sympathy with the author and agree with his position on the distinctive faith. We pray that God in His sovereignty might be pleased to use it to bring others to the truth on this fascinating subject. Most of all, if nothing else happens, it is our prayer that God would be pleased with it and get glory from it in spite of its human weaknesses.)



# Making Too Little

(Continued from page 1) ♦

to make too little of sin? These questions are important to a proper understanding of grace. We live in a day that grace is no more than a judicial reconciliation. Preachers have left off teaching the whole counsel of God concerning grace. I would like to demonstrate from the Scriptures that the real problem is not making “so much of grace” but making too little of grace.

If men believe that grace is simply God making a way possible for salvation and leaving it up to men then it will lead to making too little of sin. In our day preachers have preached making a decision for Jesus and then after you make that decision you are eternally saved. Now we certainly believe in the eternal security of the believer but salvation by grace is so much more than this. Of course since you are eternally saved by your decision then sin cannot doom you, can it? This is the false thinking here. I am not suggesting that someone who is truly saved can sin away their salvation, but a person who is still in love with their sins yet does not want to spend eternity in a lake of fire may view such a doctrine as simply a fire escape and nothing more. Jude spoke of such false teachers when he said that they were **“turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness”** (Jude 1:4).

What is grace, we might ask? I like a quote that my pastor uses. He says, “Grace is God doing for us what we could never do for ourselves.” While that is a very true statement I wonder how many souls realize to what degree of help from God that involves. If grace was no more than a legal reconciliation, that is a canceling of debt, then why does Paul

tell us, **“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”** (I Cor. 6:9-10)? Is Paul putting forth the idea that you are saved by grace and then keep yourself saved by not living the life styles here mentioned? I think not, but make no mistake, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals (“abusers of themselves with mankind”), thieves, and those of the other lifestyles mentioned here have no part in the inheritance that is in Jesus Christ. So, Paul, if men are saved by grace and yet those that practice these things are not saved then how is it still of grace? Well Paul explains this in the next verse for he says, **“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”**

Folks, if grace has not sanctified you (set you apart from the world) and given you a holy hatred for the sin that you may have cherished in the past, then be not deceived into thinking you are saved. Paul is the one saying this. He is not saying this from a self-righteous point of view but presenting a stern warning in love. Is it wrong to warn souls of a horrible and impeding danger? In this modern religious era we have members of churches that live together outside of marriage and think nothing of it. After all, they are saved by grace, so they think. The spiritual state of some so-called churches has degraded to the point that a homosexual lifestyle is seen as legitimate. Thus we have a push by deceived people



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

It seems folks are always searching and searching for truth, yet constantly reject it when found, usually because it is inconvenient or doesn't fit their agenda. Rather than trying to find new truth, we just need the people who already know the truth to stand on it without compromise.

to legitimize same-sex marriages. Dear reader if this is your position on the matter then there is no hope for you short of a work by the Spirit of God, which in reality is the only hope for any lost man. As Paul said, **“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”**

## WHY THE NEED FOR GRACE

If grace is indeed God doing for the sinner what the sinner could never do for himself, then to what degree is grace needed? Is it merely to help us along or is it more? Well, in more than one place we are told that the lost sinner is dead in his or her sins and cannot recover themselves and are taken captive at the devil's will. Unless God would first give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth they will never be able to recover themselves. We find that this situation existed from birth because of the curse placed upon mankind from the offence of our federal head, Adam; **“For if**

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**through the offence of one many be dead**" (Rom. 5:15). The Apostle Paul tells us in his epistle to the Ephesians beginning in chapter two that before we were saved we were dead in our sins and that we walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, which is Satan. And that this prince is the spirit that worked then and works now in the children of disobedience. This is the spirit that is working in the false churches that claim homosexuality is a legitimate lifestyle. And Paul tells us that we who are saved also had our conversation in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of wrath just as others who are lost in their sins. But something happened to those who are truly saved. Paul says that they were quickened to life. He says that this quickening from the spiritual dead was a thing of grace. He further writes that this saving grace brought about a faith that was not of ourselves and that none of this was by our own ability or our own works. He further adds that we who are saved had a change of lifestyle and now produced good works, but that this was actually the workmanship of God who before ordained it. You see these works are now the fruit of life and not the dead works of a lost sinner.

## THE ELECTION OF GRACE

Since men are born dead in their sins as the Word of God has so plainly taught, and since God knows the beginning from the end, and without a work of grace no man can be saved, and man cannot raise himself up to even receive grace then God must have chosen whom He would bestow this grace upon. To such a logical conclusion the Bible affirms. **"Even**

**so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work"** (Rom. 11:5-6).

In Paul's epistle to the Ephesians he told them that they were chosen before the foundation of the world to be a holy people and without blame before Him. That it was in love that He predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself. That this was done not because of foreseen merit but according to the good pleasure of His will and all to the praise of the glory of His grace. When Moses wanted to see God's glory, what did the Lord tell him? **"I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will**

**proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy"** (Ex. 33:18-19). God told Moses that He would show him His sovereign grace.

## THE RECONCILIATION BY GRACE

Since men are dead in their sins and since there is an "election of grace" then does grace just stop there? As we pointed out before that grace is more than simply a judicial reconciliation, yet a judicial reconciliation was absolutely necessary and it is on the grounds of that legal reconciliation that the supply of grace in our lives stands. This reconciliation was through the sacrifice of God's own dear Son, Jesus Christ. **".. Much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man,**

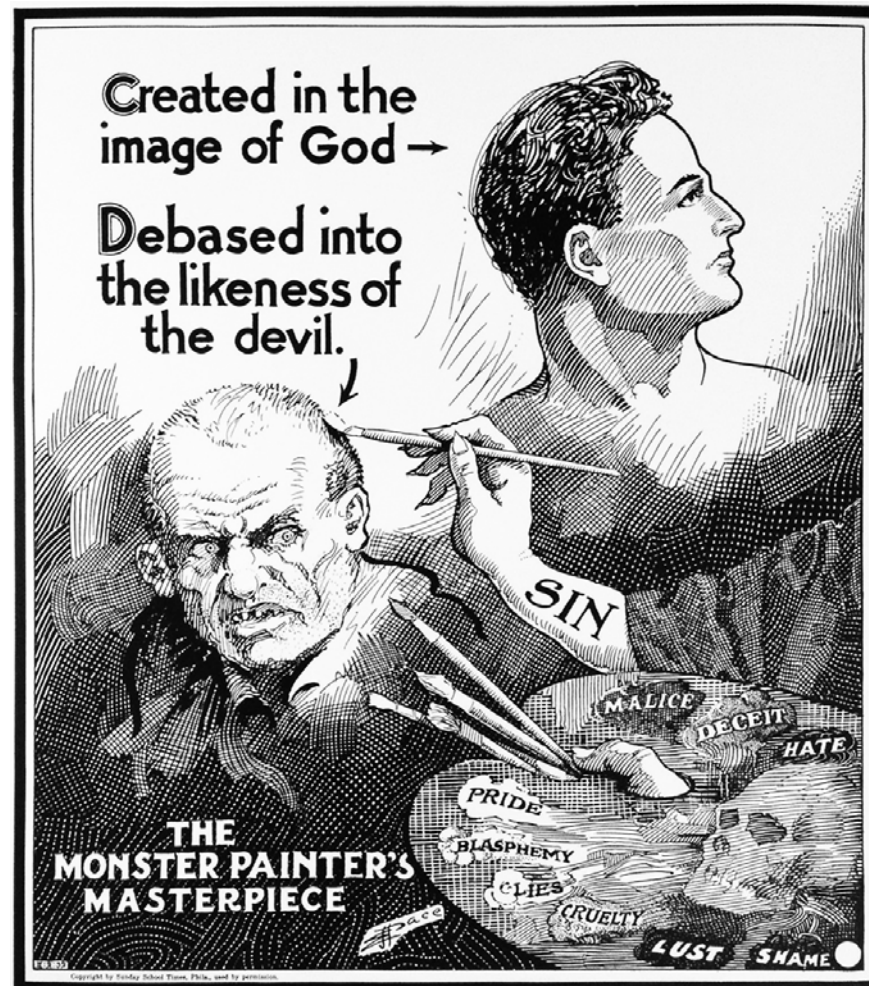
**Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many"** (Rom. 5:15). In Romans 5:10 the Apostle Paul tells the Romans, and we who are saved, that while they were still the enemies of God that they were reconciled by the death of His Son. The Greek word translated "reconciled" is an accounting term. It means to exchange coins of equal value. When you reconcile your checking account you are making sure it balances. If you owed the bank a debt and someone without your knowledge went and paid off that debt and also foresaw any future debt and paid it all off as well, the banker is not going to attempt to extract that debt from you, for that would be illegal. In the same sense Jesus Christ has done this for the "election according to grace." Based upon that judicial reconciliation Paul goes on to say, in that same verse, that the ones who were reconciled while yet enemies shall be saved. **"Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."**

## THE SUPPLY OF GRACE TO THE SINNER

Grace did not stop at judicial reconciliation. There is a need for reconciliation in the heart of the sinner as well. If men are dead in their sins then in order for any reconciliation in their hearts to take place life must be given. **"Be ye reconciled to God"** (II Cor. 5:20). There is a need to be reconciled to God and this is what we preach to sinners. It is the Gospel of reconciliation through Jesus Christ. He hath **"made peace through the blood of his cross"** (Col. 1:20). We are saved by faith in what He did.

When Lazarus was dead in the grave he could do nothing. In John 12:17 we are told that Jesus **"called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead."** When

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Jesus said, **“Lazarus, come forth”** it was an effectual call. It was a call that gave life to a dead man. It was a call that brought him forth from the grave yet while still bound in grave clothes. In like manner the dead sinner is called by grace with the same power that raised dead Lazarus from the dead. **“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified”** (Rom. 8:30). That is the effectual call of God to the “election according to grace;” an effectual call to the legally reconciled. Notice Paul says that all who are **“called according to his purpose”** (vs. 28) are justified and glorified as in the past tense even though glorification is still future. Why is it spoken in the past tense? Because it is certain and why is it certain? Because of grace.

**“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled”** (Col. 1:21).

## GRACE TO RECEIVE MORE GRACE

The Bible admonishes the believer to **“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”** (II Peter 3:18). But it is grace that gave us faith in the first place. So we see we needed grace in the beginning and even grace to receive grace. Grace is needed through our entire walk in this flesh. We are in constant trials and battles and without God’s grace we are “without strength.” In our time of need we are dependent upon God’s grace. Yet we turn to God by grace for more grace. It is grace that empowers us to even ask for grace. The writer of Hebrews tells

us **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”** (Heb. 4:16). James says, **“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble”** (James 4:6). Yet, grace is what made us humble in the first place.

## GRACE TO THE END

Perseverance is required of every one who shall finally be saved. It will distinguish believers from false professors. **“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed”** (John 8:31). The writer of Hebrews states, **“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul”** (Heb. 10: 38-39). Here we see that drawing back is unto perdition. But the writer of Hebrews also states that the just who live by faith are not of them that draw back unto perdition but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. How is that? How can he be so sure? Because the perseverance of the believer is through grace. Paul was confident that God would perform the work that He had begun in believers until the day of Jesus Christ. **“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”** (Phil. 1:6). Notice it was a work that God had begun IN them and not simply for them. Remember Paul told us that those who were called according to His purpose are justified and glorified. He went on to say in that same chapter in his epistle to the Romans that nothing could separate the elect from the love of

God that was in Christ Jesus.

## PAUL’S TESTIMONY OF GRACE IN HIS LIFE

Most of us know of Paul’s persecution of the Church before the Lord saved him. Remember how he had been persecuting the believers in Jesus Christ and had obtained letters from the high priest in Jerusalem to the Synagogues in Damascus that if found any believers in Jesus Christ, whether they be men or women, that he might bind them and bring them bound to Jerusalem to be punished. He had journeyed miles to Damascus and was in eye view of that city when the Lord stopped him and apprehended him. Paul said, **“I am apprehended of Christ Jesus”** (Phil. 3:12). Paul was so willing to persecute the followers of Jesus but after being apprehended of Jesus Christ he was so willing to be His apostle and suffer for His name’s sake. Why? Because of Grace! Paul said that the Lord had called him by His grace at the time it had pleased God (Galatians 1:15). It happened at the time and place God had decided and not when or where Paul decided. That is grace! It was grace that arrested that man and gave him a new heart.

Not only was Paul saved by grace but he was made a minister of the gospel by grace. **“Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost”** (Rom. 15:15-16). And we might add, not only was Paul made a minister by grace but he labored more abundantly

for the Lord than they all, yet it was by God’s grace. **“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”** (I Cor. 15:10).

## GRACE CAUSES THE BELIEVER TO MAKE MORE OF SIN

The original statement quoted was “One caution of grace! Never make so much of grace that you make light of sin!” What we need to caution is not making too much of grace but a perversion of grace. Jude warned not about making too much of grace but about false teachers turning the grace of God into something it was not. The Greek word for “turning” means to translate or transpose something into something else. To change the grace of God into something not taught in the Scriptures at all. In this case it was “lasciviousness” or unbridled lust. To unbridle lust is to legitimize it. Those that teach it is permissible for sexual relations outside of marriage or that what the Bible calls sodomy is a legitimate alternative lifestyle or any other sinful lifestyle are guilty of what Jude warned about. Jude was warning those who were sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ and called to contend for the faith, that is, that system of doctrine, and the reason was because certain ungodly men had crept in amongst believers unawares, teaching a transposed version of grace and that these men were before of old ordained to this condemnation.

What grace really does is to make the born again believer think more of sin and not to make light of sin. Paul tells us in Titus that the grace of God teaches us who are

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saved **“that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”** (Titus 2:11-14). Grace teaches us to think much of sin in our lives with horror and hatred for it, not make light of it.

To think more of sin by thinking less of grace leads to self-righteousness and a legalistic attitude. To think much of grace and by grace to hate sin in our lives is to proclaim like Paul, **“But by the grace of God I am what I am.”**

## GRACE IS NOT A LICENSE TO SIN

It has been said by some that reject the doctrine of eternal security, “Well, if I believed that I would go and sin all I want to.” To which words of wisdom have replied, “I sin more than I want to. I do not want to sin at all against my Lord.” The problem with “I would sin all I want to” is that statement is made by men who have a broken “want to.” What it is saying is they are still in love with the pleasures of this world. Oh, they do not necessarily want to commit every sin there is but there are some they really cherish and would love to do if they could get away with it. This unholy desire is why men turned the grace of God into unbridled lust. The person that views grace this way is still under the bondage of sin and a servant of sin and has not been set free by God’s grace. Paul says the same for he says, **“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under**

**the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness”** (Rom. 6:14-18). But be not confused. This is not something done in the letter but by and in the spirit. It is having a new nature and a new master. It is having a new love and a hatred for the old man and the sin that he loved. **“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh”** (Gal. 3:3)? Absolutely not! No, what the believer in Christ experiences is the fruit of regeneration. It’s God’s grace in his life. It is the grace of God that is with him, as Paul declared.

What is the relationship of grace and the law? We know we are not justified by the law. To keep it simple and without going into a long discussion of the Old Testament economy and the ceremonial law, etc., the law is a revelation of the holiness of God, which is His greatest attribute. All of His other attributes are adorned in His holiness. Even His grace is adorned in holiness which is why He had to send a sinless substitute. Even the Gentiles who did not have the law had the law of conscience unto themselves (Romans 2:14-15). With that said the law is a mirror that we can look into and see ourselves as God sees us. You may have dirt all over your face and not know it, but look into a mirror and you will find out

what you really look like. This is what the law does. It shows us that we are sinners and in desperate need of help. With some this brings about conviction because the Holy Spirit has already begun a work in them and they have a **“godly sorrow” that “worketh repentance to salvation”** (II Cor. 7:10), while others go away and forget what was revealed. **“For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass (mirror): For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”** (James 1:23-25). So the law cannot save us but it does reveal the holiness of God and the sinfulness of men. As Paul said, **“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster”** (Gal. 3:24-25).

## WE NEED MORE GRACE

We need grace everyday of our lives in this warfare with our flesh. Without grace we cannot receive more grace.

In closing we offer a quote from J. B. Moody:

“Do you say this is enough of grace? Not while Salvation is my theme. If grace begins the good work in us, then it is prevenient to any working out by us. When and where does grace begin, and what does it do? To answer this, may the God of all grace give us all grace to perceive grace; and when by grace we perceive grace, may we have grace to feel our need of grace; and when by grace we feel our need of grace, may we have grace

to desire grace; and when we have grace to desire grace, may we have grace to seek for grace; and when by grace we seek for grace, may we have grace to receive grace; and when by grace we receive grace, may we have grace to enjoy grace; and when by grace we enjoy grace, may we have grace to praise grace; and when by grace we praise grace, may we have grace to manifest grace; and when by grace we manifest grace, may we have grace to extend grace; and when by grace we extend grace, may we have grace to grow in grace; and when by grace we grow in grace, may we have grace to serve grace; and when by grace we serve grace, may we have grace to suffer grace; and when by grace we suffer grace, may we have grace to persevere in grace; and when by grace we persevere in grace, may we have grace to die in grace; and when we have grace to die in grace, may we have grace to hope in grace; and when we have grace to hope in grace, may we have grace to rest in grace; and when we have grace to rest in grace, may we have grace to rise in grace; and when we have grace to rise in grace, may we have grace to be glorified by grace; and when we have grace to be glorified by grace, may we have grace to glory in grace; and we have grace to glory in grace, may we have grace to glorify grace; and when we have grace to glorify grace, may we have grace to reign in grace, and when by grace we reign in grace, may the world have grace to be ruled by grace; and when the world has grace to be ruled by grace, may all grace be ascribed to the God of grace; who by grace, and through grace, and in grace, abounds with the all-sufficiency of grace, from everlasting, and will abound forever more.”



# None Saved But

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than before: perhaps it even seems to you that they are farther from the truth and from faith in Christ than they have ever been. We find that Jesus Himself experienced the rejection of those who should have been the first and happiest to receive Him, those of His own country and His own house.

These people had known Jesus and His earthly family, His parents, His brothers and sisters, since the time He was born to Mary in her virginity and raised by His mother Mary and His foster-father Joseph. They had known Him, but they did not know Him in truth. They said, **"Is not this the carpenter's son?"** – referring to His foster-father Joseph, who was a carpenter. They did not know that He was the Son of God and the Savior of the world. They did not know that He had come down from Heaven in the likeness of sinful flesh to die for sinners in the flesh. They did not know that He was the Word of God and that He spoke the words of eternal life. They did not know that He was the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. Why did they not know these things?

**"Because of their unbelief."**

These were blinded by their unbelief. Others knew whom Jesus was. These who were in Nazareth of Galilee had heard of the mighty miracles which Jesus performed. They heard His teaching of God's Word. **"Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" "Whence hath this man all these things?"** Others knew the answer to these questions. When Jesus told Nathanael that He had seen Nathanael under the fig tree before Philip had called Nathanael to come and see Jesus, Nathanael confessed, **"Thou art**

**the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel"** (John 1:49). When many turned back from following Christ and walked no more with Him, and Jesus asked the twelve apostles if they, too, would leave Him, Simon Peter answered, **"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God"** (John 6:68-69). There were some who knew who Jesus was, and who were saved by Him, and who walked with Him. The disciples did not have a perfect knowledge of Jesus. They knew Him to be the Son of God, but as yet they did not know all that His being the Son of God entailed or meant. They did not know everything, but what they did know they knew by faith. They believed what they did know. When you were saved, you did not know everything about Jesus and about the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. I trust you know more now than you did then. Yet, what you knew you believed, and believing you were saved; and the more you have come to know has not changed the truth of what you did know and believe at the first that was true.

These had the privilege of having had Jesus in their midst from His youth up; but that privilege afforded them no spiritual benefit. They were more familiar with Jesus' family than others. They were more familiar with Jesus' upbringing than others. They were more familiar with many aspects of Jesus' personal life prior to the commencement of His earthly ministry than most others. Yet, this familiarity brought them no spiritual advantage. There are people who have been brought up in Christian homes, who have attended sound churches and

heard the Word of God faithfully preached and taught, who have witnessed the godly life of a parent, or parents, who feared the Lord, and yet these persons have gained no spiritual benefit because they have remained in unbelief and unrepentance of their sins toward God. You can be taken to church by your parents, you can learn the Scriptures, you can tithe and give an offering above the tithe, you can sing, you can dress according to godly principles, you can avoid outward immorality, and you can know the truth about many things as far as human knowledge is concerned; and yet, if you remain in unbelief toward Jesus Christ and are not justified from all your sins by faith in Him and what He did upon the cross of Calvary, then you will remain lost and without hope and without God in the world.

**"And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."** The inhabitants of Nazareth had heard of the mighty works which Jesus performed in other places. **"Whence hath this man . . . these mighty works?"** Yet, in their midst, He performed only a few mighty works. They were robbed of the blessing of His power to do wonderful things because of their unbelief. He was not robbed of any of His power or ability. The unbelief of any person does not change God in any way. Your unbelief does not make God unable to do anything. Some teach that God is dependent upon you. No, much the rather, you are dependent upon God. God is not the one who needs a mighty work of grace done in order to be saved from sin, death, and hell; but rather you are the one who, if He does not save you with His mighty hand, will perish forever in the corruption of your own sins. Those who received no mighty

work from Jesus in His native country remained as they were, sick, deaf, blind, dumb, lame, or otherwise afflicted by the devil. Those who remain in unbelief of the gospel of Jesus Christ remain as they are spiritually, lost and on the road to hell, servants of sin and of the devil.

Now we do not read in the Scriptures that "he did not any mighty works there," but that **"he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."** For the general part, the people who lived in the country where Jesus grew up did not believe in Him. Yet some did. **"And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them"** (Mark 6:5). This by no means indicates that it was a small thing that Jesus healed these few sick folk. To them it was all! Yet, was He not able to heal many more? Was this Man whom they thought they knew so well, and whose words and works so offended them, not able to heal any and all that would come to Him, or be brought to Him, or to whom He Himself would come and find? Now I ask you, are there any whom He cannot save? Are there some whom Jesus is not mighty enough to save, whose sins He cannot remit, whose broken hearts He cannot bind up, whose bruises He cannot heal, whose darkened understandings He cannot enlighten? Nay, we know of none who are so! He can save the chief of sinners! He can save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him! There is no deficiency in Him whatsoever to save a single soul, no matter how black with sin, no matter how long that person has been sinning, no matter how many times he or she has sinned. But there

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# The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Please explain Matthew 11:11.

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**“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matt. 11:11).**

This statement by the Lord Jesus Christ comes at the end of a stirring tribute to His forerunner, John the Baptist.. The Lord Jesus had such high esteem for the character and ministry of John that He exalts him above all the prophets and saints of God that went before him in the Old Testament dispensation. John’s ministry was pivotal, transformative, and unique as the chosen one to prepare the way for the ministry of Christ. John carried out his work in simplicity and humility, always being careful to point men to Christ Jesus. He was a fearless preacher who was imprisoned for his boldness and martyred for his unwavering commitment to the truth. John the Baptist was chosen and sent by God with authority to baptize the Founder and Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As great as John was, Jesus makes it clear that there were some who were least in the kingdom of Heaven who were even greater than him. Some conjecture that Christ is referring to the saints

of God in Heaven who were free from sin and the limitations of the flesh. It is certainly plausible that this could be the interpretation given the fact that God’s elect in the heavenly land enjoy unfettered fellowship in the presence of the Lord.

However, I am inclined to agree with Brother John Gill who believed that Jesus was talking about the apostles who were the first members of the church He organized during His earthly ministry (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20-22). What the members of the first Baptist church organized by Christ did is unprecedented in human history. God so empowered them with His Spirit thousands were converted among Jews and Gentiles. New Testament churches were planted through their missionary efforts that are still bearing fruit today (John 15:16). God inspired some of them to write powerful accounts of Christ’s ministry, doctrine, and practice. Their message of grace and power is still resonating in the Lord’s churches 2,000 years removed from the earthly ministry of Christ.

Here are some of Gill’s observations:

“...but of the apostles of Christ, who were then the kingdom of heaven, or the visible Gospel church state. These had better opportunity of conversing with Christ, and of seeing and hearing the things they did, than John had; they had the power of performing miracles, which John had not; were immediately sent forth by Christ, to preach the Gospel, and had a clearer insight into the

truths of it than John; especially, after the Holy Ghost was in such an extraordinary manner poured forth upon them on the day of Pentecost; particularly after the death and resurrection of Christ, they were able to preach Him, not only as come in the flesh, but as having suffered and died, and obtained eternal redemption: they could speak of His blood being shed, of His righteousness being wrought out, and of His sacrifice and satisfaction as being made, which John could not; and besides, were more successful in the conversion of sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, than ever he was. The comparison does not lie so much between their persons, as their several different degrees of light and doctrine.” (Vol. 7, p. 119).

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John the Baptist belonged to the old covenant. Those of the old covenant looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. The sacrifices, the temple, and everything under the Mosaic law were shadows of good things to come. **“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect” (Heb 10:1).**

Those of the new covenant are made perfect thru Jesus Christ. **“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we**

**draw nigh unto God” (Heb 7:19).** The saints of God who enter in the kingdom by way of the blood of the Christ are considered by the King to be greater than those of the Old Testament.

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**“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matt. 11:11).**

Two important points are being made by our Saviour in this verse and they might seem to some as a paradox. First, is the greatness of John the Baptist. None greater, says our Lord! But then, He says that some (one) will be greater before we even finish processing the first thought! Selah! Think about it! If we go back to the context of the chapter, we might see what the Lord is speaking about. Matthew 11:7-10, **“And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? ...A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.”** Jesus answers His own question about whether John was a prophet: **“yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.”** Yes, John the Baptist was a prophet, but much more than that, I believe we can see, John was

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# The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

## 2. What was the purpose of Christ's baptism?

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For me this is one of those questions that I know the answer, but to actually put it into words or explain it may be a little difficult, and the other writers may do a much better job at answering it than me but I will do my best to give a solid answer.

The first thing that I would say, Christ's purpose for everything He did was to do His Father's will. **"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me"** (John 5:30).

The next thing I would say is God has a perfect plan and He works all things after His own will and purpose. **"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"** (Eph. 1:11). So if that is true, which I believe it is true, everything has to be done according to His plan and there can be no deviation from it.

This is where I get very aggravated with those who do not study and who maybe are not even saved. All they want to do is argue about something they have no understanding of what so ever.

So with that said, dear reader, there is an order to things. And

just to stop here for a moment, there are those who do not want to keep this order, they want to do what pleases them no matter what God has said! God not only wants things done His way- He demands it! God has said from the beginning, do it My way and I will shower you with blessings beyond compare. **"And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God"** (Deut. 28:2). Do it your way and face my wrath and judgment. **"And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you"** (Lev. 26:17). **"If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart"** (Mal. 2:2). I believe the judgment God gave to Malachi has fallen on America as well. There are many more Scriptures that can be quoted here but I will not take the space.

First order of things, **"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John"** (John 1:6). So we all understand this, **"THERE WAS A MAN SENT FROM GOD,"** what part of this is not understood? You can call John anything you want at this point but the Bible is clear and says he was a Baptist preacher, **"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea"** (Matt. 3:1), and he was

preaching, **"And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"** (Matt. 3:2). I am going to be a little sarcastic here because I really get tired of some people's interpretation of this part of the Bible. Do you remember the children's TV show, "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood?" Well can you say **"JOHN THE BAPTIST, BOYS AND GIRLS?"** Can you say **"JOHN THE BAPTIST PREACHED, REPENT YE FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND?"** CAN YOU SAY **"JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS SENT FROM GOD, BOYS AND GIRLS?"** Do you get my point? John came preaching and baptizing and God sent him, so that tells me that John was the only one who had the AUTHORITY to do this at that time. I am not going to apologize for being sarcastic because as ridiculous as you think what I said may sound it is how ridiculous people sound that do not believe John was a Baptist preacher! That is, of course, according to whether or not you believe the Bible.

**"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him"** (Matt. 3:13). What! Jesus came to John to be baptized of him! Wow, now is that not something, do I need to tell you dear reader again why Jesus did this? Good, I was hoping not. Look at the next four verses. **"But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and**

**lighting upon him. And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"** (Matt. 3:14-17).

Remember what I said earlier about Christ coming to do the will of His Father? Well look at verse 17 again, the voice from Heaven (God's voice) was well pleased. Do you think that God would have been pleased if Christ would have said, "I have no need to be baptized?" I think not.

Let me again stop here, I do not want the questioner or reader to think I am making fun of the question. On the contrary, I think the question is great, but for those who do not agree with my answer- all I can say to you is God help you. Not that I am right or wrong- this is just a plain truthful fact on the order of things as recorded in Scripture.

I want to wrap this up so let me say this, Christ needed to be baptized because that is what God's order of things were, and He needed to be Baptist to set the example for all those that would be added to His church. **"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls"** (Acts 2:41). **"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"** (Acts 2:47). Whether you believe this or not is no anxiety of mine, but those that were added to the church daily were added by being baptized.

Finally, since John was the only one who had the authority to baptize in order for Jesus to continue and start His Church, the authority had to be passed onto Jesus by John, **"He must increase, but I must decrease"** (John 3:30). John did decrease, he

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# Forum #1

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THE prophet of THE prophecy. Christ then quotes Isaiah 40 and attributes the heralded messenger as this humble John, the voice of the wilderness! Preparing the way for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! This John the Baptist was going to change EVERYTHING.

The task given John was an exalted one, which required a great man of God! None greater born to women! Notice Christ elevates John to that of equality with those prophets gone on before. Not greater than Moses, Abraham or Job. But particularly for this generation of Baptist rejecters, Christ Jesus wanted them to know that not Moses, Abraham nor Job was greater than John, either! None greater! Selah! Think about it!

Our Redeemer is not one to mince words about exaltation and glory. He pairs this information about John's greatness with a mysterious follow-up that says that whatever greatness might be conferred upon the first Baptist, **"he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."** Who is Jesus referring to?

Well, the other usages of this word "least" in the gospel of Matthew are typically translated as "little" or "small." Matthew 18:1, **"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"** Question sound familiar? He is going to answer it for us! Matthew 18:2-4, **"And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall**

**humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."** However great the task given to John the Baptist, so great also is the task given to every child of God! If we humble and submit ourselves to the task God has given us, we can be as the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven! As David, Samuel and Noah! As great as John the Baptist!

But ultimately, I believe this verse is referring to Jesus Christ, Himself, as the One that will be greater than John. I think what Jesus is teaching here, is the importance of service - our service to God! The disciples desired greatness? Then all one has to do is humiliate themselves to the glory of God! And none did that better or as selflessly and perfectly as did the Son of God! When James and John desired that exalted position of sitting on the left and right of the Sovereign of the universe, Jesus told them it was a bitter cup, but never told them it was out of reach! Matthew 20:25-28, **"But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."**

**"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.**

**Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"** (Phil. 2:7-11). Jesus Christ is the GREATEST in the Kingdom of Heaven! Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



To this point and time, humanly speaking there was no one **"born of women"** (physical birth) greater than John the Baptist. Other than the angel Gabriel sent from God appearing to Zacharias and considering Elisabeth's old age, John's was an ordinary birth.

Just a note here, Jesus excludes Himself because He was not **"born of women"** but **"made of a woman."** **"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law"** (Gal. 4:4). Remembering also, that John had an earthly father (Zacharias) involved in his birth, our Lord had no earthly father (Joseph not being involved), but a heavenly Father.

In the Gospel of Luke 7:28, **"For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."** We see what Christ said about John phrased a little different here in Luke. In

Matthew 11:11, Matthew records it **"Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist,"** but Luke records it **"Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist."** There seems to be an emphasis on prophets. So we have **"No greater born of women"** in Matthew and **"No greater prophet born of women"** in Luke. Even though holy men of God were led by the spirit to write, **"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"** (II Peter 1:21). God let them retain their own individuality. So it is not a contradiction, it is how they personally saw things unfold. At this juncture I believe Jesus openly declares John to be more than a prophet. So the prophets of old could only prophesy of the Christ, but John not only prophesied of Him, but got to see Him face to face.

So there should be no mistake here that of all the prophets (Enoch, Noah, Abraham, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest) in the Old Testament, and all men born up until the time John was born there was no man greater. I find no reason than to belabor any longer to prove this out.

So John was the greatest in natural birth, and he had a great calling (sent from God), **"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John"** (John 1:6). John also had great privilege and status, and for me there is no greater privilege for a man than to preach the Word of God.

Now we come to a more complex part of this verse in Matthew 11:11, at least in my opinion (I would encourage the reader to read Luke 7:28 over

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## Forum #1

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again). Who is the **“least”** and what is the **“Kingdom of Heaven”** referring to? I will say this before I continue; whoever the **“least in the kingdom of heaven”** are, they are **“greater than he,”** he meaning John the Baptist.

Some may say that Christ is the one referred to here as the **“least”** being the one greater than John the Baptist, but John already alluded to that when he said in John 3:30-31, **“He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.”** If Christ is above all how can He be the **“least”** and if He is the **“least”** how does He sit on the right hand of God? **“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”** (Heb. 12:2). Also Jesus was not a mere man, neither was He born in like manner as a man, but by a strange and wondrous kind of birth. But that is how I see it and that does not necessarily make me right.

I would have to believe that the **“least in the kingdom of God”** to be the **“least”** believer who lived after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. I would believe that weakest **“least”** member of the Lord’s church has a clearer knowledge of the exact manner in which God would justify the ungodly than John the Baptist or any one that lived before the crucifixion could ever have. I have always said, I would rather have the **“least”** amount of people that were faithful than a

church with a hundred that were not.

There could be a contrast that Jesus is showing here between the privileges of those who lived to see His shedding of blood and those who died before that blood was shed. We do not realize the enormous difference in the position of these two classes of people. Let me give an example of what I am trying to say. While John the Baptist lived he did not have access into the Holy of Holies, it was denied to all to enter except the high priest but after Jesus gave up His Spirit the veil that stood in the way was rent from top to bottom (Mark 15:37-39) **“And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God”** (Mark 15:37-39). But now we have a privilege John the Baptist never had, Wow! Now we can go boldly before the throne of God. **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”** (Heb. 4:16). So that is why I believe Jesus said **“least”** which have come to understand to be the **“least”** church member (since this is the New Testament Church dispensation) was **“greater than he,”** again he being John the Baptist. That is just one example of the many privileges and/or the things we have seen and read about that John did not.

To answer the question what is the **“kingdom of heaven”** referring too? I will let the late Boyce Taylor answer this for me because I believe this to be the **“kingdom”** to which Christ is

referring. This to me would be consistent with what I have said thus far. I will quote from Brother Taylor’s tract *The Difference Between The Family of God, The Kingdom of God, and The Church of God*.

Concerning the Kingdom of God Brother Taylor says, “The Kingdom of God includes all the saved on earth at any given time. In Matthew 13 the kingdom as used in John 3:3-5, Matt. 16:19, 11:11, Luke 16:16, Rom. 14:17, Col. 1:13, John 18:36, etc., is composed of all the born-again on the earth.

This is not the kingdom of Dan. 2:44, Luke 9:11-27, Acts 1:6, etc. These passages refer to the millennium. That kingdom is yet future.

What is sometimes called the spiritual kingdom is composed only of those who have been born again, who have been “translated out of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son.” In John 3:3-5 the Master said, except a man be born anew he can neither see nor enter the Kingdom of God. In Matt. 18:1-16 and Mark 10:13-15 the Master shows very clearly, that the Kingdom is composed of only such as have received Him, whether children or adults. The family of God includes all the saved of all ages, whether in heaven or on earth; the kingdom of God includes that part of the family of God who are on the earth now.” (End of Quote).

One final note! The reader may or may not have picked up on the two passages that have been used in Matthew 11:11 and Luke 7:28. But in Matthew 11:11, Matthew records Jesus using the phrase, **“kingdom of heaven”** where in Luke 7:28, Luke records Jesus using the phrase **“kingdom of God.”** I will use one other illustration to show where I am

going with this. In Matthew 19:23 and 24 we find once again Jesus speaking here, **“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God”** (Matt. 19:23-24). In verse 23 Jesus says **“kingdom of Heaven”** but in verse 24 He uses **“kingdom of God.”**

There has been much debate if they are one in the same, or meaning something totally different. Clearly, the two phrases are to me one in the same, with the meaning being determined solely by the immediate context. I will not take any more space but it seems clear that the **“kingdom of God and/or heaven”** can denote to the same folks, or is in fact the same place. Not in every case but probably more frequent than not.

I pray this will sufficiently answer the question that has been asked. God Bless!

ROGER REED



## Forum #2

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was beheaded. Christ increased, after He was baptized of John He was led up into the wilderness and tempted of the devil (Matthew chapter 4). You will also see in that chapter that He started His earthly ministry and called the first church members. Because in order to have church members you must have a church, which He started as well. All because of the authority that was passed onto Him by being baptized, by one John the Baptist.

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## Forum #2

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Then before Jesus' final departure from the earth He passed the authority on to His Church (Matthew 28:18-20). **"All power"** in verse 18 is "All Authority!" God Bless!

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John's baptism was from Heaven, if it were not Jesus would never had been baptized by him. His baptism showed to you, and me, and all followers of Christ the need to fulfill all righteousness. Jesus put His stamp of approval upon the authority John baptized with. We should take note John is the only person, or Church, that has received authority vertically in the Scriptures to baptize.

I want to point you to Romans chapter 6:1-14. We will be in the first resurrection, if we no longer serve sin.

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Please read Matthew 3:13-17 where the account of Christ's baptism is recorded.

First, Jesus declared that His baptism was to fulfil all righteousness. Baptism is clearly stated as a work of righteousness on His part and

John's. Thus, baptism is in no way to be regarded as a saving or sacramental ordinance in light of Titus 3:5-7: **"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."** Jesus was not baptized in order to be saved or to have any sins washed away. He was sinless and perfect. Rather His baptism provides an example for all believers that it is an act of obedience and righteousness.

Second, the baptism of Christ establishes the importance of proper authority in the administration of baptism. Jesus walked 60 miles to be baptized by John the Baptist, the one who God authorized and sent to baptize. Christ, the Founder and Head of the church recognized the authority of the Baptist in His own baptism. In fact, later in His ministry Jesus declared that those who reject the authority of John's baptism were in effect rejecting the council of God (Luke 7:27-30). As the Head of the church Jesus vested His church with the authority to baptize (Matt. 28:18-20). The church that Jesus started, perpetuated,, and empowered to carry out the Great Commission was what we would today identify as a Baptist church. Thus the authority to administer the ordinance of baptism has always been in the Lord's church to be observed according to His purpose and will.

Third, the purpose of Christ's baptism was to establish the proper mode of baptism once and for all. Jesus was baptized by immersion in water as a symbolic

declaration of His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom 6:1-6). Sprinkling and pouring are the heretical, anti-Christian inventions of sinful men that have never been recognized as valid modes of baptism by true churches of The Lord.

Fourth, Christ's baptism signaled the beginning of His public ministry.

Fifth, the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist was approved and validated by God the Father and the Holy Spirit. The three persons of the Holy Trinity ratified the importance of scriptural baptism to the Lord's churches. All believers should desire to follow the example of Christ and seek the baptism that God approved and validated.

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Jesus Christ's baptism served the same purpose there at the Jordan River that it serves when one of His children is immersed in this generation. It marks out God's chosen avenue of service! It marks out God's people! Matthew 3:16-17, **"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."** This is my beloved Son! Selah! Think about it!

The purpose of baptism has always caused a lot of questions and controversies down through

the ages. But the Jordan River is a good starting point to understand it! First of all, the purpose of baptism is NOT to get saved! Jesus Christ did not need to be saved and yet He was baptized. Cornelius in Acts 10 was already saved- but God sent him to Peter to be baptized! Baptism is NOT to wash away our sins! Again, Jesus Christ is a good place to start, because although He was baptized, it clearly was NOT because He had any sins to wash away. The washing away of our sins was predicated upon His death on Calvary, not His immersion in Jordan! Not with water, but with blood! Revelation 1:5, **"And from Jesus Christ, ...him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."**

Let us review at least two reasons why Jesus went to John for baptism.

1) To establish baptism as a Baptist ordinance. Baptism is the doorway into the Lord's church and He is the Head of the churches. "Follow Me!" He says by word and by action! Matthew 4:18-20, **"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him."**

Only Baptist churches can perform the ordinance of baptism. It is a tightly guarded ordinance, that allows no imposters or alien immersions (or sprinklings, for that matter!). No one else could baptize Christ, but John! Why? John 1:6,32-33, **"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ...And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit**

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## Forum #2

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descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." Scripture clearly states that God sent John with the authority to baptize. None other, until Christ assumed the mantle of authority (via baptism) and built His church out of the materials prepared by John the Baptist, could baptize! Selah! Think about it!

2) To establish baptism as an ordinance of submission. I Peter 3:21, **"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."** Did you ever wonder what the purpose could have been for Christ Jesus, the Son of God to submit Himself to the baptismal administrations of a mere mortal like John? John correctly deduces this great patronization in Matthew 3:13-15, **"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"** There is NO WAY in the world that John could be worthy of such an act of superiority! But Christ makes it clear that His condescension is to the One who SENT John, not the mortal himself. **"And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all**

**righteousness. Then he suffered him."**

In other words, Jesus told John that he had a job to do. Yes, he was not worthy. Yes, it was a matter that would require suffrage and seeming outrageous indignation unto the One that he was not worthy even to loosen His shoe latchet, but since God had commanded it—**"thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness!"**

The same thing is true today. No man is worthy to baptize anyone into the precious churches of our Lord, but we submit ourselves one to another in this wondrous ordinance of obedience and authority. This authority God gave His churches in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 and this picturesque act of dying out to the world and submitting ourselves wholly to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is ours in baptism and church membership! Mark them, God says! **"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."** Selah!

MATTHEW STEPP



## None Saved But

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is not one person who will be saved who does not believe upon Jesus Christ in order to be saved. **"Their unbelief"** was the cause of their not experiencing His mighty power. His mighty power remained undiminished in the least. His mighty power remains undiminished today. He can save and He can heal – and He will save and He will heal whosoever believeth in Him.

The Scriptures are very plain, that it is the person who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ who shall be saved. There is nowhere anything ever stated concerning

those who do not believe with regard to salvation. The unbeliever is said rather to be under condemnation, to perish, to die in his or her sin, and to have a part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.



## Salvation of the

(Continued from page 1) ♦

The purpose of this article is to refute the idea that Saints of the past Old Testament days were saved in a different manner than saints today and to clarify that, as our text states and we believe, there has always and only been one way of salvation and that "by grace through faith."

From time to time, from various angles, some have been led to suppose that Old Testament saints were saved in a different manner than saints today. Usually, this comes about by their theological and scriptural misunderstandings, such as believing that Old Testament saints were saved or kept saved by the keeping of the Law, or that the Holy Spirit's work in regeneration was different in the Old Testament than it is today in this age of the church. My friend, just as God never changes, nor does His truth, for to do so would mean both have changed and that is impossible.

First, consider the Law. Did the Law save Old Testament sinners? Simply, the answer is no. In fact the reason it never saved anyone is because that was never the purpose God gave to His Holy Law. The truth is, men were being saved by the grace of God through faith long before the Law was ever given. Note Galatians 3. The whole question

is addressed here, but especially notice verse 11, **"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith."** Did or does, then or now, a man receive the new Spiritual life he needs by the keeping of the Law? No! Note again verse 21, **"If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."** So if the Law was not purposed to save a man, to make him righteous or give him life, then what was the purpose of God in giving the Law? Verse 24 gives us God's answer, **"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."** Although much more should be said of this, our space will not allow it, but I will include some other passages for those who like to further seek discernment on this fact (Gal. 2:16, 21; Rom. 1:16-17; 3:19-31; 7). The fact is, both the books of Romans and Galatians are dealing very clearly with this fact, that the Law never did, could, or will save or keep one saved, because that was never its God-given purpose. Rather, both books, rightly discerned, will show their full support for the truth of Ephesians 2:8-9. Yes, it was true for both the Old Testament "then" and the New Testament saints "now."

Second, some have asserted this belief of a supposed difference in the means of salvation for the saints of the New Testament from those of the Old Testament, because they believe that the Spirit worked differently in the saints back "then" than from how He does His work in them "now." This is usually derived from a wrong understanding of what

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## Salvation of the

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the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" was. Most will assert that this was some work of the Spirit done in New Testament believers that was not done in Old Testament believers. We will not have the time to address every aspect of this issue, but let us say a couple of things. First, the believers on the day of Pentecost were exactly that, believers, those already saved by the Grace of God and that through faith. The work done that day was not by the Spirit, but by Christ using His Spirit. As John the Baptist had foretold, and Jesus had promised (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 11:15-16) and as it was described in Acts 2:1-13 and 10:44-48, and it should be distinctly acknowledged, it was not a work IN, but ON believers, specifically in both cases it is apparent it was on assemblies of believers, both Jew and Gentiles, in both instances. It is believed that the work done on Pentecost was a fulfilling of His promise ON His kind of church.

The work of the Spirit in regeneration and conversion is another thing. His work has always been to be the agent and impartor of new and God-given life. This was true both for Old Testament saints "then" and it has remained even to "now" for the saints of this age, and any to come. Regeneration has always been a gift of God's sovereign grace and it has always been accomplished by His Spirit's quickening and thus, His giving and enabling of repentance and faith. Although concerning my deductions in this article, I can not say that he would hold to every one of my conclusions, you would have to ask him, nevertheless, Brother

Ron Crisp in his work entitled, *A Study Guide On The Person And Work of The Holy Spirit*, (which I recommend to any and all) says this in Chapter 4, pg 7-8:

"The belief of some that Old Testament believers were without the Spirit must be rejected. While no one will deny that on the day of Pentecost a new dispensation of the Spirit was received (John 7:37-39, 14:16-17, Acts 1:8), yet it must be asserted that there has never been a child of God who was destitute of the Spirit. The flesh can never produce a saint (John 3:3-6; Rom. 8:7-8). In Proverbs 1:23, wisdom promised to pour out her Spirit upon those who turned at her reproof. Even while Christ was emphasizing the future descent of the Spirit, He was careful to make it clear that the Holy Spirit was already dwelling with them (John 14:16-17).

Another error sometimes heard is the teaching that Old Testament saints might lose the Spirit. Some have used the case of Saul (I Sam. 16:14) to prove this teaching, but they are confusing the Spirit's work in salvation with His work of equipping men for service to God. The Holy Spirit comes upon and departs from men in many respects, but never in regard to salvation. To imply such would be to deny the security of God's people (Ps. 37:24)."

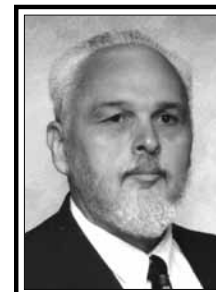
Thus we believe, when properly discerned with God's help from the truth of His Word, whether it was the saint of old back "then" or the saints of God "now" today, there can only be one truth, and that truth is, men have always been, are being, and will be saved just as our text proclaims, "by grace through faith."



## Did Paul Eat the Lord's Supper with the Church at Troas?

By Curtis Pugh  
of Poteau, Oklahoma

**"And there accompanied him into Asia SOPATER of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, ARISTARCHUS and SECUNDUS; and GAIUS of Derbe, and TIMOTHEUS; and of Asia, TYCHICUS and TROPHIMUS. These going before tarried for US at Troas. And WE sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto THEM to Troas in five days; where WE abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted" (Acys 20:4-12) (Emp. CP).**



As this text has been used much against the strict Baptists, it has been on my heart for several months to point out some things about this passage. I believe the truth of it will strengthen the position held by those Baptists whom I regard as sound in their practice with regard to the Lord's Table. I refer to local-church only, closed-communion Baptists as being sound in their practice. Those who believe in a universal-church, open-communion or denominational-communion have had a field day with this passage. They say this passage proves that Paul ate the Lord's Supper with a Church of which he was not a member, i.e. the "Church at Troas." They say that Paul preached to this "Church at Troas" a lengthy sermon that continued until the dawn. They often also say that the early Churches observed the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day, but space forbids us to enter into that discussion here. I shall attempt to answer these questions by asking and answering some questions myself.

First question: What are the undisputed facts in the case? Let me answer this question by making nine brief statements: (1) Paul intends on returning to Syria (v. 3), but because of danger from the Jews he makes

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# Did Paul Eat the

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his way through Macedonia. (2) He sends a group of friends and fellow laborers in the Gospel on ahead of him to Troas. Those men were Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus. They are listed for us in verse 4. (3) Paul and Luke (and possibly others) traveled together to Troas. We know this because the writer (Luke) says that these above-mentioned men waited for "US" at Troas, thus including himself (and possibly others) as being in the company of Paul. (4) Paul and Luke and others if there were any with them, sailed from Philippi to Troas in five days, arriving there either on the Lord's Day evening or early on our Monday morning (v. 6). (5) After seven days, on the first day of the week, Paul and **"the disciples"** came together to **"break bread"** (v. 7). (6) Paul spoke with them until midnight when a young man fell asleep as Paul spoke and fell down from the third level to the ground (v. 9). (7) He was taken up as dead, but Paul went down and embraced him, saying that his life was in him. (8) Paul returned to the upper chamber and after he **"had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while"** even until the dawn, he departs. (9) Because the young man was alive, those remaining were greatly comforted.

Second question: What are the disputed facts? It is here that the issues of local-church only and closed communion come to the fore. The dispute arises concerning these things: (1) Who were the disciples that gathered in the upper chamber? (2) What is meant

by the phrase "to break bread?" (3) Did Paul preach a sermon to this group or engage in a prolonged conversation with them? If Paul gathered with a Church in Troas and took the Lord's Supper with them, we must conclude that Paul was not a local-church only, closed-communion Baptist after all and if our position is not destroyed altogether, it is most certainly weakened. So let us proceed with more questions and answers.

Third question: Was there a Church in Troas? And if I may, let me also at this point ask, "who founded it?" The facts are these: While some attempt to maintain that Paul founded a Church in Troas on his first missionary journey, there is absolutely no support for such a claim! The Word of God says, **"And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them"** (Acts 16:8-10). It does not sound to me as if there was an opportunity to preach the Gospel and establish a Church in Troas on this first missionary tour as many claim.

Later Paul would write these words concerning his visit to Troas: **"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into**

**Macedonia"** (II Cor. 2:12, 13). Paul here says that he had an open door to preach the Gospel in Troas, but that he left that place and went into Macedonia because God spoke to him in a vision. Writing about this verse (II Cor. 2:12), A.T. Robertson says, "Here was an open door that he could not enter." Although Paul wanted to preach the Gospel in Troas, Titus did not keep his appointment to meet Paul there and Paul, having seen a vision, **"immediately"** (Acts 16:10) took his leave of them and **"went from thence into Macedonia"** according to II Corinthians 2:13. So there is no time for Paul to establish a Church in Troas.

In fact, we have no Biblical record at all of any Church being established in Troas: period. There is no secular record, according to J.R. Graves, of any church being established in Troas until the second century. John Gill mentions this fact as well. So we have neither a record of the founding or the existence of a church at Troas in the Bible nor even within the first Christian century, if I may call it that. It looks bad for the open-communionist, but it gets even worse!

Let us consider another important question: If there was not a Church at Troas, just who were the "disciples" who gathered with Paul on this occasion? We know the names of some of them, at least. There were **"Sopater..., Aristarchus... Secundus..., Gaius..., Timotheus..., Tychicus... Trophimus"** according to the text quoted at the first of this article. These seven, plus Luke and Paul, and perhaps others who traveled with them, made up the group of disciples who gathered

in that upper chamber. So there were at least nine men present. Eutychus, the sleepy young man, was probably not a disciple, but may have been a servant of the owner of the upper chamber which doubtless they rented for their stay in Troas. There may have been others, perhaps all the members of the family whom we think rented the room to Paul and his entourage. It is possible and perhaps even likely that Eutychus and others were present to serve the meal and look after the supply of food and drink. While we cannot go further than the Bible, we can at least see that it is possible that a significant number of people would have been together in that upper chamber and also about the house in cooking and preparing food, and in transporting it to the upper chamber, etc.

In this text, as in all the Bible, let us not be guilty of eisegesis, i.e. of reading into the Scripture what is not there. We believe our loose-communion friends are guilty of that and we charge them to be faithful in drawing out the meaning of the text rather than reading their preconceived ideas into it. There is just no hint, statement, or reason given in the Bible to cause us to believe there was a previously existing Church in Troas when Paul made this visit. Only the suppositions of some commentators would lead us to believe that there was. But let us proceed to the next question in our search for the truth in this matter.

Let us consider exactly what is meant by the phrase "to break bread?" Open-communionists (those who believe in allowing all professing

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believers to partake of the Supper) and denominational-communionists (those who believe in allowing the members of other Baptist Churches to partake with them in the Supper) say that the phrase means to take the Lord's Supper. A.T. Robertson, famous Greek scholar and either an open-communionist or a denominational-communionist admits that the words themselves refer to the "agape" feast of ordinary food. Both he and Matthew Poole argue that this "agape" feast was followed by the Lord's Supper and that the Supper is what is intended here. But they do so from prejudice, I fear, and not from anything warranted by the words, for „they admit that the words refer to taking a meal of ordinary food." The word used for bread in verses 7 and 11, by the way, is an ordinary word for bread and while it can include unleavened bread, often means raised or leavened bread, so another question might be raised here: Did Paul eat leavened bread in the Lord's Supper with the Church at Troas? But we are in process of showing that Paul did NOT eat the Lord's Supper, nor did anyone in this instance and so we shall not digress into a discussion of what kind of bread was used that night.

The same language describing eating ordinary food is used both here (vs. 7, 11), and definitely also in Acts 27:35 where Paul, as a prisoner on board a ship and in the midst of a storm says, „**he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.**" If our friends

who are "loose" on the Supper can demonstrate to us and state with a straight face that Paul took the Lord's Supper on the ship, I will readily admit that he ate the Supper at Troas in the text before us in Acts chapter twenty. The words used in Acts twenty of Paul and also of Paul in Troas are ordinary words used of an ordinary meal and do not indicate that the Lord's Supper was intended.

And so we come to our final question: Did Paul "preach" a sermon to this group or engage in a dialog with them? Those who maintain that a communion service was observed at Troas when Paul was there also maintain that he preached to them. However, the Greek word for "preached" in verse 7 and "preaching" in verse 9 is used 13 times in the New Testament. The King James translators translated it as "dispute" six times; "reason with" two times; "reason" two times; "preach unto" one time (here in verse 7); "preaching" once (here in verse 9); and "speak" one time. So here is a word that is NOWHERE ELSE IN THE BIBLE translated as "preach" and yet some insist that it ought to portray to us an orderly Church meeting with Paul standing before a silent congregation and delivering a sermon. It just does not portray that! It is IN BOTH PLACES the Greek word that transliterates as "dialegomai" – from which we get our English word "dialog." Now a sermon is the speaking of one man, but a dialog is a conversation or interchange of words and sentences between at least two persons, perhaps more. Webster gives as two possible meanings these: "dialog: a conversation between two or more persons"

and "an exchange of ideas and opinions" (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary). A dialog is NOT preaching! Paul did not preach this night at Troas! He and the men with him spent the evening in conversation, in exchanging ideas, but there is nothing in the Bible to cause us to think that Paul preached a sermon in that place at that time.

So what do we have in this much-disputed text? (1) We have no evidence that there was a Church in Troas at the time Paul visited there. (2) We have Biblical evidence that Paul, in fact, did not spend much time in Troas on his first visit and did not preach and organize a Church there at that time – when most if not all commentators say he did. (3) We have language descriptive of an ordinary meal used to describe what took place when these disciples gathered together that First Day evening. (Baptists do eat on Sunday, you know!) (4) We find no evidence that Paul preached on this occasion, but rather that he and those with him lingered in conversation until midnight when the bored and uninterested young man, Eutychus, having nothing to do, fell asleep and fell down from the third level of the building. After restoring him to life, Paul continues his dialog – he **"talked a long while, even till break of day."** Why the lengthy discussion? Perhaps Paul and the disciples continued long in dialog because Paul was going to go afoot (Acts 20:13) and meet the disciples who labored with him at the seaport of Assos. He was continually in danger and varied his route and method of transport to confound his enemies (Acts 20:3) and it seems that that may have been his motive in leaving

them on this occasion. These co-workers with Paul loved him and knew not if they would see him again after this night in Troas for he would depart on the morrow. Let it be remembered that Paul was going up to Jerusalem. He will meet with the elders of the Ephesus Church at their seaport of Miletus where there will be much weeping because they know that they will see his face no more (Acts 20:37, 38). Considering what lay ahead, it is little wonder that Paul and these men who love him and labored with him would continue their conversation throughout the night. The meeting described for us is one of tenderness and brotherly affection in an informal setting as these travelers were about to part company once again.

And so we conclude that Paul did NOT eat the Lord's Supper with the supposed Church at Troas. We have sound and Biblical reasons for our conclusion. We can say with confidence that he did not even serve the supper nor was there a communion service held in that place at that time. There is no evidence that there even existed a Church in Troas at the time of this visit. Our open-communion friends and denominational-communion friends have neither leg nor foot to stand on to support their views in Acts chapter 20! Let them attempt to defend their position from somewhere else, for they have no ammunition here! Let us who would follow the Bible resolve to study it carefully and follow it faithfully and continue with the Biblical practice of closed, local-church only communion.





# THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

## ANTI-RELIGION BULLIES SWITCH TARGETS

(WNS)--Two atheists who recently targeted churches in Hawaii that rent space from public schools are continuing their assault on religious liberty—this time, in Michigan. Mitch Kahle and Holly Huber moved back to the mainland after 15 years advocating for the “separation of church and state” in the Island State. They immediately helped found the Michigan Association of Civil Rights Activists (MACRA), which already is attacking religious liberty there. MACRA sent letters of complaint to two school superintendents in Muskegon, alleging Christian clubs offered to middle school students during the lunch hour were unconstitutional, according to mlive.com, a Michigan news conglomerate. Although the groups met for two years with no complaints, the schools canceled them on Dec. 4.

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## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: TITLE IX APPLIES TO TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

(WNS)--Schools that offer single-gender classes, from kindergarten through high school, must allow students to attend based on their declared “gender identity,” according to a Department of Education (DoE) memo issued Dec. 1. The directive even applies to sex-ed classes, where students often are separated by gender to help make them feel more comfortable. The 34-page memo applies to federally funded schools and extends Title IX

gender discrimination protection to transgender students. It requires transgender students to be treated according to their proclaimed gender identity “in all aspects of the planning, implementation, enrollment, operation, and evaluation of single-sex classes.” The DoE Office for Civil Rights released the memo to ensure school compliance with Title IX regulations. “As we receive increasing inquiries about single-sex offerings, we want to be clear what federal law allows: Protect civil rights and promote achievement,” said Catherine E. Lhamon, assistant secretary for civil rights.

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## NORTH CAROLINA AG WILL ASK HIGH COURT TO HEAR ULTRASOUND CASE

(WNS)--A federal appeals court gave the pro-abortion movement an early gift in December, striking down a North Carolina law requiring abortionists to show their patients ultrasound images of the babies they are about to kill. In December, a three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a lower court’s decision to block the law, known as the North Carolina Woman’s Right to Know Act. The appeals court ruled the law violates free speech rights because it requires doctors not only to show abortion-minded women their ultrasounds but also describe the image to them. North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper plans to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court based on other, conflicting court decisions. “Monday’s opinion holding North

Carolina’s law unconstitutional is now in conflict with ... a case involving a similar Texas law which the 5th Circuit Court upheld,” Cooper’s spokeswoman, Noelle Talley, told the *Charlotte Observer*.

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## KENTUCKY SINKS TOURISM TAX INCENTIVES FOR NOAH’S ARK THEME PARK

(WNS)--Kentucky officials withdrew a state tax incentive package in December for a Christian nonprofit building a replica of Noah’s ark, claiming the rebate violated the principle of church-state separation. Answers in Genesis (AIG), an apologetics ministry, plans to build an 800-acre theme park centered around a life-sized Noah’s ark in Williamstown, Ky. The organization also runs the Creation Museum near Petersburg, Ky., located 20 miles west of Cincinnati, Ohio. Almost 2.3 million people have visited the museum since it opened in 2007. Due in part to its success, AIG started construction earlier this year on the Ark Encounter theme park, which is expected to bring hundreds of jobs to the area. The project also will feature an ancient city, live animals, and a Tower of Babel replica. AIG sought approval to participate in Kentucky’s tax-incentive program designed to draw tourism to the Bluegrass State. The program allows tourist attractions to recover up to 25 percent of their development costs by refunding the sales tax they collect for the first 10 years of operation. In 2011, AIG received initial approval from the Kentucky Tourism Development Finance Committee to participate in the program, authorizing up to \$43.1 million in rebates, *USA Today* reported.

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## ATLANTA MAYOR DENIES RELIGIOUS MOTIVES IN FIRE CHIEF’S TERMINATION

(WNS)--Atlanta Mayor Kasim

Reed fired Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran on Jan. 6 over a spat that started with a faith-based book and ended with LGBT activists demanding swift punishment. Cochran’s self-published book, *Who Told You That You Are Naked?*, tells the story of his faith in Christ, but also includes comments supporting traditional marriage and orthodox Christian teachings on sexuality. During a news conference to announce the firing, Reed emphatically denied Cochran lost his job over his religious beliefs. Reed insisted he relieved the fire chief of his command because of what amounted to insubordination, saying, “This has nothing to do with his religious beliefs. It has everything to do with the decision to publish a book, with the contents of this book, without talking to your boss. Period.”

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## SAME-SEX MARRIAGES START IN FLORIDA

(WNS)--A judge in Miami-Dade County ruled clerks there may issue same-sex marriage licenses today just before a statewide ruling allowing gay marriage takes effect. U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle declared the state’s marriage amendment, which defines marriage as between one man and one woman, unconstitutional in August, but stayed the ruling until midnight Tuesday. On New Year’s Day, he issued a clarification that the ruling applied to all Florida counties, not just those named in the original lawsuit. Liberty Counsel, a conservative legal group based in the Orlando area, planned to file complaints in several counties today to block clerks from issuing licenses to same-sex couples.

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## STATE LAWMAKERS SUPPORT MEDICAL POT FOR KIDS DESPITE DOCTORS’ DOUBTS

(WNS)--Children in Illinois can now be prescribed medical

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## Bible & the Newspaper

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marijuana, according to rules announced by state officials in early January. The rules amend the state's medical marijuana pilot program, which initially did not include children under 18 years old. After lawmakers approved it in June, a handful of parents spearheaded a successful campaign to open the program to children, especially those who suffer from epileptic seizures. Under the new rules, which went into effect on New Year's Day, children diagnosed with a qualifying debilitating condition can obtain marijuana-infused products, but not raw marijuana for smoking. In order to obtain the treatment, children need a signature from their own physician, an additional doctor's review and authorization, and parental permission. Since 1996, 23 states and the District of Columbia have passed laws creating medical marijuana programs. An additional 11 states, including Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee recently legalized the limited use of low THC, high CDB treatment for adults and minors with specific conditions.

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### INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS "SEXUAL ORIENTATION" ADDED TO OLYMPIC ANTI- BIAS POLICY

(WNS)--The International Olympic Committee (IOC) voted in December to add "sexual orientation" to the Olympic Charter. The decision comes after pressure from gay advocacy groups following Russia's prohibition of gay propaganda during the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. The change, part of a 40-point reform package pushed by IOC President Thomas Bach, passed by a unanimous 96-0 vote and reworded one of the "Fundamental Principles of Olympism." The clause now states: "The enjoyment of the rights and

freedoms set forth in this Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind, such as race, color, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political, or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status."



## Faith and Repentance or Repentance and Faith

By Curtis Pugh  
of Poteau, Oklahoma

Did you believe and then repent or did you repent and then believe? Or did someone tell you that you needed only to believe and did not need to repent? Please do not dismiss our present subject as mere "hair splitting." It is not! The question is this: does faith precede repentance or does repentance come first? This question is of utmost importance because the kind of faith that precedes repentance (if it be called faith) is not saving faith. It is mere intellectual assent: mere agreement with the facts. It is not that "resting your whole weight upon" Christ and His finished work. Therefore, if the only faith that a person has is the kind of faith that precedes repentance, that person is not saved. That person has not been born again. That person has never had an experience of grace though he may believe the truth about sovereign grace, may teach it, may preach it – yea, may defend it vigorously. And that person may be you! Our subject demands that each of us examine himself as to his or her experience.

Let us be clear: there are many who believe and say that faith must come first and then repentance. That is the position of the "Campbellites" - those folk who like to call themselves "Church of Christ," "Christian Churches," and "Disciples of Christ," in the main. There are also splinter groups of them called by other sometimes similar names such as "Christ's Church," etc. They teach that faith precedes repentance. Is theirs only an intellectual faith apart from an experience of grace? Is theirs like so many others, the faith of devils? James wrote, **"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble"** (Jam. 2:19). Baptists have historically stood on the ground that repentance precedes saving faith: who is right? Does it make a difference? We say it is the biggest of differences: the difference between saving faith and mere dead intellectual belief. The difference between being saved and being religious, but lost!

First of all let us establish this truth: the Bible teaches that repentance precedes saving faith. We know this, first of all, because when the two are mentioned together they are always – I repeat – always mentioned in that order: repentance first, faith second. When summing up his ministry, Paul said that he had gone about, **"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Acts 20:21). Repentance, then faith, is the message Paul preached to both Jews and Gentiles. The hyper-dispensationalists are in error saying that repentance was a message only for the Jews for Paul said he preached it to both groups. Considering that Paul spoke these words near the end of his recorded ministry would indicate that he had

consistently preached these things. The Lord Jesus Himself preached, saying, **"...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel"** (Mark 1:15). Here repentance is enjoined first, then faith. A further point to consider is this: Jesus said to the Pharisees, **"For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him"** (Matt. 21:32). Here it was necessary for them to repent first: in order as Christ said **"...that ye might believe..."** Again, in Hebrews 6:1 the Bible speaks of **"...repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,"** showing the Bible order of repentance preceding faith. Let us point out here that while repentance is turning to God from sin, some sin is respectable and even religious in nature. Such sin is "dead works." Not all sin that demands repentance is drunkenness, adultery, murder or other detestable sins. You may need to repent of your good works for salvation. You may need to repent of religious exercises and experiences. You may need to repent of prophesying, of casting out demons and working miracles according to Matthew 7:21-23. In those verses Jesus said religious people who were not known by Him were workers of **"iniquity."** Mark it down: religion – even "Christianity" – apart from Christ is iniquity!

Furthermore, in I Thessalonians 1:8-9 Paul told how the faith of the saints in Thessalonica was well known. He further stated how their faith was the evidence of their repentance: hence faith followed repentance. His words were these: **"For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in**

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# Faith and

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**Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.**" Their turning was their repentance, for that is the nature and essence of repentance. Their faith evidenced their turning. Faith follows repentance.

Oh, how we fear for those whose whole experience is one of mere intellectual faith – the believing of Bible facts only and a turning not to God in faith, but a turning to baptism and other works. We fear they have had no experience of grace. Theirs is a religion of works. For it is in their works that they think to find salvation: in what they may call obedience to Christ or obedience to the gospel. There are a great many people today who are like the Israelites of Paul's day. They are devout, but devoted to the wrong thing. They are zealous, but not for God – they are zealous in going about to establish their own righteousness. Paul wrote of them, "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone" (Rom. 9:30-32). Is the righteousness by which you think to be approved of God "the righteousness which is of faith" or is it "by the works of the law?" We would remind the reader

that there are only two religions in the world. One is the religion that by works thinks to satisfy and please God – whether by baptism, bathing in the Ganges River, a pilgrimage to Mecca, or joining a church. The only other religion is the religion of faith in Christ alone – "putting your whole weight" on Him and Him alone for salvation.

Are you stumbling at the stumblingstone? Have you not been enabled to see that righteousness before God is by faith? Saving faith – the faith that follows repentance – is called "the faith of God's elect" for it is "the gift of God" to them: see Titus 1:1 and Ephesians 2:8-9. Have you not read Romans chapter four where Abraham and his experience of faith is laid out as the experience to which all those whom God saves must and do come? Have you not read there of Abraham and how when promised the humanly impossible, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:20-25). Are you one of the "us also, to whom it shall be imputed?" Are you one who believes "on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead?" Or do you just believe about him "that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead?" Perhaps, never seeing yourself as God sees you – a sinner – you see no need for imputed righteousness. Perhaps you see no need for repentance.

You see no need of turning to God because you think you are pleasing God by your religion or good deeds or by just being what you think is a good person. So you continue in your self-reformation and attempt by your own will to please God and yet you do not, will not, shall not, indeed you cannot please God.

Why will you not believe that God imputes (credits) absolute righteousness by means of saving faith? Why will you not repent of your self-effort – your works – by which you think to please God? Will you repent of stumbling at the stumbling stone? You may have stumbled at Christ and His finished work. Will you repent of even this – turn to God – and trust (believe) with the faith of Abraham that you may have righteousness imputed to you? Have you not read that "…they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7)? God says, "…they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:9-14). Many today boast they are not under the Old Testament – the law – but have subjected themselves to a man

♦ (Continued on page 24)

## BЕРЕА BAPTIST BROADCAST

### Financial Report

12-1-2014 to 12-31-2014

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Beginning Balance .....                   | \$7,463.99 |
| <b>RECEIPTS:</b>                          |            |
| Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....          | 225.00     |
| Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY ..... | 100.00     |
| Calvary Ind. B. C., Everson, WA .....     | 100.00     |
| Grace B. C., Corbin, KY .....             | 200.00     |
| .....                                     | 625.00     |
| TOTAL .....                               | 8,113.97   |
| <b>EXPENDITURES:</b>                      |            |
| Radio Time .....                          | 454.98     |
| Program Production .....                  | 195.00     |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURES .....                  | 649.98     |
| ENDING BALANCE .....                      | \$7,463.99 |



## BЕРЕА BAPTIST BANNER

### Financial Report

12-1-2014 to 12-31-2014

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Beginning Balance .....                    | \$916.35   |
| <b>RECEIPTS:</b>                           |            |
| Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX .....   | 50.00      |
| B.C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL .....     | 25.00      |
| Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....           | 300.00     |
| Berea B. C., Stonington, IL .....          | 60.00      |
| Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX .....           | 50.00      |
| Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY .....  | 150.00     |
| Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV .....           | 313.45     |
| Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL .....       | 25.00      |
| Faith B. C., Lynn, AR .....                | 12.50      |
| Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME .....        | 20.00      |
| Grace B. C., Corbin, KY .....              | 200.00     |
| Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC .....       | 50.00      |
| Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL .....           | 50.00      |
| Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK .....            | 70.00      |
| Indore B. C., Indore, WV .....             | 100.00     |
| James Kitchens, Mantachie, MS .....        | 25.00      |
| The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC .....   | 50.00      |
| Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH .....   | 100.00     |
| New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN .....      | 50.00      |
| Philadelphian B. C., Decatur, AL .....     | 100.00     |
| Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR .....      | 50.00      |
| Providence S. G. B. C., Tupelo, MS .....   | 200.00     |
| 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 .....                        | 179.00     |
| Anonymous .....                            | 2,225.00   |
| Dividing checks .....                      | 150.00     |
| Sub Total .....                            | \$5,310.95 |
| TOTAL .....                                | \$6,227.30 |
| <b>EXPENDITURES:</b>                       |            |
| Printing .....                             | 490.00     |
| Postage .....                              | 671.57     |
| Wages .....                                | 2,300.00   |
| FICA .....                                 | 175.96     |
| Dividing checks .....                      | 150.00     |
| Supplies .....                             | 140.25     |
| Total Expenditures .....                   | \$3,927.78 |
| ENDING BALANCE .....                       | \$2,299.52 |

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Citrus Missionary Baptist Church of Inverness, Florida and pastor Troy Sheppard would like to announce that they will be hosting a Bible Conference February 13th thru 15th.

Services will be on Friday at 6:30 p.m., Saturday at 10:00 a.m., & 1:30 p.m., & Sunday at 10:00 a.m. Meals will be provided by the church on Friday at 5:00 p.m., Saturday at 8:30 a.m., noon, & 5:00 p.m., and on Sunday at 8:30 a.m., & noon.

Scheduled to speak are Elders Mark Clark, Tom Horn, Paul Jackson, Doug Newell IV, Leroy Pack, John Pruitt, Justin Meyer, Paul Sandlin, Andy Wilson, and Sam Wilson.

For more information please contact Pastor Wm. Troy Sheppard at 352-464-1636 or ourbaptisthome@yahoo.com

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The Windsor Baptist Church of Windsor, IL is seeking a qualified candidate for pastor. They are small in number but rich in truth. Candidate should meet the qualification in I Timothy 3. For more information please contact Brother John Gregory at (217)728-8311 or Email windsorbaptist.grace@gmail.com.

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

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The Glade Creek Baptist Church, Summersville, WV is in need of a pastor. This church believes and preaches the doctrines of grace and

church truth. Any interested Elder should call Bro. Rodney Perkins at (304) 742-3050 or Bro. Allen Frame at (304) 742-5775.

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

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


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

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The Twinbrook Hills Baptist Church of Hamilton, OH is prayerfully seeking a pastor. Organized in 1938, the church holds to historic Baptist truths, including the Doctrines of Grace. Please visit the church's website at <http://twinbrook.net> to view the

Church Constitution and other items that describe our beliefs and show what the church is doing today. Please contact Bro. Chris Willis at Elohimfirst@gmail.com for more information.



## Faith and

*(Continued from page 23)* ♦  
made law of works for salvation just as horrendous as any Israelite ever was. This, too, requires repentance toward God!

Why will you continue in your dead works? Only the blood of Christ can free you from the slavery of false religion: the notion that works can save – whether baptism or your futile attempt at ceasing from sin. The Bible says, **“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”** (Heb. 9:14). Your conscience tells you that you must reform, you must obey, you must serve God, you must be a slave to the law, you must cease from sin – but your experience tells you that you cannot. Your conscience has been taught that works will save you. But they cannot! The blood of Christ alone can cleanse your conscience and give you liberty from dead works! What you need is the experience

of God's grace wherein the Spirit of God moves in the new birth changing everything so that you turn to God (repentance) and in total utter dependence on Christ's finished work look to Him. That is saving faith. Jesus said, **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”** (John 3:6-7).



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