

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

Where Art Thou?

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

"And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou" (Gen. 3:9)? This question which the Lord God asked Adam is a question that we can ask ourselves. This is an important question. Perhaps, in asking this question, and then arriving at an answer for this question, we can reveal our own (or others') spiritual condition. Maybe someone considering this question from a spiritual perspective today, perhaps by putting him or herself in the place of Adam and Eve hiding in the Garden of Eden, will realize that they are fleeing or hiding from God, because they are sinners who are afraid to be confronted by God, and only wish to escape the notice of a thrice holy God. Maybe someone among us will discover that, despite the front he presents to the world, and perhaps even despite the lies he tells himself, he (or she) is not near the Lord, or maybe has never known Him at all. Maybe someone among us, as he considers this question and examines his own life, will



come to the conclusion that he is not right now where he ought to be in his relationship with God and the Saviour of men. Perhaps this one can now begin to recover what was once his, as he considers where he is presently, and what he is doing, who he is around, as compared to where he should be, what he must be doing, and the persons that he needs to be fellowshiping with.

I believe each of us can ask this question about ourselves and our present condition, while we are yet depraved, lost, and undone; we can ask this question even after we are saved; we can also ask this question of those that are around us, to perhaps, provoke others to consider where they are right now, and who they are before God. For just a little while today, let us ponder this question and consider **"Where art thou?"**

ARE YOU HIDING IN THE GARDEN?

I want to consider our first

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The Heavenly Perspective

By Joseph Sidders
of Guntown, Mississippi

"For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off" (Ps. 37:28).

I was walking one evening recently and meditating over the many things that have occurred this year, and as I thought through the long list of concerns my eye just happened to catch a bird flying high up in the sky (Now I should point out that in my mental state at that moment this pondering was much more



of a "why has this happened to me?"). As the bird was too high for me to distinguish what type it was I could not help but wonder what I must have looked like from his perspective. Was I just an old sweaty Adidas hat slowly creeping along the road? Did I appear to be moving at all? Could he see the next bump in the road from there or would it even be distinguishable from where he was?

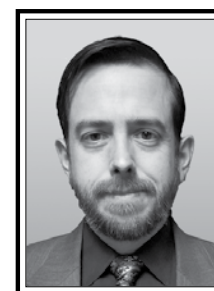
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Help Wanted!

By Joey Newell
of Silsbee, Texas

"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:1-2).

These verses are quite easy to read, but they are altogether more difficult to put into practice. I would imagine that every pastor should have a desire that the people they care for, particularly the youth, would be well grounded in the truth and bold in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would



also expect that many church members out there would like a clear path to increase in personal knowledge and skill pertaining to biblical understanding and growth in spiritual living and discernment.

In writing this, I ask myself, "why in the world would anyone care what you think on this issue?" In fairness, that is a fairly reasonable question. Please allow me to give you some information, so the reader can determine

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The purpose of the Berea Baptist Banner is as follows:

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

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WCNA, Myrtle, MS.....	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	95.9	3,000	FM
WCTT, Corbin, KY	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	680	5,000	AM
WFTA, Tupelo, MS.....	Sunday 9:30 - 10:00 a.m.	101.9.....	3,000	FM
KARL, Blaine, WA	Saturday 10:30 - 11:00 a.m.	550	5,000	AM

Where Art Thou?

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condition. We notice from the verses surrounding our text that Adam and Eve have just partaken of the forbidden fruit. **"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat"** (Gen. 3:6). We know from reading the Scriptures that Eve was deceived, but Adam knew full well what he was doing when he partook of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression"** (1 Tim. 2:14). We also know that the moment that Adam ate of the fruit, he died spiritually. **"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"** (Gen. 2:17). Since the Scripture says that Adam will die **"in the day that thou eatest thereof,"** and since Adam did not die that day in the flesh, it must be that the Lord is referring to the spiritual life that had been alive within Adam, which died in the day (yea in the very minute) that he ate of the forbidden fruit.

We also read in Romans 5:12, **"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."** It is also clear from the verses we have looked at so far, that Adam subjected himself and all mankind to the inevitable fate of physical death. It is apparent that even from the moment of his spiritual death, he began to die physically. **"In the**

sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19).

I mention the above verses to give us an understanding of this first point. "Are you hiding in the garden?" The effect of the sin and death which had come upon Adam and Eve was so extensive, that when they heard the voice of the Lord God as He was walking in the Garden, they could do nothing but hide. **"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden"** (Gen. 3:8). Sin had broken the fellowship which they had once enjoyed with the Lord God. Something had come between them - something that they could not remove. **"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God..."** (Is. 59:2). There was now a separation and void between God and man. What could Adam and Eve do except hide? This is comparable to what Jonah did when he sought to flee from the same Almighty God. **"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD..."** (Jonah 1:3). But there was no escape from God. They could not hide from the presence of One Who is omnipresent. How terrible and awful is the fate of every man! In our original state we hate that which is good. We hate Him Who is good and holy. In our natural condition we flee from the One Who can save. There is surely only one Saviour, and it is the Lord God. Adam and Eve hid from the One that could

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PONDERING THE TIME



Look at your mailing label on the front page of this month's paper. If you see above your name "Expires 2/2021" then this will be your last issue. So renew now, otherwise you will have to sit and ponder what you could have been reading in the next issue of the *Banner*.

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Light Contemplations

By Luke Austin
of Cadillac, Michigan

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

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The hardest part about writing an article for me is the beginning. How do I open my thoughts and get them in some semblance of order? I have not written much as of late because of my own personal struggles with temptation and a sense of unworthiness. But after current events I thought maybe I could offer some perspective that may have value, not because of my intellect (I do not claim to have much) but based on the Scriptures.

"That is unamerican." You keep hearing this from the media and politicians. Well, you do realize you are meeting in a city named after a general who was famous for killing British redcoats who were a part of an oppressive government? Now I do not agree with nor condone the violence that has taken place in cities throughout the summer that was perpetrated by the political left. And I do not agree with nor condone the violence that took place in D.C. by the political right. But my grievances with said violence is not because it is "unamerican." Actually, it is American as apple pie. My grievance stems from my Christianity, not my patriotism.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on

the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:44-45).

You see, I am a Christian first and foremost. I am not an American Christian. I am not even a Christian American. I am a Christian who happens to live in America by God's providence. The world identifies "Christian" synonymously with "conservative" or at least the American political world. Sadly, I get grouped in with those that attacked D.C. But false religion and TV evangelists have so sullied the name "Christian" that anyone who repeated a prayer and votes republican is considered "Christian" in America. Yes, I vote conservative. Yes, I support life and traditional marriage. But only because it aligns with my Christian values. I will not follow a political party blindly because of a letter by their name. My political affiliation will not get me into heaven. Only the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Believing that Christ died for my sins is my righteousness before God. Not my voting record.

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3).

The problem with this country is we are too full of ourselves. We have lost any real perspective on the true human condition. We think we are better than we actually are. When you start from the basis that all men are sinners, you conduct yourselves as such. You govern yourselves as such.

When you move into humanism and this ideal that man has ascended from his former state unto a higher plane, well this is what you get. People scream "we are better than this." Actually, no we are not and that pride is our downfall. We are self governing as if we have no sin and need no help from God.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

So you who are truly Christian, not by decision or religion but by God's choice, do not forget this world is not your home. You are just passing through. Also, the world extends beyond the borders of the United States. Do not try and predict the return of Christ based on American events. Just because your world inside these borders is tumultuous does not mean the whole world is in an uproar. The Bible does not teach us to be ready only when it is ugly. It teaches us to be ready always.

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matt. 24:36-42).

Finally, I offer you, dear Christian, some comfort. His plans have not changed. He is

still sovereign and all these events are part of that sovereign plan to bring all things into subjection to Christ. He will set His King upon the throne of David and nothing will so much as cause a hiccup in that plan.

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Ps. 2:1-6).

IF THERE IS ANY HOPE LEFT

"And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand" (Mark 3:24).

I have been employed as an appliance technician for nearly 18 years now. One unique aspect of my job is the interaction with people in their homes. I have dealt with people from all backgrounds and countries and political affiliations. Strangely enough, nobody has tried to kill me or acted as my enemy.

The fall of this country will not be so much left and right but the tearing apart of left and right. I will let you in on a secret. I have worked in democrat homes. There is Barack staring back at me from the bookshelf. Yet the crazy thing, I have openly admitted my Christianity and conservative voting record numerous times. Guess what happens? We talk. Nobody punches me and I do not punch anyone. No guns are pulled,

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Light Contemplations

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no violence, not even raised voices.

The problem with our country is division, not the existence of oppositional voices. It is a perceived enemy that does not actually exist. Certainly spiritual wickedness in high places exists (Eph. 6:12). High places, those in charge. Politicians and the like. But your neighbor who votes democrat because of his labor union? Misinformed? Sure. Enemy? Doubtful. Do not get me wrong, I can in no way agree with or vote like the other side, but a little human interaction reveals we do not want to harm each other. We can even reason together. The ruling class and their media machine keep presenting us with an enemy that wants to harm and kill us. And because of the lack of human interaction today, it works. Both sides do not know the opposition. There is no face to their perceived enemy. Go to your neighbor and let them see that the face of the opposition is not seeking their harm. There is a ruling class that is evil today, but go talk to your neighbor who does not vote like you. I bet you will find they are human. Social media is not human interaction. People let their unfiltered annoyances out on a screen. They would never act that way face to face. If there is any hope left it is in that commandment, love your neighbor as yourself. **"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"** (Matt. 22:39).

But Luke, you do not understand, my neighbors really are my enemy. They attack me. They persecute me. Surely this calls for me to retaliate. **"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them**

that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

American Christianity has adopted the religion of divide and conquer politics. Who did Christ walk with? Fellowship with? Eat with? Those that thought and acted like Him? Was the Gospel for the good and moral and upstanding citizen? **"And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples"** (Matt. 9:10).

There was not a single human on earth during the time of Jesus' ministry that was not an offense to His Holiness, yet God humbled Himself, took on the form of a servant and came down to lowly man. There is not a single one alive today that is not an offense to God's holiness. But as Christ's ambassadors, do we now act as though those that offend God's holiness are unworthy of our love? Of the gospel we carry? Do you want to take away the power of those in charge today? Love your neighbor. Give them the gospel.

This article may offend those that take a hard right or hard left stand. I never thought I would find myself being the one to call for people to dial it back. But Jesus went to a world of people that hated and rejected everything He is and stood for. He only had harsh words for the religious elite. In all other cases He was moved with compassion for them. He treated them with kindness. **"And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick"** (Matt. 14:14).

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



Where Art Thou?

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save. And do not mistake they hid from God because they did not want God. Just as you and I in our natural conditions, not only hide from God, but also in reality we want nothing at all to do with Him. If we can get farther from Him, and deepen the darkness that hides us from Him, then we will certainly do so. Adam and Eve hid amongst the trees of the garden of Eden, hoping that the Lord would not find them. If they could have found some deeper and darker place to hide, then surely they would have.

Today man will hide himself from the Lord using whatever means are at his disposal. If we feel that the Lord might be near us in the house of God, then we will do what we can to stay away from the church building. If we fear that the Lord might behold us or be too nigh unto us if we befriend a Christian, then we will separate ourselves from that Christian. In the flesh we only desire to hide from the Lord. Whatever God finds pleasing, we find to be awful. Wherever God would manifest His presence, we would desire not to be.

Sinner, is this your condition? Are you hiding from the Lord God? If you can only acknowledge that you have been hiding from the Lord, then that in itself may be evidence of the workings of the Holy Spirit. If you are aware of the fact that you have been fleeing from Him and hiding from His presence, then will you not acknowledge your need of Him? Why have you been hiding from Him? Is it not because He is holy and good, and you are sinful and evil? Come out from behind the trees, and run to the One that can save you! Come to Him and hide

yourselves in His omnipotent love and care for you!

ARE YOU NAKED AND ASHAMED?

I address those again who are hiding from the Lord God. Wherever you may be, and whatever your standing on earth, still yet you seek to hide yourself and your works from the Lord God Almighty. You do not seek Him, nor desire His presence. Why is this? Is it not because that in your natural condition you are naked and ashamed? Refer back to our account of Adam and Eve. Notice that after they had hidden themselves, and after the Lord had called Adam, that Adam responds to Him: **"And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself"** (Gen. 3:10). Here we find Adam's reasoning for hiding from God. Is not this also the reasoning of all that have come after? We know there is a higher being, and that we are not in ourselves worthy of Him. We seek to hide ourselves and our nakedness from Him. We are naked and ashamed.

Remember, before the fall, the Bible tells us in Genesis 2:25, **"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."** When they partook of the fruit, the Bible tells us that **"the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked..."** (Gen. 3:7). In their original condition, Adam and Eve did not even realize their nakedness. They had no concern about their state. This changed when they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now, they had sinned, and now they knew that they had sinned. They also realized their nakedness and were ashamed. They knew they were unfit before God.

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Narrow Paths

By Doug Newell IV of
Clendenin, West Virginia

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

I AM OFFENDED

Are you offended? Seems like most people are today. Offend came from the Latin word *offenden*, which means "to sin against," and *offendere*, which means to "attack or to strike." But, since our culture no longer has any moral common ground, and has forgone the Biblical doctrine of sin, we have no basis for offense, other than our feelings. I think the last thing we all agree is wrong is hurting someone's feelings. We are more offended by being told we are wrong than sin itself and demand apologies for our words. But we should not apologize simply because someone is offended when we simply state what we believe. You definitely should apologize if you sin against someone but not for saying something that makes some sensitive soul's bottom lip quiver.

After the Lord's famous teaching in John 6, some disciples who followed said (in John 6:59-65) it was a "**hard saying**." This does not mean the Lord's sermon was difficult to understand. It means they thought Jesus harsh, intolerable, and offensive (compare Matt. 25:24 and James 3:4 where it is translated "fierce"). The Lord's message was not a hard saying because it was difficult to understand. It was a hard saying because it was completely understood. These students were offended by the Teacher. There are two main themes in Jesus' message, the sovereignty of God in salvation and the exclusivity

of salvation by grace, through faith, in Christ alone which is the true teaching and meaning of the Lord's teaching on "eating his flesh and drinking his blood." These doctrines are offensive. I believe in God's sovereign grace in salvation and sometimes that doctrine is labeled as unloving, or cold, or callous, but it is interesting the same charge was levied against the Lord. Jesus never sinned with His words but He certainly offended people. God's sovereignty in salvation hurt their feelings and their pride, so they said the problem was with the doctrine.

Are you offended by the sovereignty of God? Will you be offended if you see Jesus coming again in the clouds? Will you be offended by His sovereignty then? Would you be offended at the sight of the glorified and risen Christ? Then why be offended at the sovereignty of God now? It is the Spirit that quickens. It is the Spirit that gives life. They were offended by God's sovereignty because they loved their perceived "autonomy" but the flesh profits nothing. The flesh does not give life, but it is the sovereign Spirit. The words, this truth, the gospel, they are life. And despite this truth, there are some who will not believe because they are dead in their sin. That is why Jesus said, no man can come to Him, except it were given unto him of the Father. Jesus did not apologize when He lost the crowd. The truth of the gospel is offensive but that is not the gospel's fault. Do not apologize for believing

what the Bible says just because someone is offended by the truth. Jesus did not.

KNOWN KNOWNNS

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

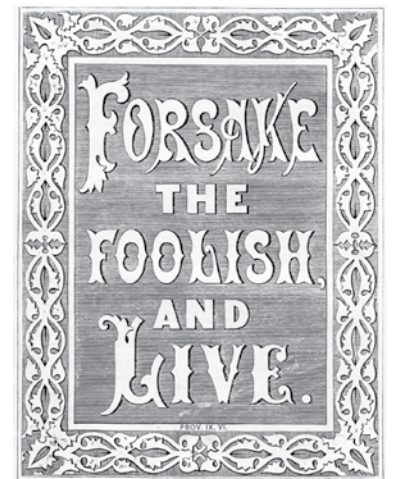
In 2002, Donald Rumsfeld, speaking about weapons of mass destruction and Iraq said, "...there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know." This of course, sounds funny (especially the way he said it) but it is true. I know I do not know astrophysics (I am sure you are shocked) — but there are things in the vastness of the universe no one knows are there, so we do not know exactly what it is we do not know. There are also things we think we know, but do not. I read a book published in 17th century on Romans 8. He was illustrating how bad things can work for good and said even the leeches work for our good, by sucking out only the bad blood. He knew his theology, but not medicine. He knew the "settled science" of the day, but did not know the consensus was wrong.

There is a lot we do not know. The Bible says we do not know what we should pray for as we ought (Rom. 8:26). We do not know all the blessed details of the future glory (I John 3:2). We do not even know what is going to happen tomorrow (James 4:14). We do not know the hearts of other people, though God knows the heart (I Sam. 16:7).

But we do know this — **"All things work together for good,**

to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." We do not "feel this." We do not "assume" this. We know this truth. We know from God's Word. The Word of God does not go through revisions to change doctrine with the times. Truth is eternal and unchanging, so when we know God's promises, we really and truly know, and can know we know (I John 2:3). We know from God's character all things work together for good. We know that our holy, wise, sovereign, loving, merciful Father has called His people, according to His purpose, that "none should be lost" and be presented before Him holy and without blame in love, so that in the ages to come, He would demonstrate His kindness through eternity toward us, in Christ (Eph. 1:4; 2:7). And I know that if my Father, who has adopted me, and made me, not only a child, but an heir and if an heir, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, has promised me eternal life and a glorified body in the resurrection, and has so perfectly ordained eternal redemption for me, I can trust Him and know that all things that are happening now are for good to them that love God.

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



Where Art Thou?

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This reminds me of a verse in the New Testament. **“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do”** (Heb. 4:13). You know, Adam and Eve had **“to do”** with the same God **“with whom we have to do.”** They were naked and ashamed and sought to hide from God, but there was no escape. They were naked before Him before they hid themselves, and they were naked before Him after they hid themselves. They could not change the fact that they were naked and ashamed before Him. In our natural condition, there is nothing appealing in us. That is why we are ashamed and afraid. We are ashamed because we know that we are not fit in ourselves to be seen by One Who is holy and righteous. We are afraid because we know we are not worthy to be seen by One Who is the righteous Judge. In our natural estate we seek to flee from Him so we will not be destroyed. And of course, in fleeing from Him, we think we can find our own means of salvation.

Sinner, can you see this as your condition? Certainly we have shown you that you cannot hide amongst the trees of the Garden of Eden, or indeed amongst the trees of any garden. Do you see now, the reason for your hiding? You are naked, unworthy, filthy, and defiled before God. If you see your condition, and understand that One is aware of your condition, will you not see also that He can remedy that situation? Would you not desire that sweet fellowship which can be had with your Confidant and

Friend? The Lord Jesus Christ can cover your nakedness and He can calm your fears!

ARE YOU CLOTHED WITH FIG LEAVES?

Let us think about the first response of Adam and Eve. We have seen already that they hid themselves amongst the trees of the garden; and they hid themselves because they were naked, ashamed, and afraid. But refer again to the story. I want to show you what happens immediately after eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: **“And the eyes of them both were opened, and the knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons”** (Gen. 3:7). Immediately, upon eating of the forbidden fruit, **“the eyes of them both were opened.”** I think now, they are fallen into that horrible lost state which man has ever since been condemned to. Though they have not yet been cast out of the Garden of Eden, still they are immediately cast out of that spiritual kingdom. Immediately they turn to the things of the flesh. They think these fig leaves are appropriate garments to hide their nakedness. Is it not the response of every man since, that he will clothe himself in garments of his own design? Perhaps the fig leaves were even sewed together in a very effective design, so that all of their natural nakedness was covered over. I am sure that Adam and Eve were very intelligent and were able to come up with a design that would be quite sufficient as far as man is concerned. Yet, no matter how appealing or how beautiful might be the garments with which we clothe ourselves, surely they are not able to hide our shame and our nakedness from the Lord God. **“But we are**

all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isa. 64:6). The seemingly beautiful attire with which we will clothe ourselves is in the eye of God as filthy rags.

If we notice Adam’s response again, we see that he tells the Lord, **“I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself”** (Gen. 3:10). Well, had he not already clothed himself with fig leaves? He must have thought the fig leaves were a good idea at the time, but when the Lord actually came to him, he realized that he was still **“naked,”** even though he wore the fig leaves. It is the same with all of us. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes unto us, we realize that the clothing which we have been trusting in is not sufficient to hide our nakedness. Certainly, every sinner in his natural state needs to be **“afraid, because”** he is **“naked.”**

Sinner, do you today seek to clothe yourselves in works of the flesh? Do you suppose the beautiful deeds that you perform or the rites or practices that you might observe, are sufficient clothing to hide your shame and your nakedness? Let me warn you that if Adam and Eve, the father and mother of all living men, were not able to manufacture a clothing that could hide their nakedness before God, then it is supremely impossible for you to cover your sinfulness before the same God with Whom they had to deal.

ARE YOU LOST AND WITHOUT HOPE?

Next, let us notice again where Adam and Eve were. They were hiding amongst the trees of the garden. They had no sure place to

flee. They had nowhere to go. They were surely lost amongst those trees. They were surely without hope of finding their way out from amongst those trees. Sinner, is this your condition today? Are you wandering about seeking a hiding place? Know today that there is only one hiding place. **“Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah”** (Ps. 32:7). David knew Who his hiding place was. Will not you hide yourself in Him today? The trees of the garden are not sufficient to hide you from the wrath to come. Though you would hide yourself in the deepest hell or atop the highest mountain, still you cannot hide yourself from the face of justice. Though Adam and Eve thought that they were hidden, they were yet visible to God. He did not even need to search for them; all of their cunning could not serve to hide them from this God. Are you more cunning than Adam? Are you capable of hiding yourself from God, though Adam could not? And then are you willing to trust to the effectiveness of your hiding place? Let me tell you today, that since the time of Adam, men have every year, every day, every minute attempted to hide themselves from the disapproving Face of Justice. Let me also tell you that not one single person has been successful. **“For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.”** (Luke 12:2). Do you think that you can accomplish what none other has been able to accomplish? Forget your own abilities and your own feeble disguises and flee to the only Refuge, the Lord Jesus Christ!

♦ (Continued on page 7)

Small Drops

By Joseph M. Sidders of
Guntown, Mississippi

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God" (Deuteronomy 32:2-3).



THE LORD'S CALL TO MOVE

"Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased

with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:18-32).

I humbly present this text to you today to bring to our minds the role of a pastor. The pastor cannot save lost souls. We are called of the Lord to present the Gospel and "declare unto you all the counsel of God." We are called to love as Jesus loved, just as any born-again believer is. We are called to be faithful to the Lord's leadership and go where we are sent, just as any born-again believer is. Herein we find the true tests of our faith: is our salvation of the Lord, or of the pastor, and do we go where we are sent, or do we stay where it is familiar?

2020 was an "interesting" year. While it had many challenges the Lord still blessed and saw fit to use me and my family. Last spring the world grinded to a halt and confusion and panic seemed to envelop the globe. Yet under the authority of our little church in Temperance, Michigan the Lord used us to unite nearly 1100 folks

to the preaching and teaching of His Word through a virtual Bible conference. This page is still active and still being shared today on Facebook (11th Hour Baptist).

A year ago we were writing from Temperance, Michigan where I had been called to pastor Grace Missionary Baptist Church for the past three years. Now I sit at my desk in Mantachie, Mississippi where I have been called to pastor Berea Baptist Church. The work continues. There are many miracles that occurred over the past year that I hope to be able to better expound upon in future writings but I want to express in this writing our need to be faithful to the Lord's leadership and go where we are sent. Paul told the Ephesian elders here "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there." We must also go bound when called whether we know how it all will work out or not. Thank you all so much for your love, care and prayers over the years. May the Lord see fit to bless the time we have together according to His will.

(Joseph Sidders is pastor of the Berea Baptist Church of Mantachie, Mississippi.)



Where Art Thou?

(Continued from page 6) ♦

Those that hide themselves in Him are cleansed from all sin, because when you are hidden in Christ, you must pass through His precious blood! Any that pass through the precious blood of Christ are declared righteous by that same fearful face of justice.

You are lost and cannot find your way out from amongst the trees of the garden. There is no hope for you, unless it would be that the One Who is the true hiding place would come

unto you. He is your hope and He is your hiding place. If you acknowledge today that you are surely lost and without hope, I know that the Lord will take you unto Himself. There He will hide you in His bosom for all eternity.

ARE YOU CLOTHED WITH THE COAT OF SKINS?

Brethren, are you clothed with the coat of skins? Yes, I can call you brother if you are found wearing the clothes that are provided by our Saviour. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). Surely the humble "coats of skins" with which the Lord God clothed Adam and Eve were far more effective, wonderful, and glorious than the poor, inefficient fig leaves with which they were formerly clothed. Yes, it is even true that these "coats of skins" are pictures of the garments of salvation that are provided by the Lord God to His people.

These coats of skins will hide our nakedness. We can abide in the comfort and security of these coats of skins and the sacrifice which they pictured, for all eternity. No longer do we need to fear that the Lord God in Heaven would behold our nakedness and shame. Now we have the clothing which He has provided us. This is clothing that we can rejoice in because it is given unto us by the grace of God. This clothing which is given to us can never be taken away, and it will never lose its ability to hide our nakedness.

The coats of skins will also hide our shame. We can wear these clothes without any shame. The shame that we expressed over our utterly miserable condition need never express itself again. For now instead of being objects of shame, we are objects of mercy.

♦ (Continued on page 8)

Where Art Thou?

(Continued from page 7) ♦

God has been gracious unto us, and will no longer remember our sinful condition.

In addition, the coats of skins will hide our wares. These garments of salvation can calm our doubts and fears. Do not fear for the wrath that will be exhibited upon those who have all their lifetime hidden themselves from God and trusted in their own frail and foolish garments. No, those that are clothed with the righteousness that is in the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be subject to the wrath of God. Now, surely we can at times be subject to His chastening hand, but never will He expose us to the vengeance and wrath that will be disbursed upon the reprobate man and the fallen angels all because we are clothed in the coats of skins.

Most importantly, however, the coats of skins will hide our sins. Only the clothing which is provided by the Lord God can satisfy the demands that are placed upon those entering into the heavenly abode. **"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen"** (Matt. 22:11-14). You see that ordinary clothing will not suffice. Yea, even the most glamorous of all clothing will not be tolerated in Heaven. Only the **"wedding garment"** that is provided by our Lord is acceptable. Though

these coats of skins may have not been much to look at, surely they were emblems which portrayed a garment that could be rivaled by no earthly garment which has ever been, or ever yet will be.

ARE YOU SERVING THE LORD?

And finally, dear brother and dear sister are you serving the Lord? I know you have received greatly from Him. I know you have partaken of that which was purchased at no cost to you, but at great cost to the One Who suffered and died in your stead. Yes, you were once hiding in the garden. Yes, you were once naked, ashamed, and afraid. Yes, you once attempted to clothe yourself with man-made religions and your own good works. Yes, you were once lost and without hope. All of that is changed now. You have been found by God. You are no longer in hiding. Truly you have been now clothed upon with the garments of salvation. Now there is no more fear in you, because you have hope within your breast. Rejoice in this, dear brethren.

But do not let us stop here. No, there is so much more that we can do in our service to our Lord. It is shameful for the servants of Christ, those who have been recipients of His grace, to lay down the weapons of our warfare and to do no more in His service. He has found you and clothed you for a reason. You are His and His alone. Remember that Paul told us in Ephesians 2:10, **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."** Notice that **"we are his workmanship."** It is not coincidence that this verse follows upon the heels of v. 8-9. Surely we are **"created in Christ**

Jesus." We are not participants in the acquiring of this salvation, we are recipients of this salvation. And yet Paul tells us clearly here that as surely as we are saved by the grace of God, just as surely we are **"created...unto good works."** We have an obligation which must be fulfilled. We have documented our previous condition, now we must leave that former condition and go forward to that which we were created for.

Notice how Paul has also told us that the fact that we are created unto good works implies that it is inevitable we will do these good works, because he immediately adds, **"which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."** If the pre-ordaining of us to salvation is indisputable and unchallenged, then it must be that the **"good works"** in which **"we should walk,"** must be just as sure. I am certain that you understand my meaning. God will not save a person and then leave him as prey to his own natural sinful body. Any the Lord has called, and will yet call, will be doers of good works. Paul has just told us that it must be so! **"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain..."** (John 15:16). Here we have the Lord Jesus Christ stating the same fact. He even once again points out that we are **"ordained"** to **"bring forth fruit."** I am not seeking to cause anyone to doubt his or her salvation. Nor am I seeking to lead anyone to question the work which the Lord Jesus Christ has performed in his or her life. Rather, I think the question should be, **"Are you distinguishing yourself from the world by your Faithful Service unto the Lord Jesus Christ?"** Can others look at you and see in you

evidence of the fact that you were ordained unto good works? If the question is asked you, **"Where art thou?"** Would you be able to honestly reply, **"I am in the service of my King?"**

I also am not attempting to cause any of the servants of the Lord to compare themselves to other, perhaps more faithful servants. I think we should all just attempt to serve the Lord to the best of our abilities. I believe if each of us would set out to more faithfully serve the Lord that we would be amazed at what the Lord could do through each one of us. It might even be that our service could attain to the heights of others have gone on before us if only we would separate ourselves and our lives unto the Lord. That is the prayer I have today for myself, and that is the prayer I have for each of you. May we all seek God and His ways first and foremost.

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



Help Wanted!

(Continued from page 1) ♦

if this is a worthwhile article. Since becoming the pastor of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Silsbee, Texas, the young men, ranging in age at that time from 10-38 (6 men total), have each taught a lesson almost every Sunday (eighty-six total as of this writing), have spoken at our last two conferences, have written in the local paper, and are each active in their local mission fields. In addition, the young women, ranging from 10-36 at the start, have likewise engaged in their local mission fields, and have joined the men in lesson preparation; every time the men

♦ (Continued on page 10)

Brief Truths

By Randy Johnson of
Texarkana, Texas

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



GOD WILL PUNISH SINNERS

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

There is no question of God's thoughts concerning sin. God hates sin so much He condemned the entire human race because of one single sin, Adam's sin. Some people would like to make us believe that God loves the sinner but hates the sin, but God will not punish the sin, He will punish the sinner. The sin is not responsible, the sinner is, **"The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity"** (Ps. 5:5). It is a fool's thinking that somehow God loves every sinner and in time He turns to hate that very sinner, God is eternal and sovereign, therefore He never changes, EVER! Other people want us to believe that somehow salvation is for all and even if we live a life of sin and unbelief that we will all get to heaven because God loves us all. This is biblical ignorance at the highest level, also secular thinking and the lost person's only hope. The truth is God hates sin and God hates sinners, God will not punish sin He will punish the sinner for their sins in the eternal lake of fire. **"Then shall he say**

also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). If your hope is built on anything or anyone except Jesus Christ then you are doomed for eternal punishment. **"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope"** (I Tim. 1:1).

God said, **"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men..."** These are those who refused to accept Jesus Christ His beloved Son and sent Saviour as their Saviour. Jesus Christ came to this world for one purpose, to save a remnant of sinners, **"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"** (Luke 19:10). Jesus did not come "in hope" of saving sinners but to save them, God does nothing "in hope" of accomplishment. However, for those who have rejected Jesus Christ as Saviour there is a consequence, you will one day face God's wrath. The word "wrath" in its true meaning here is - anger, indignation, or vengeance - which as we know is an unthinkable amount of pain and misery in the lake of fire that is never quenched. The poor unsaved, non-believing rich man described hell's fury this way, **"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and**

said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:23-24).

The **"...ungodliness and unrighteousness of men..."** Ungodliness is defined as wickedness or impiety. Albert Barnes defined it this way, "It refers to the fact that people had failed to honor the true God, and had paid to idols the homage which was due to him." Which is what "impiety" means, to give God's due honor to another and failing to worship God. God commanded that everyone love and obey Him, **"In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it"** (Deut. 30:16). God accepts nothing less, and all who do not are going to receive God's wrath in time. No sinner will ever worship God and walk in His commandments unless they are saved through the work of Jesus Christ and forgiven by the Saviour's blood. The obedience of Jesus is our obedience, the perfection of Jesus is our perfection in our obedience and worship. Mankind, not even the saved can properly worship God or walk righteously unless God causes us to. If not for the grace, preservation, and power of the Holy Spirit, we would all fail. **"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring"** (Acts 17:28). Every person should live their life in reverence to God and in holiness to God and without failure, this is only

possible through Jesus Christ.

When God speaks of **"and unrighteousness of men,"** He is describing people's second condemnation, which is defined as legal injustice or moral wrongfulness. This sin is primarily our sin against other people, as well as our unrighteous walk in this world. Again, we all fail at this, however in Jesus Christ it is possible and accomplished. God commanded people to first love Him, **"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."** Matthew 22:37 and secondly God commanded we love our neighbor, **"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"** (Matt. 22:39). We are not allowed to hate one another, we are not allowed to bring vengeance on one another, we are commanded to love one another. Christians fail at this as we fail in everything else, but again we are perfect in Jesus Christ. God will not bring wrath against the believer because all their sins are pardoned in Jesus Christ. However, the lost person has not forgiveness, and therefore one day God will deliver all lost souls to wrath and destruction in hell's eternal fires.

In closing, please be warned, people's punishment is not in this world, in fact most lost people prosper in this world, their punishment is after death. Satan blesses his own and many lost people are earthly blessed. How many billionaires are Christians, none that I know of, not one? Christians, real Christians do not have glory and fame, there may be a few, but very few. The prosperity of Christians is not for this world, but rather in the world to come. Lost people have no

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Brief Truths

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eternal glory so their punishment will be eternity in hell's fires. God said He has a vengeance, and it is His to execute, and one day He will. **"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"** (II Thess. 2:9-12).

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



Help Wanted!

(Continued from page 8) ♦

have spoken, the ladies have also written essays on the same subjects for that week. When I am gone to speak at other places, I have great confidence that these young men will faithfully examine and divide the word of God, fearing God, and loving one-another. That they will be bold and sound in doctrine, and will not excuse themselves from the counsel of Spirit of God in the Word of God.

Please know that I do not consider myself the authority or an expert in any of these writings. I intend only to share some of our focus needs and to be, in some way, an encouragement for development and growth to the people of God. I have not arrived, but the Lord continues to work on me.

Pastors, we are responsible. There are at least four problems that may be found in our current state that would address why many pastors may think, "why does anyone not want to do anything?" and why many members may question, "what does being a church member mean, other than hearing preaching a few hours a week?"

1. We do not have a faithful report to be heard.
2. We have not examined and encouraged men to be faithful.
3. Once counted faithful, we have not committed or handed over ministerial duties.
4. We have ridiculously low expectations for the next generation of believers.

THE REPORT

Men, we have to get the beam out of our eyes. Perhaps the reason many church members are lazy in their work as members is that we are, or at least perceived to be, lazy in our work in pastoring. If there is randomness in our study and preaching, and our delivery is passionless and without zeal, why would those we pastor desire to be like us? If what we have is not worthy of sharing with others, doing the work of the evangelist, then why would they engage and strive in it? If we do not commit ourselves to godly living, why would those we pastor find that need?

John C. Maxwell describing leadership in his book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws Of Leadership*, written of the "Law of the Lid." He uses the lid to paint the illustration that effectiveness will not surpass, overcome, or rise above the lid that is upon it. Pastors, we know this is true in our own lives, but why do we not take responsibility for this in the churches? Is it because it is easier to say that someone is "spiritually

weak" or even "unsaved" than to admit that we have not properly disciplined them? Let us be faithful in examining ourselves, brethren. No doubt, many of us have had jobs where the workers were OK, but were not sufficient for a task, not because they were not capable, but because the leadership was not willing to invest in their development and take personal interest in the growth of the business at hand. Examples in sports are easy to make; I have been a Cincinnati Bengals fan for years (I quit watching sports several years ago for obvious reasons), and I knew that they would get higher draft picks every year than most teams. We must ask, why are they always losers? It is not that the players are dumber, weaker, slower, or less capable of playing football. It is because of the "Law of the Lid."

Again, before we get frustrated with the people of God for not following, we should examine ourselves, and truly press the question, are we leading?

FAITHFUL MEN

Perhaps it is easier for some more than others to identify faithful men. Before we start puffing ourselves up, consider how Jesus practiced this. We know that He is God, and nothing was hidden from Him, but did He not from the time He called the twelve, persistently question them, prove them, encourage them, and cause them to often ponder the things of God? When the Lord Jesus Christ asked Peter, **"But whom say ye that I am,"** it was not asked because He lacked knowledge, but to bring out truth concerning Himself, the gift of grace from the Father, and the Lord's church.

Pastors, we have to do a better job probing and pressing the people of God in sound doctrine and teaching, and not just from

the pulpit. Our conversation should be preparing the next generation of the people of God. Commit time to identify and encourage faithful men.

COMMIT

We can suppose that it is a human failing that we want power and want to keep it. Pastors, we can easily forget that the post we have as preachers was a calling given to us by God. We can also soon easily forget that the pastorship we have been called to was extended from the church we pastor. So, what do we really have that is ours? If all has been given and extended, how dare we pretend that it is ours to hold onto, and not share freely?

Sharing and committing (*Strong's* #G3908; present, deposit, or trust) the things of God to God's people for God's glory ought to be joyful and exciting to a pastor as well as to the people of God! Jesus said, **"these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me"** (Luke 24:44). In the very next verse (vs. 45) it says, **"Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."** I understand that I am not the Lord Jesus Christ; there is no doubt. At the same time, pastors, we have a model to follow; how Christ opened to the understanding of Scripture to the people of God, and further committed these things to them to go into all the world (Matt. 28:18-20). We should have a passionate desire to commit the things of God to the next generation of believers for the glory of God and for the love of God in His Son, Jesus Christ.

♦ (Continued on page 11)

Little Valleys

By Timothy J. Hille of
Ashland, Illinois

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



TRADITIONS

"Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition" (Matt. 15:3)?

The majority of religious practices followed in the world today have nothing to do with the commandments of God. They are merely the traditions, opinions, and philosophies of man's own making. There is a tradition handed down in many religions that baptism saves a sinner and makes that sinner a child of God. Yet, the clear teaching of the Bible is that God requires not an outward washing but an inward cleansing. **"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 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" (Titus 3:4-5). "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom" (Ps. 51:6).** The inward washing of the heart can only be accomplished by God. He says in His Word that He alone does this work in those whose faith is in His Son Jesus Christ, who died for their sins upon the cross. **"That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18). "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and**

love on another, as he gave us commandment" (I John 3:23). God never commanded baptism or many of the other traditions taught today as the way of salvation from sin. He commands repentance from sin and faith in His Son Jesus Christ. **"This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29). "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47).** Before baptism, there is to be repentance and faith. **"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8).** As to man's traditions, **"We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).**

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



Help Wanted!

(Continued from page 10) ♦

LOW EXPECTATIONS

I have heard (many, many, many times) over the years sayings like, "so-and-so will not even come to church." Over time, I honestly believe the low lid level has produced a Laodicean complacency within the Lord's assemblies. Fearing someone to be soon offended, perhaps addressing slothfulness of the people of God is something many pastors stay away from. Modern theology is pleasing and easy to the flesh; we certainly do not want to ask anyone to do anything. Besides that, many believers are trained by observation and teaching that they should expect the same things from God that they do

their pastor; "I want to hear good news about grace and how the Lord blesses me, but stay out of my life and do not tell me what to do." For this, pastors and church members should repent.

From the text, Paul told Timothy to reasonably expect that the men he would teach, by the power and influence of God and the diligence of the faithful man, the teachings of Christ would be committed generationally by faithful men. There are four generations in the text: Paul, Timothy, the faithful men, and the others that the faithful men would teach. This obviously needed to be said. We should hear the saying as well. Pastors, I encourage you from the Word of God to take a personal interest in teaching and grooming the next generation, with generations of the people of God in mind. Being a landmarker, I believe what Paul told Timothy is necessary in that belief. Through succession, we must commit sound teaching, doctrine, by good report, to men identified as faithful to God, and that with high expectations upon the promises of God the Son, **"and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:20).**

THE RUBBER AND THE ROAD

This is how it all worked out. First, I simply asked the membership, "who wants to learn how to study the Bible?" Every hand went up. Second, I gave them an assignment, a 500-word essay, on a particular subject. Next, I asked the young men to present their study. At the conclusion of their presentation, I gave them their next assignment. Boy, did their little faces look sad. Well, guess what? They did their next assignment. Over time, the length increased to 1,000-word

essays, and they have been doing them ever since. Along the way there have been obstacles; parents and grandparents thought there was too much pressure on the kids, members did not care for spending the time listening to these people grow and struggle at times, and some times life just got busy. But now, eighty-six studies in, the membership has grown spiritually as individuals and in love toward one another. These young men (and women) are prepared for further teaching and will be able, even if not one of them are called to preach, to commit faithful teaching and behavior to others also.

This has, selfishly, also helped me as their pastor. I know that these people are trained and care about the things of God. If I teach something confusing, they ask their questions. If I teach something strange or new to them, they clarify the teaching. If and when I say something that is worded incorrectly or simply flat wrong, they have the discernment to call me out on it, and the confidence in the Word of God to do so.

Pastor, do you want help? How is your witness in the labor of the Lord? Do you examine men, looking for faithful co-laborers? Once identified, do you commit the things of God to them? How about expectations; do you expect minimums, or do you expect great things generationally from the Lord through your faithful service and the faithful service of those you commit the things of God to? I pray these questions are received in love from a fellow-laborer, and through the love of God in Christ.

May the Lord bless.

(Joey Newell is pastor of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Silsbee, TX.)



The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Could you comment on “**comfort of the scriptures**” in Romans 15:4?

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“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

This is one of the premier scriptural texts concerning the necessity of the saint’s continual close relationship to Bible reading. They were “**written for our learning.**” The Bible was written by men’s hands, through the breathing of the Holy Ghost upon their hearts and minds, to teach us the things of God. As we learn, we increase our knowledge of God and spiritual matters of importance. As we increase in knowledge, we will increase in faith and wisdom. **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding”** (Prov. 9:10). To fear and reverence the Lord is to estimate His Word as precious and the attained knowledge of the Holy (One/ways) will marvelously increase our understanding of what is going on; of what is truly important in this world, and the next. Selah! Think about it!

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). So many folk have a

misunderstanding of what faith is. Is it blind? Never! Do you expect or have faith that your car will start, or that the sun will rise? Why? Because you know that it has always done so before. Therefore, your faith is rooted in knowledge and science. Observation and notation. So, then our Hebrew definition of faith is so gloriously perfect. **“Faith is the substance... the evidence...”** The substance or reality of “**things**” not seen (as yet by us, perhaps), but known to be true because of past biographies in the Old Testament. Faithfully and certainly passed down to future generations of God’s servants by previously chronicled hopes that have become reality and notated in Scripture as evidence. As it has been for our fathers and mothers in the faith, so too it shall be for us. Selah! Think about it!

This then is the comfort of the Scriptures. The truth of the Scriptures validated by each succeeding generation of believers. Believers in the promises of God are comforted as they pore over the enduring Scriptures reiterating their personal struggles against that same Satan and his fleshly devices. That the good guy always wins is the joyful refrain of the Psalms. **“For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace”** (Ps.

37:9-11).

Entwined with faith and patience, the reading of the Scriptures will bring comfort, instruction and validation in times of sorrow, joy, affliction, success, failure and every other circumstance the beleaguered saints may find themselves. I think it is interesting that in the next verse following our text, the Apostle repeats his phraseology in the Greek, but the English translators open up the word with more understanding for us readers of God’s Word. **“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation...”** (Rom. 15:4-5). The “**patience and comfort**” of the Bible comes from a God of “**patience and consolation.**” Selah! Rejoice in that!

Now, most of us Americans have a somewhat skewed understanding of that word “**consolation**,” because as we have grown up in sports, the two routes of the semifinals either lead to the championship game, or the consolation game. In our modern world of “winner take all,” the consolation game is subconsciously, or not, usually relegated to the loser category. But in reality, the consolation game is a game of grace, eh? Do not have to play it... We have lost, right? We do not deserve the championship game. We do not deserve anything, much less to keep on playing (living?). **“But God, who is rich in mercy... But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”** (Eph. 2:4; Gen. 6:8). But God consoled Noah. Gave him and his family: LIFE! Oh, that there might be a consolation game. That we might have

consolation or as our text states... comfort. Oh, dear reader (of the Scriptures) grab hold of the comfort and consolation revealed in the veritable Scriptures of promises and hope. Repent of your sins and trust what the Bible says. **“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else”** (Isa. 45:22). Selah!

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Romans 15:4 states: **“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”**

The context of the first part of Romans chapter 15 is an exhortation for genuine believers in Jesus Christ to earnestly follow the example and instruction of their Great Saviour. The Lord Jesus pleased not Himself when He bore our reproach, our sins, and our condemnation as the sinless sacrifice on the cross, as He suffered in our stead. His perfect life, sacrificial death, and resurrection from the dead are all foundational truths prophesied and promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. As His devoted followers we are called to follow in His steps in order to serve God and edify others. If we love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength (the First and Greatest Commandment), we will be equipped to live out the Second Greatest Commandment

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. What is meant by “**confess your faults one to another**” in James 5:16?

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“**Confess your faults one to another**” should be the way we are honest, and be open, sharing our needs with other believers which would enable us to uphold each other in our spiritual struggles.

If you noticed I said “should be the way”! We have pointed the finger at one another so much over the years that if we would “**Confess your faults one to another**” most Christians would be horrified at the “**faults**” (“sin”) of our brothers and sisters in Christ. The other problem we face today is, Sister Jane is appalled by what Sister Bertha (who have been close friends for 30 years) just told her about her “**faults**” (“sin”), and then Jane ran and told everyone at the ladies’ prayer breakfast (that is why some Christian ladies do not want to get together anymore). When you “**Confess your faults one to another**” it should not go any further!

James in verses 17-20 expresses that verse 16 should be a matter of prayer to help the one who has sinned, and not for finger pointing or being a blabber (gossip) mouth. Is not gossip and backbiting a sin? “**The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue**” (Prov. 25:23). By the way, the same thing also applies to men.

This is borrowed, but it makes perfect sense:

“It is fitting that James should return to prayer at the end of v. 16 to show its power and effect. The intelligent prayer is made possible by the open confession of sin. This confession includes the resolve by the sick person to abandon the sinful habit. This kind of prayer is effective and warm with the love of God and from a man who is not guilty of the particular sin. He is described as a righteous or a just person. Many examples are in our Bible (e.g., Daniel 9:18). Here in verse 17, he cites another example, the prophet Elijah.

17-18 We have found in our study that living examples are often used to illustrate truth being expounded. This illustration of Elias is pertinent. He is described as a man similar to us, so his kind of prayer is within our reach. His prayer had to do, not with physical illness, but with God blessing the land with rain, and then also withholding the rain. His people had grievously sinned in turning away from God and were in bondage. They also had turned to other, pagan, deities. Their sin was compounded but Elijah did not abandon them. Rain was a blessing from God and Elijah asked God to withhold His blessing knowing this would not only hurt them, but also himself; he was willing to suffer with them if this would cause them to repent. His praying is described in a special way. Literally he “prayed being at prayer.” The content is surprising, “Do not send the early or latter rain.” He asked God to

withdraw His blessing and God answered him. The loss of at least three harvests brought the nation to Elijah in humble confession of sin. At the sign of repentance, he prayed again and the heaven (singular) gave rain and the earth brought forth its fruit.”

Before I close, I would like to comment on something that the writer says here, that we should all adhere to! He said, “This kind of prayer is effective and warm with the love of God.” When listening to the “**faults**” (“sin”) of others we should take on the love of God, and have empathy for the other person caught in the “**fault**.”

I love that word empathy, I learned it in college, it means the psychological identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another, the imaginative ascribing to an object, as a natural object or work of art, feelings or attitudes present in oneself: By means of empathy, a great painting becomes a mirror of the self. In simpler terms “put yourself in the other persons shoes.”

If we would learn to love each other more, with Godly love, oh the people we could help. Someone told me one time (and I use it all the time) “when you point your finger at someone, you have three pointing right back at you.” Add the word empathy and its meaning to your daily walk with Jesus! God Help Us!

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James 5:16 states: “**Confess your faults one to another, and**

pray for one another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

The Roman Catholic Church uses this verse as a proof text for their doctrine of auricular confession where people go into a confessional booth and whisper their sins in the ear of a listening priest who tells them to say a few Hail Marys and come back next week. That, of course is a heretical teaching that is no where practiced in the Word of God. The context of the verse reveals the power of prayer as practiced by individuals personally and members of the Lord’s churches corporately. We can go to God with our physical ailments and seek His healing touch through prayer. We can also go to God with our spiritual ailments and sins and seek forgiveness and restoration. This passage of Scripture is emphasizing the importance of prayer in both the lives of individual believers and in New Testament churches.

This verse may refer to those instances when some public sin has been committed that brings reproach upon Christ and His church. That individual is to confess his sin first to the Lord and then publicly to the church. I do not think James was suggesting that we confess our sins to a priest or a preacher. Public confession of public sin may be used as a means of restoring an erring brother to full fellowship to the church, especially after church discipline has taken place. When sin is openly confessed and forgiven publicly it is wrong for God’s people to gossip about them to those inside or outside of the membership of the church.

I do find it interesting that the whole context of this passage

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Forum Question #1

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which is to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Romans 15:4 declares the importance of believing, receiving, and applying the Scriptures, all of the Holy Writings inspired by God Almighty in our quest for learning about God, obeying His truth, and taking comfort in His promises. Paul makes special mention of how the Holy Scriptures that were written aforetime, namely the entirety of the Old Testament, are filled with promises, principles, admonitions, and prophecies all aimed at teaching, instructing, and guiding us in the way of salvation, truth, and holiness. When Paul wrote this verse under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the only Scriptures he had were those written aforetime. Certainly this is a rebuke to hyper dispensationalists who say that the Old Testament is unimportant and irrelevant. The fact is, every word of Holy Scripture in the Old Testament and the New Testament is inspired by God as is affirmed in II Timothy 3:15-17: **“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”**

It is the precious truths and promises of the Holy Scripture that have cheered the hearts of the elect in every age, enabling them to persevere in the faith, endure every trial, and maintain hope in a glorious future. The Greek

word for comfort in our text is *paraklesis*, and it means a calling to one's side, either by exhortation or consolation. It is very similar to the word *Parakletos* used by Jesus to describe the work of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter. I thought it was profound that the One who inspired the Holy Scriptures and Who dwells in us also exhorts us to count on the Word of God for comfort, learning, and hope as we abide in Christ. Our English word **“comfort”** means to soothe or console; to cheer; to aid and encourage; to be contented and undisturbed; to feel relief, and satisfaction; freedom from anxiety. The synonyms for comfort are calm, solace, gladden. My what a comprehensive description of what the Word of the Living God does for the saint of God who is called to walk in its precepts and lay hold of its promises! Dear child of God read all of the Scriptures! Cherish and value them more than your necessary food (Job 23:12). Saturate yourself with the water of the Word and think deeply upon its precious truths and you will be spiritually fruitful (Psalm 1:2-3). Take comfort that the Book of books has been inspired by the Almighty. Every word is inerrant and pure (Prov. 30:5). The Scriptures reveal the mind and will of God. May God stir us to obey the holy admonition found in II Timothy 2:15: **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”** Oh, Lord open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law! Grant me grace to rightly apply the truth as it is in Jesus found in the Holy Book so that my heart may be filled with comfort and hope!

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What is meant by the **“comfort of the scriptures”** in Romans 15:4 is that the word **“comfort”** literally means encouragement. Commenting on this verse W. E. Vine defines the word **“comfort”** as “exhortation,” another word for **“comfort”**. In our struggles as Christians, The Word of God not only advises believers how to endure, but it also encourages (comforts us) in our daily walk.

Paul is giving the believer here an “exhortation” that the Scriptures not only instruct us how to live our lives, but the Scriptures will give us the **“comfort”** we need in life as well.

Also, this encouragement from Paul is for our acknowledgement of the Messiah as a fulfillment of prophecy, a comfort to us seeing God as the Deliverer of Israel, and our hope of future glory in Christ. Therefore, we should be patient in our Christian lives. **“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (II Peter 1:5-8).

We should consider the patience of Job, and with patience wait for that which we see not.

There is not one thing that

can come into our lives that the Scripture does not have an answer for, and how to handle it and get us through it. If only more Christians would seek out the Word of God for help, strength, and **“comfort”** how much better off we would be. God help us!

ROGER REED



Forum Question #2

(Continued from page 13) ♦

reveals that powerful praying is associated with the honest and open confession of sin. Genuine confession of sin is one of the keys that opens the throne of grace to the believer. Psalm 66:18 declares: **“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.”** It stands to reason that if God will not hear our prayers if we regard iniquity in our hearts, then it is imperative that we rid our hearts of those sins that would obstruct the blessings of God. If we want God to hear our prayers and answer them favorably, then we must be faithful to confess our sins. I also believe that we must have our hearts right with one another if we expect God to hear our prayers as a church.

Practically speaking the success of our prayer life is intricately linked to a right relationship with God. We can expect no power in prayer if our lives are characterized by open or secret rebellion to God. Perhaps one of the reasons why our prayers are weak and unavailing is because we are failing to practice righteous living in our daily walk. Georgi Vins, the persecuted Russian preacher said: “Live your lives in such a manner that God will hear and answer prayer!”

♦ (Continued on page 15)

Forum Question #2

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I close with a powerful quote from John Gill, the Baptist expositor:

"Prayer is the breath of the spiritual man, and is no other than the reverberation of the Spirit of God in him; and such prayer cannot fail of success...true prayer is not what is written in a book, but what is wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God; who is the inditer of prayer, who impresses the minds of His people with a sense of their wants, and fills their mouths with arguments, and puts strength into them to plead with God, and makes intercession for them according to the will of God; and such prayer is always heard, and regarded by Him: this has great power with God; whatever is asked, believing, is received..." (Gill's Expositor, Volume 9, page 524).

TOM ROSS



"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

As James concludes his epistle on the topic of fervent prayers of faith, he begins with this statement to **"confess your faults one to another..."** This is obviously not a confession mediatorially. There are no others to whom we could effectively confess our sins to receive absolution. Only a sovereign God can forgive sins

as Christ validated in Mark 2:5-7: **"When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?"** There is no benefit in taking our confessions thereunto, to aught but God. Selah! Think about it!

The context of our **"confessing"** is in the middle of the Big Creek Baptist Church's prayer requests in our church bulletin, actually. Listen: James 5:14-15: **"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."** The first step in healing is to get the church a prayin'. Call for the elders of the church and get the word out to God's faithful saints to be praying for the church member, or their family, or friend. Albert Barnes must have been a pastor, because his commentary bewails members that expect their pastor and fellow members to come visit, when they have not as yet "called" them to apprise them of their praying needs. As Barnes says, we would not presume our physician to know of our ailment and just presciently show up, so neither should we prevaricate to "call" on the church to show up. Certainly the latter would be even more willing.

The second step is to **"pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord..."** The oil here first of all represents the natural healing potency of pure olive oil or other healing agents

that would be pertinent to the disease at hand. **"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him"** (Luke 10:33-34). The oil also represents a saturating of prayer flowing like the oil of the Holy Spirit upon this loved one. In the following passage the Apostle John shows the "anointing" we have within ourselves as church members to be able to pray effectively and fervently for our fellow saints, that the world knows nothing of. **"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction (anointing) from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. ...But the anointing (unction) which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing (unction) teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him"** (1 John 2:18-21, 27) The Holy Spirit of God abides in us and we in Him. May we saturate the saints in our midst with the anointing oil of our prayers, that they may be healed.

Lastly, on this thought of

successful prayers that James is chronicling: **"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up..."** What is this **"prayer of faith"** that seems to have omnipotent potency? Well, that leads to our text verse above. A prayer of faith must come from a pure heart that is in line with the will of God. Confession and repentance are the precursors to faithful prayers. Note the words of the psalmist David in Psalm 66:18: **"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."** Sin in our lives will hinder the power of our prayers, my friend. We must take care that we do not value the iniquity in our hearts (pet sins?) more than a clear and flowing line of communication with our holy and loving God. If we have any anger or unforgiveness in our hearts, our prayers will not be **"the prayer of faith"** required of Scripture and Jesus Christ. **"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift"** (Matt. 5:23-24). **"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"** (James 5:16). Whether we are praying for ourselves or for others, the path must be clear to the Healer. May God cause us to abide in the love, forgiveness and mercy of our Holy God, and as our will becomes at one with His, the answered prayers will start to flow, to the glory of His marvelous grace! Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



Little Hills

By Nathaniel Hille of
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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON - BIBLE SURVEY #19 THE BOOK OF JUDGES

TEXT: Judges 21:25

DEVOTIONAL READING: Judges 2:6-19; Acts. 13:20

AIM: Over-View of the Book of Judges

INTRODUCTION: We now look at the 7th book of the Bible; the second in the Historical Section: Judges.

THEME: God Delivers. The book of Judges can be held in mind by four words: 1) Sin, 2) Punishment, 3) Repentance, 4) Deliverance.¹ Sinners should stand in awe of God's power and ability to deliver sinners (Heb. 7:25); Saints—in that He doth yet deliver us again and again (II Cor. 1:10; I John 1:9-2:2).

No other book of the Bible brings out the two truths of the desperate wickedness of the human heart and God's grace in long-suffering, patience, love and mercy toward His people.

I. AUTHOR: Unknown, possibly Samuel

II. SUBJECT: Judges 2:6-19—serves as an outline for the whole book. We might outline the contents of Judges with four words: sin, chastisement, repentance, deliverance.²

III. KEY CONCEPTS: God's Will for Israel was to be a peculiar people, separate from all nations; to be a beacon of light—pure, holy, separate. So, too, the children of God and His church today (I Peter 1:15,16; Eph. 5:25-27). However, due to the sinful flesh, we sin. God, in love, chastens His people (Heb. 12:5-6); bringing about godly sorrow worketh repentance (II Cor.7:10); and the Lord hears, answers and delivers His people (Ps. 107:6).

The book of Joshua shows how God's people ought to live: Victorious. The book of Judges shows how we often live: unfaithful, weak, failing, spiritual poverty.

IV. DIVISIONS OF JUDGES; TYPES OF CHRIST IN JUDGES: Each Judge is raised up by God to deliver His people. Judges 3:9—Each judge is a type of the true Deliverer—the Lord Jesus Christ (Ps. 18:1-2).

The divisions of the Book of Judges go along with each Judge. It is possible that some judges were raised up at the same time in different parts of the land as they were from different tribes.

1. Introduction: Judges 1:1-2:23—under Joshua's direction the tribes went to war to drive out the inhabitants of the land. However, they did not do as the LORD commanded them. Observe, **“Neither did...drive out the inhabitants of the land”** (Judges 1:19, 21, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34). Utter Failure! The reason is found in Judges 2:1-3. It was not that God could NOT do it, but that His people had not obeyed Him.

2. Othniel: Judges 3:5-11—Israel sinned against God in that they worshiped Baalim. This came about by marrying contrary to God's Word (Deut. 7:3-4).

God's anger kindled against Israel and he “sold” them to another to afflict them (Deut. 28:25). After Israel cried unto the Lord, He raised up Othniel whom the Lord delivered Israel by. Othniel = force of God. Enemy: Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia. Land had rest forty years.

3. Ehud: Judges 3:12-30—Ehud is known for being left-handed. Israel had once again sinned. And God permitted Moab, Ammon, & Amalek to come against Israel. After 18 years, Israel cried unto the Lord and He raised up Ehud who slayed Eglon, king of Moab with a message from God and a dagger (Vv. 20-22) and led God's people in battle. Ehud = “united.” Enemy: Moab. Land had rest 80 years.

4. Shamgar: Judges 3:31—Very little does the Holy Spirit reveal about Shamgar, but volumes are here. He slew 600 Philistines with an oxgoad. Truly, **“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty”** (I Cor. 1:27).

5. Deborah & Barak: Judges 4:1-5:31—Dual Judges, Deborah—a prophetess—the only female judge; name = the bee (swarm) from its systematic instincts (4:4). Barak = lightning or flashing sword. Israel sinned and was delivered into Canaanite hands. Upon repentance, God raised up Deborah & Barak and delivered Sisera and 900 chariots of iron into their hand. Judges 5: is a song of praise to God for His deliverance. The land had rest forty years (5:31).

6. Gideon: Judges 6:1-8:35, Gideon is also called **“Jerubbaal”** (7:1). Gideon = warrior. Enemy: Midianites. God raised up Gideon: poor family of Manasseh, least in father's house, yet a mighty man of valor, sent by God (6:14,15). The name of Jehovah-Shalom=the Lord our peace is revealed (6:24). Gideon sought a sign from God (6:36-40), of which God obliged and showed Gideon that He would deliver Israel through Gideon.

God delivered Israel with only 300 men (7:1-9). The instruments of warfare were trumpets, pitchers and lamps within the pitchers (7:16). Truly, **“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds”** (II Cor. 10:4-5).

Gideon refused to set up a kingdom, but pointed Israel to the Lord to rule over them (8:23). The land had rest 40 years (8:28).

7. Abimelech: Judges 9:1-57—the son of Gideon appoints himself ruler. God did not raise him up. Abimelech = father of the king. After Gideon died, Israel revolted against the Lord and showed Gideon's house no kindness for all he had done for them. Yet, God destroyed Abimelech according to the prophecy of Jotham (9:56-57).

8. Tola: Judges 10:1-2—Very little is said concerning Tola. He judged for 23 years as the Lord would have him to. His name is that of the crimson worm alluded to in Psalm 22:6 concerning the Christ of God.

9. Jair: Judges 10:3-5—Name = “He who God enlightens.” Judged Israel for 22 years. He had 30 sons who rode on 30 ass colts.

10. Jephthah: Judges 11:1-12:7; Name = He will open, or He whom God sets free. He judged Israel for 6 years (12:7). He was the son of a harlot (11:1). His brethren rejected him (11:2; John 1:11). Enemy: Children of Ammon (Gen. 19:38). After having been rejected by his

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Little Hills

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brethren, they desire Jephthah to be the captain over their army for deliverance (11:7-8).

11. Ibzan: Judges 12:8-10—very little known here. His name's meaning is not certain. He judged for 7 years; had 30 sons and daughters.

12. Elon: Judges 12:11-12—name = "oak" or "mighty," judged Israel 10 years, was of the tribe of Zebulun.

13. Abdon: Judges 12:13-15—name = "servitude." Hillel = "praising;" Pirathonite = "prince(ly)." He had forty sons and thirty nephews or properly rendered "grandsons." He judged Israel 8 years.

14. Samson: Judges 13:1-16:31—Samson, of the tribe of Dan; A perpetual Nazarite Vow appointed him by the Lord from before his birth. Samson judged Israel for 20 years (16:31). Slew more in his death than he did in his whole life (16:30). He had great strength from the LORD, not because of his hair. His hair was symbolic of Samson's separation unto the LORD. His enemy was primarily his own flesh and the Philistines.

15. Conclusion: Judges 17:1-21:25—There is a record of fearful departure from God. Israel sank to great depths. In Judges 17 & 18—Micah's idolatry describes the religious decline by excessive indulgences. Judges 19-21—the crime at Gibeah shows the moral condition of Israel. This shows the inner life of the people of God. No wonder the book concludes with: **"In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes"** (Judges 21:25). This was the secret to their failure. It is the secret to our failure. God was their King. And we are to do that which is right in the eyes of the Lord.

NOTES

1. Gray, James M., *Synthetic Bible Studies*.

2. Ibid, Pg. 68.

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

The Heavenly

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As I thought on this higher perspective I began to forget about my own. He could have been looking at the same terrain that I was, but to him there was still so much of the journey to behold. Oh, beloved, in our having obtained the victory over the flesh and over death through Jesus Christ, let us more frequently look at the challenges of this life from the vantage point of our future inheritance.

We can do this because "our profession is profound." **"Now faith is the substance of things**

hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:1-3). So many times already in my ministry have I utilized this chapter to teach faith in God, and so many times have I passed right over the powerful lesson verse 3 has to offer on the sovereignty of God. The worlds, as we know, were all made by the hand of God, but this verse is going a step further and saying they were also 'framed' by His Word. Through

faith He grants as a deeper understanding of His creation, praise the Lord! This word in the Greek is *katartizō* and it can also be translated as "made perfect." The **"word of God"** is, of course, a reference to the Son which was an agent of creation, and we see how here by the word *katartizō* that Jesus was used to make creation perfect.

Oh praise the Lord, so we can see here why our profession is many times perceived by the world as a stumbling block or immensely profound because we are telling them that this creation was made by God and it was **"very good."** We also confess that we brought about with our sin (through Adam) a brokenness; even death itself. Through faith in Jesus Christ it is repaired and made perfect; through faith in Jesus Christ we are repaired and made perfect. **"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"** (Heb. 11:8-10).

Beloved, when I walk into the kitchen and I do not know why I am there, my wife looks at me like I am nuts. The text here tells us Abraham profoundly left seeking an inheritance that he was not sure **"whither he went."** How would he know when he got there? The truth is in the foundation. If we are blending in with where we are, we are not as a city set upon a hill. We must be set apart; we must be zealous and peculiar. Love like brethren,

beloved, because our profession is profound.

Our trials are merely temporal. When we truly recognize that each day is but a vapor, when our vantage point ascends beyond the reach of our furrowed brows, we can truly see that there is still so much of the journey to behold. **"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh"** (Heb. 11:4). We find here proof of our temporal nature that "all we are is dust in the wind," beloved. The first thing we are told that Abel did was the last thing he would ever do and that was that he **"offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice."** Do we realize that whatever we are going through right now is only temporary and it is no excuse to offer a weak sacrifice unto God? Paul told us in Romans 12:1, **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."** In Hebrews verses 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24-26 we see five examples of God's people looking to the future. Not a future they expected to see necessarily but one in which they hoped for and knew that the Supreme God of the universe would still be very much in control of. We, too, must strive to approach every trial with a Heavenly perspective.

Thirdly, beloved, our faith should be firm. **"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith**

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The Heavenly

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it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:5-6). Our faith in God must be firm and it is made so by our diligently seeking Him. Beloved, without faith it is impossible to please Him. Our flesh will fail, and in failing we will find His grace to be sufficient. **"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"** (II Cor. 12:9).

"By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace" (Heb. 11:29-31). It was a firm faith that drove every step the nation of Israel took on dry ground, "Kicking up dust." It was faith that led Rahab to hide the scouts and to later hang the scarlet line in her window.

We have an anchor that keeps the soul

Steadfast and sure while the billows roll

Fastened to the Rock which cannot move

Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love"

Will your anchor hold beloved? Are you diligently seeking Him even yet this hour? Is your faith firm in the Lord?

Finally, it is from this Heavenly perspective that we will find our salvation is secure. **"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the**

saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7). By faith Noah moved and became an heir of righteousness. Not just any righteousness, but the righteousness which is by faith. Noah's salvation was so secure, beloved, that the hand of God sealed the door. We do not read in the Bible where Noah was caught adrift at sea for a time, nor do we read where he and his sons had to heave the door of the ark closed and then seal it.

Imagine their faces as animal after elect animal, two by two, were led to the ark and caused to enter in. Imagine yet again their faces as the door was closed and sealed by the omnipotent power of God's own hand. Imagine even still as the rain began no one had even seen such a thing. Feel the joy in their hearts as this great and mighty vessel, built to the instructions of the Creator of the universe, begins to lift off the ground. Oh, beloved, faith rooted firm in the salvation of the Lord is most secure. This might seem impossible from our ground level view, but from a Heavenly perspective every obstacle that we see standing in God's way seems as to disappear.

Now, as we close, I want you to meditate on having a "resurrection perspective." Imagine living each day looking from the vantage point of our future resurrection in Christ. That sweet-spot where the victory of our faith is not only experienced, but felt and seen. That wonderful day, in just a little while, when we will meet our King in the air and we shall never be apart from Him again. Oh, what a glorious day that will be!

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar

off [beloved, praise God they were made to see!], **and were persuaded of them** [beloved, praise God they were made to believe!], **and embraced them** [beloved brethren, praise God with me that we were made to love the precious promises of our Lord and Savior!], **and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth** [Great commission!]. **For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country"** (Heb. 11:13-14).

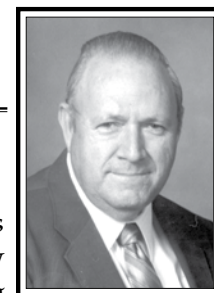
My conclusion of this bird's view of me was that any obstacle

that might lie ahead on the road before me could not even be seen as a concern from his perspective. And, oh, how wonderful to him must my final destination appear to be. Let us look to the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ in John 16:33, **"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."** Let us **"desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city"** (Heb. 11:16).



From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



The Setting Sun

"Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out" (Jer. 6:4). These are the words of the Chaldean invaders of Jerusalem. They are lamenting that they have lost time in not taking the city and now the evening is upon them.

I want to focus attention upon the words: **" . for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out."** There is something great and glorious in a sunset. There is the rosy tinted evening sky and the fading light of the sun-clad hills and valleys. Sunset is the sinking to rest of the great king of day as the darkness deepens over mountains and plains. It is the forerunner of the quiet and peaceful hours of eventide which proclaims a day of work ended and a night of rest advancing.

While sunset is a scene on

which our eyes delightfully look, the setting sun of life's little day is equally grand and glorious in the case of the righteous. In this message I wish to draw several striking and instructive analogies between the setting sun of nature and the setting sun of life.

THE TOILS OF THE DAY ARE ENDED

Sunset is a time when the toils of the day end. The plough stands still in the field because the farmer has gone home. The tired horse feeds peacefully in the stable. The machines in the factory are as silent as a tomb, for the workers have retired to their homes. The noise of cars on the highway coming home from work has hushed. The shouts and sounds heard from kids on the school grounds are stilled, for the kids have gone home after a day's

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study. Even the birds have ceased their singing.

Work for both God and man ends at the sunset of life. Christ said: **"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work"** (John 9:4). King Solomon wrote: **"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest"** (Eccl. 9:10). In this life we have certain resources at our disposal which are to be used to achieve results. When life's sun has set there is no opportunity for making up for the tasks left undone. If life's work is not done when life is done, it will remain undone for ever.

REST AFTER A DAY'S WORK

Sunset is when men rest after a day of hard work. The rich radiance of the evening sky is the forerunner of quiet and delightful rest for the laboring man and woman. Ecclesiastes 5:12 says: **"The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep."** Being weary from hard work makes a man's sleep sweet and undisturbed. He sleeps best who works best.

When the sun sets on mortal life the spirit departs the body to rest in Paradise: **"There the wicked cease from troubling; and the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master"** (Job 3:17-19). **"The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken**

away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. . . they shall rest in their beds. . ." (Isa. 57:1-2). **"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them"** (Rev. 14:13).

At death we shall rest from our spiritual warfares with Satan and sin. How pleasant to rest from our heavy crosses on earth. How wonderful for a soul to rest in the arms of sweet deliverance. Death is a blessing to a righteous man. It wipes off tears, covers disgrace, hushes the voice of a tempting world, silences complaints, cures sickness, and lifts the burdens of life's day. Truly the believer looks and longs for the sunset of life.

In death the body rests in the grave and the spirit rests in Paradise at home with the Lord. How long will this intermediate state last? The disembodied souls of the tribulation martyrs asked this question in Revelation 6:10. They were told **"that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled"** (Rev. 6:11). So departed souls will rest in Heaven until the purpose of God for the present age is finished.

SUNSET IS DETERMINED BY GOD

Sunset is something determined by God. Men may write almanacs and calendars which predict the time of sunset and sunrise. Such information may be given out on the television and printed in the newspapers. While men are able to do this by their knowledge of the natural laws of God, only God can bring it to pass by His awesome power and wisdom. So

great is the Governor of the world in might and wisdom that He can intervene in the course of nature and make the sun to stand still (Josh. 10:12-14).

Likewise, the God of Heaven determines when the sun of life shall set for a man upon earth. He says in Deuteronomy 32:39: **"I kill, and I make alive."** Job asked: **"Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?"** (Job 7:1). Later in the book he answered his own question: **"Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass"** (Job 14:5). We read in Psalm 68:20: **"...Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."** In Revelation 1:18 Christ declared: **"...I have the keys of hell and of death."**

We know not the hour of our departure. God in mercy has hidden it from us. How terrible it would be if we did know the hour of our death.

AFTER A WHOLE DAY'S CIRCUIT

The sun sets after it has run a whole day's circuit. The psalmist wrote: **"...In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun. Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof"** (Ps. 19:4-6). King Solomon said: **"The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose"** (Eccl. 1:5). Silently, slowly, and surely the sun travels across the sky until it has done its allotted work for the day. Then it sleeps behind the western horizon.

Even so, a Christian dies when

he has run the whole circuit of his life on earth. When he has traveled the determined distance of life's brief span, he will have finished his testimony. The Apostle Paul said: **"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"** (II Tim. 4:6-7).

The old hymn writer put it this way:

*My latest sun is sinking fast,
My race is nearly run;
My strongest trials now are past,
My triumph is begun.*

*I know I'm nearing holy ranks
Of friends and kindred dear,
For I brush the dews of Jordan's banks,
The crossing must be near.*

*I've almost gained my heavenly home,
My spirit loudly sings,
Thy holy ones, behold, they come!
I hear the noise of wings.*

*O bear my longing heart to Him,
Who bled and died for me;
Whose blood now cleanses from all sin,
And gives me victory.*

*O come, angel band,
Come and around me stand;
O bear me away on your snowy wings
To my immortal home.*

Some believers have already reached the three score and ten milestone. They have borne the burden and heat of the day. They know they are near the end. They continue to walk by faith and not by sight. Even more so than younger believers, they have renounced all human righteousness, and they think only of their saving interest in the finished work of Christ. They will soon finish their course with joy and rest under the green trees on the celestial shore. They are just waiting and watching for

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The Setting Sun

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life's sunset.

NOT LIKE THE DAY IT CLOSES

Sunset is not always like the day which it closes. Man does not know what a day may bring forth (Prov. 27:1). Christ said: **"..When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring"** (Matt. 16:2-3). Often the morning is bright and beautiful, but by evening it is dark and stormy. Or, it may be the rising of the sun is obscured by clouds and mist which gradually fades into a clear day.

This is also true of the Christian life which does not always correspond to the previous day. Some who start out in the Christian life have storms and tempests all the day long---like David they have to be men of war. But as life's sunset comes all is bright and clear for the victory has been won. Others have a bright day at the beginning, but the end is clouds and thick darkness. They are made to cry out: **"Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil; When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street!"** (Job 29:2-7).

We must judge a man by the general course and tenor of his life, not by his death. The

virtues which make up Christian character are not developed on a dying bed. Many brave soldiers have waxed weary because of the length and heat of the battle and died a miserable death at the hands of the enemy at sunset. How sad! How true of Christians in some cases! If it please God to give me a triumphant death I shall greatly thank Him for such a departure. If such is not allotted to me God will give me grace to bear the storm.

THE SUN IS NOT EXTINGUISHED AT SUNSET

The sun is not extinguished when it sets in the western sky and passed from our sight. It is true we do not see it after it has gone down for the day. It shines no more on us at that moment. But the sun has not ceased to exist. Its light is not extinguished, for it shines in other lands and places for a time appointed by God.

The sunset of life does not extinguish the bright spark of immortality in man. When a saint dies he is gone from our sight as the sun when it disappears behind the western horizon. Death has temporarily taken him away from our view. We will not see him again in this world of flesh. He is gone from his friends and family.

Like the sun, the saint does not cease to exist at death. His light of immortality is no more put out by death than is the light of the sun by sunset. His departed spirit shines in another sphere of existence, not lost, not extinguished, but he glows with even a brighter light. **"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it"** (Eccl. 12:7). **"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident, I say,**

and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:6,8).

As Whitefield preached his last sermon at Newburyport, pale and dying, his host said, "You had better be in bed, Mr. Whitefield."

"True," said the dying evangelist, and clasping his hands, cried: "I am weary in, not of, thy work, Lord Jesus."

He then uttered one of the most pathetic sentences which ever came to his lips: "I go to my everlasting rest. My sun has risen, shone, and is setting---nay, it is about to rise and shine forever. I have not lived in vain. And though I could live to preach Christ a thousand years I go to be with Him---which is far better."

SUNSET IS THE HOUR OF REUNION

The setting of the sun brings the hour of family reunion. The members of the family come from scattered districts where they have pursued a day of toil. How wonderful when all the family gets home at the end of the day. They can talk over the events of the day in friendship and fellowship. The hearts of the parents turn to the children and the hearts of the children turn to their parents. This scene is a bit of a family reunion.

When life's sun sets there is also a bit of a family reunion in the Father's house in Heaven. God's children come home from equator to poles, they come from all races and nations of the earth. How glorious is the communion and companionship when so many of the family of God is gathered together in one place. There they can talk of crowns and crosses in the life on earth. They can even contemplate the things to come. What a happy meeting we shall have in the heavenly Paradise among the host of the spirits of

just men made perfect!

There is a period of mortal life at which friends who have preceded us in death outnumber those that remain on earth. This causes an aging believer to realize that the heavenly company of friends is more numerous than the earthly. He finds himself living more in the past than the present. He knows that sunset is coming. This thought does not alarm him or disturb him. He waits and watches with a smile upon his face, for the hour of his departure to the reunion in Paradise with his friends who have gone before.

Oh, it will be glorious to meet the heroes of faith that we read about in the Word of God on earth, in the better land. How thrilling and cheering to meet many of our dear relatives and intimate friends of years past. No doubt we may also meet some of our enemies. In Paradise we shall be reconciled, notwithstanding all the warm contests and peevish differences which we had with them in this world. Heaven is a state of perfect love and friendship.

SUNSET IS FOLLOWED BY SUNRISE

Sunset is followed by sunrise the next morning. Each day as we see the sunset we know it will rise again the next day, bright and glowing as ever. We have seen it so for many years while we have lived. The knowledge of its early rise the next day comforts us as the shades of night fall around us. It will only be a few hours until sunrise.

There is sadness in our hearts when the voiceless body of a friend is borne to the damp and dark grave. While we sorrow for them we must not sorrow as those who have no hope. We know it will not be long until the dead body of our loved one shall rise again. Sunset

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has come, but the sunrise we shall see! The first resurrection is not long off. That event is more sure than tomorrow's sunrise in the world of nature.

The night of death is followed by a resurrection morning. One day the dead bodies of the sleeping saints shall come forth to shine in resurrection glory. **"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead"** (Isa. 26:19). **"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt"** (Dan. 12:2). Jesus Christ declared: **"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation"** (John 5:28-29). **"...for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed"** (I Cor. 15:52). **"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first"** (I Thess. 4:16).

Have you lost a dear one? Maybe a father or mother? maybe a husband or wife? maybe a sister or brother? He or she will not long remain out of your sight. Do not mourn for one delivered from this world by the call of the Lord. Truly they are separated from us, but they are not lost. They have merely gone before us to the

Paradise of God. We must not put on dark robes of mourning when they have already put on white robes of glory. Lift up your head, wipe away your tears, cheer up your heart, the hour of sunrise is near. The night is far spent and the day is at hand! Sunset has come, but the sunrise you see! Oh, to think that the resurrection day has no sunset and no night of sorrow!

CONCLUSION

Are you ready for life's sunset? Is your work all finished? Have you learned all you want to know about the Bible? Have you grown to the measure of the stature of Christ? Have you witnessed to all your friends and relatives? Are you ready to be offered? Will you finish your course with joy or grief? If there is work which needs doing, do it quickly, before the night comes when no man can work.

Those in my text hated to see the sunset. The Chaldeans knew that when sundown came the battle might be lost. Many lost sinners will dread to see the sunset of life's little day. The lips unused to praying cannot pray. The habit of unbelief is hard to break. Pride will keep many from Christ as they near sunset. At sundown they will have to exclaim: "Life has been a mistake. It has not been worth living. Woe is unto us. Hell is our everlasting portion. We have sundown with no hope of sunrise!"

Your life's sun has not yet set. All is not gone beyond recall. Why does a living man complain? The sun still shines brightly for you that hear this message. Repent and believe the gospel. Flee to Christ from the wrath to come! Now is the day of salvation. Soon it will be sunset for all eternity.



Church Discipline

PART ONE

By Roger Reed
of Mansfield, Ohio

Matthew 16:19

Most of this article is taken from the little booklet, *Church Discipline* by L. S. Walker and revised and enlarged by E. C. Gillentine, available at the Berea Baptist Church Bookstore, I believe. So, I am not taking all the credit for this article. But I believe it is lacking in our churches today and needed very much. I preached it to our congregation a few months ago because we have many new members that have never heard a message on church discipline.

Now I know some may read this and will totally disagree, but I believe it is one of the most Scriptural doctrines we have in our Bibles. My first pastor, the late Oscar B. Mink used to say, "If you belong to the Moose, Goose, and anything else that is loose, you will abide by the rules or get kicked out of that organization. So, should the church not have a set standard in which to have some kind of control over its members?"

I belong to two clubs and they have a set of rules (for the members own good) that have to be followed or you are voted out! I will tell you, as I am sure Brother Mink would have as well... whether you are a saved member or not, but a member just the same of a true New Testament church, you are still a depraved creature. And the church has to have some control or we will reap a bitter harvest.

No one need apologize for writing, speaking or teaching

the truth. "God's Word is Truth." Jesus said to His church, **"Ye are the light of the world"** (Matt. 5:14). If the light of His churches is to shine out as it should, the members of those churches must live close to Him and keep their lives clean and pure from the slime and filth of the sinful world in which they live. As Baptist ministers of the gospel, we need to correct the error into which many churches have fallen, that of neglecting the doctrine of church discipline.

Let us look at the meaning of discipline. The word "discipline" means to regulate one's moral and mental training according to strict rules; to develop his character; to cause him to render strict obedience to the teachings of God's Word; to inflict punishment for disobedience.

What is the doctrine of church discipline? The doctrine of church discipline is founded on the emphatic Word of God. That this is true there can be no doubt. Jesus said to His church: **"Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"** (Matt. 16:19). There should be a burden on every heart to see that Baptist churches all over the land are made better and enabled to do more for the cause of our dear Master. Undisciplined churches are robbed of their power to witness effectively for the Lord because of sin in their membership. In this they are severing their fellowship with their Lord. God cannot, He will not, bless a church in sin. In His Word we read: **"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"** (James 4:17). A church that will not discipline its members

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Church Discipline

(Continued from page 21) ♦

is either ignorantly or willingly disobeying the Word of God. If God had not intended for His churches to have exercised discipline over their members, He would not have inspired His writers to put it in His Word.

What is the reason or purpose of church discipline? There are several reasons or purposes for church discipline: It will aid the church in getting rid of her unregenerated members. Of course, no church should, in reality, have any unregenerated members, however, many of them, perhaps, most of them do have some people in their membership who are unsaved. Certainly, an unsaved person cannot live a Christian life. He has no spiritual background. He has no foundation for his life. His life is being built upon the sand rather than upon the eternal Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ, the only true foundation for salvation. **“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”** (I Cor. 3:11). Hence to exercise strict church discipline will help to keep the church free from such members. It will aid in chastening the erring children of God in the churches. It will cause them to repent of their sins and weaknesses of the flesh. It will be a constant reminder to the church and to the world that God’s justice in judgment will find the wicked in whatever state, condition, or society they may seek to live. It will increase the membership among those who want a clean, wholesome spiritual environment in which to live. There are times when some churches would exercise their authority in church discipline were it not for fear of offending someone. On this point

let us reason together a little.

What about offending God and His church? Is it all right to offend the Lord? Is it all right to offend His church? Do you think we should consider the personal feelings of an individual and neglect our duty regarding church discipline? Or should we do our duty toward God regardless of the individual’s personal feelings in the matter? Do you think we should fellowship wrong for the sake of members? The Lord says, **“Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them”** (Eph. 5:11). We may not be responsible for the wrong, but we are responsible for fellowshiping with the wrong-doer when we have it in our power to withdraw from them. God is no respecter of persons, and He teaches us in His Word not to be (James 2:1-4). When a member walks disorderly, lives an ungodly life, and brings reproach on the church he should be dealt with according to the teachings of God’s Word. This should be done regardless of his social or financial standing in the world. When a church thus deals with her members, she will gain the confidence and respect of all saved people both in and out of her membership. Of course, discretion and prudence (carefulness) should always be exercised. Weak members will be helped. Many churches have weak members who are afraid to exercise church discipline. They are afraid of criticism and persecution. Such members need to be taught the truth of God’s Word on the subject, and they would grow stronger thereby. Many times, weak members, who themselves are not willing to help to exercise church discipline, can tell the church how it should be done. As

a rule, when the time comes to do the work such members cannot be found. The spiritually ignorant will be helped. Many times, churches have as leaders carnally minded and unsaved persons. Strict church discipline will both be a rebuke and instructive to them. Such a leadership in many churches is, probably, the greatest of all reasons why we do not have more church discipline.

God will not bless such unscriptural proceedings in anything, it matters not how sincere we may appear to be. God is bound only to keep and bless His Word. The doctrine of church discipline is tremendously important as all Bible students will agree. Likewise, all who understand the prevailing condition of the churches will agree that very few are exercising any discipline at all. May God help His people to start now to raise the standard of living in our churches, that they may not be stumbling blocks to the world.

The Devil has imposed many things upon the Lord’s churches to rob them of their influence with the world of lost sinners. Many of our churches are now cursed with worldly wise, carnally-minded leaders. Under such leadership the vilest offenses are committed against the churches and against God and His Word. These vile offenses are committed in the name of Christianity, such things have become a stench in the nostrils of God. Because of this many churches have become cold and spiritless, indifferent and unresponsive to the truth; they have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof, from such, Paul said, **“Turn away”** (II Tim. 3:5).

Many churches have gone so far in this loose way until Satan’s seat is in many churches today. On

this particular doctrine we have sinned and some have almost come to the point of outright contempt for God’s Word. Such contempt for divine instruction is mounting evidence of the exodus of the Lord from His churches and the entrance of Satan to the seat of leadership in many congregations in the name of Christ. No doubt, we are living in the days of the Laodicean church age spoken of in Revelation 3:14-21. We need to lay aside all customs, forms, traditions and preconceived ideas and opinions of our own and get on the plan as outlined in God’s Word. Certainly, we should obey God rather than men.



The Short Pews



Brief Articles
by Curtis Pugh
(1944 - 2018)

SLUMGULLION PREACHING

Today’s danger is the preaching of a different Jesus, a different Spirit and a different gospel. The Greek word translated “another” here is “heteros.” We are familiar with the word heterosexual. A heterosexual person is one who loves or prefers persons of a different sex than himself or herself. So the “Jesus,” “Spirit,” and “gospel” mentioned is different from what Paul preached.

Paul wrote: **“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him”** {with him: or, with

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The Short Pews

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me} (II Cor. 11:4). Paul has in mind specific persons who often followed him about. These false teachers were critical of Paul and so Paul does something unusual for him. He takes time in the following verses to talk about himself at some length. This is why he asks (as the King James marginal note says) that they "might well bear with me," i.e. with Paul. He certainly does not ask his readers to put up with such false preachers as he describes. (See Gal. 2:4-5).

Such false teachers talk about Jesus, the Spirit and the gospel! But the "Jesus" they preach is not one who paid for the sins of His people. He is one who tries to save everyone, but cannot because His death really accomplished nothing in itself. This "Jesus" requires the spiritually dead lost sinner to rise up of his own power and do something to add to the work of Christ in order to be saved – really in order to save himself!

The "Spirit" preached by false teachers is not a sovereign one. He is not like the Spirit spoken of in John 3:8 who blows where it "listeth" (wills or desires), but rather is one who can be conjured up by repetitive choruses and conditioned responses just like Pavlov's dogs. And the false "gospel" preached by such men is not the simple proclamation of the finished work of Christ for His sheep. Rather it is a slumgullion (by definition a cheap stew): an attempted mixture of works and religious deeds claimed to be necessary to bring about the new birth.

Paul wrote: **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his**

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10). Again he wrote, **"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. 11:6). Works have no part in salvation! Works have no part in the new birth! It is impossible to mix works and grace for such an attempt changes the meaning and nature of each one!

ATTEMPTING TO MAKE GOATS ACT LIKE SHEEP

If it were not so sad it would be amusing to read and hear preachers and others trying to get spiritual goats to act like spiritual sheep. It seems that some people think that everyone that ever "made a decision for Christ," or "prayed the sinner's prayer," or "got baptized," etc., are saved in spite of the way they live. Because of this idea again and again we read and hear religious leaders hammering away trying to get lost people to act like Christians.

It seems clear that they think that there are genuine Christians who continue to live exactly like the world. Nothing could be further from the truth! Jesus said, **"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"** (John 10:27), but these folk say that Jesus' sheep do not follow Him. Jesus said, **"For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit"** (Luke 6:43), but these folk say that a good tree brings forth rotten fruit: i.e. that a true child of God can live an immoral life. Jesus said, **"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them"** (Matt. 7:20), but these folk seem to think that true Christians do not necessarily

produce good fruit.

It is unpopular today to believe the Bible although many give lip service to it. Paul wrote: **"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"** (II Cor. 5:17), but some folk, it seems, believe that a born again individual will not experience what it means to be a new creation in Christ. Hebrews 12:14 says: **"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord,"** but it seems some think it possible to go to be with the Lord without any holiness.

It is true that spiritual goats act like goats. They think like goats, love the things of this world, dress like goats, seek after goat-pleasures, indulge in goat-excesses, etc. In short they acted like goats before they "made a decision" or "prayed the sinner's prayer," or whatever they did having been told by false teachers that their act would cause them to be born again. They do not understand that the new birth is a matter of God's intervention in their lives and has nothing to do with their wills for God says of those born again, **"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"** (John 1:13). In spite of these clear words, **"Not of works, lest any man should boast"** (Eph. 2:9) the natural mind reasons that it is possible to do something which will get God to save a sinner.

So it is that some goats are obviously goats while other goats make a pretense at being religious, claiming to be spiritual sheep. But you cannot make a goat into a sheep.



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 12-1-2020 to 12-31-2020

Beginning Balance	\$2,569.31
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	200.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	300.00
Carol Willett, Cottonwood Shores, TX	70.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Eve Knowles, Scarborough, ME	100.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR	25.00
Grace B. C., Buckhannon, WV	32.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Gladwin, MI	50.00
Grace B. C., Rural Hall, NC	50.00
Grace Missionary B. C., Tulsa, OK	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
The Lord's B. C., Goose Creek, SC	50.00
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New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
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Rolan Rhodes, Buckhannon, WV	14.00
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Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Wellington, KS	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Wayne Huffman, McNeil, AR	52.00
Subscriptions	136.00
Anonymous	500.00
Dividing checks	300.00
Sub Total	\$3,004.00
TOTAL	\$5,573.31
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	563.03
Supplies	0.00
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.90
Dividing checks	300.00
Bank charge	13.00
Total Expenditures	\$3,841.93
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,731.38



BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 12-1-2020 to 12-31-2020

Beginning Balance	\$2,806.58
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Calvary I. B. C., Sumas, WA	100.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	200.00
.....	625.00
TOTAL	3,431.58
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	403.98
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	403.98
.....	3,027.60
Interest (Nov & Dec)	+0.05
ENDING BALANCE	\$3,027.65



Urgency in the Lord

By Issac Sidders
of Guntown, Mississippi

As Christians, we are called to be urgent about the Lord. We must urgently love our Savior and our neighbors. We must urgently (if saved) become members of a true church. It is essential that we each personally spend time devoted to studying His Word. As Jesus sacrificed Himself for us, we must also dedicate our lives to Him. It is necessary that we live by faith in Jesus.

We need to illuminate Christ's example through our everyday actions that the lost of this world may see where our hope and citizenship lie. If we live for our flesh, we will succeed in the trend of "fitting in" with the world. However, God's elect are not chosen of Him just to remain in the world. We are His; let us live as such. To be a Christian is to strive to be Christ-like. Not conditionally, but constantly.

We must urgently prioritize fellowshiping with our brethren, joyfully praising our almighty Creator together whenever possible. Whatever role God has set for you in your home or assembly, fulfill it, and strive to be godly in it. Additionally, it is dire that we shun all false idols and teachers—for they know not, nor compare to, our God.

Above all these matters is the important call to urgently repent, for the Kingdom of

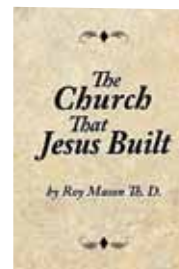
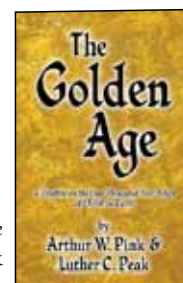
Heaven is at hand. None except Christ have lived a perfect life, and none ever will. All have failed and fallen short of His righteousness. As sinners in need of the Savior, we should never keep our testimonies secret. If you are saved, then it is your solemn job to share what Christ did for you. He saved your soul from His wrath by His sacrifice once and for all time. The lost need to see and hear us repent. When we are called hypocrites, we should be replying with an "Amen" because we recognize our sinful nature, and know that the change in us occurred only by God's hand, not our own.

On our own, we would not choose to serve God. We could never preach and teach what His Word says. We could never have our prayers of repentance heard... but Jesus. It is urgent that we abide in the Lord who saved our wretched souls. Tell the lost what Jesus did for you and how you could have never earned it and will never deserve it. We need to humble ourselves and follow His Great Commission. We must do these urgent things, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

The Stephens Branch Baptist Church of Martin, Kentucky is in need of a pastor. They are an Independent, Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Missionary Baptist church holding to the doctrines of grace and the King James Bible. If you are interested in being considered or would like more information on the church you can call Brother Lonnie Edwards at (859) 629-1413 or write the church at: Stephens Branch Baptist Church, 1025 Stephens Branch Road, Martin, Kentucky 41649.

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

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

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

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