

The Berea Baptist Banner

Displaying Biblical truth for twenty-five years in the printed page.

The Apple Tree

By Tom Ross
of South Point, Ohio

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste" (Song of Solomon 2:3).



THE TREE OF GREAT DELIGHT

Introduction: The Song of Solomon is a beautiful and poetic book about the love and affection that was shared between a certain Shulamite girl and her Shepherd King. As you read the book you will find the girl and the king painting verbal

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The Accepted Time

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

Let's begin today, by reading II Corinthians 6: 1-2, "We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)"



THE ACCEPTED TIME TO BELIEVE

These verses are most often referred to
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At Ease in Zion

By Joseph Emaziah Cobb
(1890 - 1969)

"Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!" (Amos 6:1).

What is meant by Zion? What was it then to be at ease in Zion? What does it mean to be at ease in Zion, so to speak, now? Zion usually meant Jerusalem, the holy city. Sometimes it may have referred to the Lord's cause as represented by His ancient people, the Jews. We think of it usually today as representing the cause of Christ as His cause is represented by His churches. Then what does it mean today to be at ease with reference, or relation, to the cause of our Lord? There are many whole churches today whom we think are at ease in Zion. Read the message of the Lord to the church at Laodicea in



concerned; to trust in the ability and wisdom and faithfulness of the leaders. These people were said to have trusted in the mountain of Samaria, and in those who were called the chief of the nations. The church of Laodicea trusted in her own self-sufficiency; they were rich, and had need of nothing; they did not have to look to the Lord as they thought; they were sufficient within and of themselves.

Let us note the following facts
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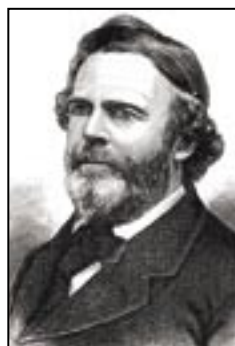
Ananias, The Liar

By George C. Baldwin
(1817 - 189?)

*"Oh! unblest falsehood, mother of all evil,
Thou art the misery making demon of the world.
Let falsehood be a stranger to thy lips;
Shame on the policy that first began
To tamper with the heart, to hide its thoughts!
And doubly shame on that inglorious tongue
That sold its honesty and told a lie."*

It is pleasant to discuss subjects which are adapted to excite emotional interest. Far different is the task before me now. I am about to treat of one which it is almost impossible should afford you pleasure, in the ordinary acceptance of the term; but with this fact distinctly before me my duty is clear.

Do we not, however, make too much of this matter of enjoyment? Does that which gives mere pleasure always benefit



mind in its noblest, highest mood, when merely experiencing gratification? Did you ever notice that the Scriptures never represent God as merely enjoying Himself, but as possessed of every attribute of goodness in an infinite degree, and constantly exercising those attributes for the well-being of His universe? And is not the human mind in its highest condition of excellence
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us most? Is what we most enjoy always what we most need? Does he who makes us temporarily most happy always do us the most good? Is the human

The Rebellious Child

By Roger D. Reed
of Mansfield, Ohio

"If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken



unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from

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The Whole Truth

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).



Many churchgoers live in open rebellion to the moral teaching of the Bible, yet they expect to be saved when the roll is called up yonder. Most of these people joined the church in what is called an old-time revival meeting. They
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A humble soul is like the violet that by its fragrant smell draws the eye and the heart of others to it.

January 5, 2006
Volume XXVI, Number 1
Whole Number 322

Editor: Christopher Cockrell
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THE BEREA BAPTIST BANNER (UPS 546470) is published monthly for \$6.00 per year by the authority of the Berea Baptist Church, 3881 Highway 363, Mantachie, Mississippi 38855. Periodical Publication postage paid at Mantachie, Mississippi.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE BEREA BAPTIST BANNER, P.O. Box 39, Mantachie, Mississippi 38855-0039.

PUBLICATION POLICIES: All matter for publication should be sent to the editor. All manuscripts are to be typed and double spaced. All such material becomes the property of BBB and will not be returned unless requested by the writer. We reserve the right to edit and condense all materials sent to us for publication.

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY with paid circulation in most states in the U.S.A. and some foreign countries.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

One year.....	\$6.00
Two years.....	\$10.00
Five years.....	\$24.00

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BUNDLES TO ONE ADDRESS: These are sent for \$4 per paper for a year. An example: 10 papers for one year at \$40 or 20 papers for one year at \$80.00.

LOCATION OF PUBLISHING CHURCH: Our church is located on state highway 363 about one mile south of Mantachie, Mississippi. Readers are always welcome to visit our services.

CHURCH PHONE: 1-662-282-7794.

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

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A Brief Look at Our Baptists

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

(Editor's Note: The article was published over ten years ago. At that time, it was written to show the many things taking place among our ranks. It is saddening to the editor to see that we have travelled further from the path than was "forecast for the future.")

When I first came among Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Independent Baptists in 1969, it seemed to me that their whole movement centered around three great pillars based upon a literal interpretation of the Bible: the local church to the exclusion of the universal, invisible church; the doctrines of grace; and premillennialism. To the best of my knowledge, about 95 percent of the brethren at that time stood firmly on these points, although they differed on other points of doctrine. As the years have passed, these three great pillars have cracked and crumbled to some degree.

THE PILLAR OF PREMILLENNIALISM

The first pillar to suffer was premillennialism. Here and there appeared a few mid-tribbers and post-tribbers. Some of these went on to embrace amillennialism, although some continued as they were and remained premillennialists. A very few returned to pre-trib premillennialism.

I would guess that the present situation is about as follows. The vast majority of our preachers are still pre-trib premillennialists, although the post-trib position has gained some strength and the mid-trib has lost a few. It is to be greatly feared that most premillennialists have received their views mostly by tradition from their fathers, and that they in the main do not have any deep-seated convictions based on personal study of the Scriptures. This makes them an easy prey of amillennialists. A growing number have no stable views on eschatology. They are disgusted with the conflicting views about prophecy, and they seldom study it, preach it, or teach it in their churches. There exists also a growing number of amillennialists who are convinced of their position by personal Bible study. The pillar of premillennialism has not fallen to the ground, but it is tottering.

THE PILLAR OF CHURCH TRUTH

Perhaps no pillar has suffered as much as church truth. It has suffered from the hands of conservatives and liberals. The first to attack the pillar were the conservatives. In the early 1960s a few of our preachers invented the "priesthood of the church" theory. This was a reactionary movement started to help stabilize church truth. These men limited God's priesthood on earth to Baptist churches. Some of these went on

to teach that only Baptists have the Holy Spirit and are regenerated, and will be in the first resurrection. A very few taught that there was no sin but a doctrinal sin and that the child of God can commit the unpardonable sin.

And, as is always the case, there was a reaction to this making a god out of the church and its anointed priesthood. Most of the brethren repudiated this new teaching. Some were so upset with the priesthood doctrine that they left our ranks and became immersed Presbyterians. The majority of the priesthood men saw nothing more in their view than new arguments for church authority. A few priesthood men went into hardshellism, or some sort of cult, or gross immorality. While the teaching of an anointed priesthood is on the decline at present, when it appeared it split our ranks and drove some weaker brethren from us into Protestantism.

Church truth in the last few years has suffered in the house of her friends. Here and there Landmarkers attack Landmarkism. The start of this attack came in the 1960s when one of our preachers wrote a book against Landmarkism. He was disfellowshipped and his book repudiated. We went on for a brief time at peace. Then another brother wrote a book against Landmarkism, charging that water baptism is our golden calf and that most Landmarkers do not have the mental capacity to read. This book was well received by a few Landmark Baptists, but it was rejected by most brethren, as was the first, as heresy. Unlike in the case of the first book, the writer of the second book continued in good grace among a few professed Landmarkers.

In the last few years the idea of a mother church has come under attack from within the ranks of Landmarkers. One of the fundamentals of Landmarkism is that there has been a succession of true churches across the centuries who preserved the ordinances uncorrupted. Any new church organized must derive its authority and church rights from another church in the line of succession. Any church not in this line of succession is not a scriptural church. Now we are being told that this is all wrong, and that it is not at all necessary that one church descend from another church. Furthermore, we are told that any church which had a mother church was organized in an unscriptural fashion. We also are told that a church need not be concerned about its origin, for to do so would be to hold to a "paper-chain" succession. Among those who are propagating these ideas are some brethren whose churches were started out of excluded members from another true New Testament Baptist church, or,

in some case, their churches sprang out of the ground.

These brethren have raised more questions than they have answered. Consider a few. If there is no Scripture for a mother church, how can churches which have a mother be scriptural churches? Can you have a true church which was started in an unscriptural manner? If how a church is started is not important, then are all so-called Baptist churches scriptural churches? What about the Protestants if there is no need to be in the line of Baptist succession? Can you have a true church without scriptural baptism? If not, where do you get the authority for scriptural baptism if not from another true Baptist church? Can excluded members from a true Baptist church be constituted into a scriptural church? Can there be any scriptural baptism apart from the body of Christ?

There is also a growing problem about the reception of alien immersion among our churches and pulpit affiliation with heretical groups. If you go to a Bible conference don't be surprised if there are Arminians, hardshells, Reformed Baptists, universal church men, or even Protestants on the program. The pillar of church truth is all but ready to fall to the ground. Worse still, most Landmarkers do not know this and some do not care.

THE PILLAR OF THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

The doctrines of grace have suffered the least of the three in my opinion, but this pillar is now under heavy attack. Some brethren have taken these doctrines to the extreme and ended up in hardshellism. But a great number in our ranks who claim to believe them do not. There is a growing number of Calvinians (an Arminian who wants people to think he is a Calvinist). A strong sermon on the covenant of grace, or election out of pure grace, would split some Sovereign Grace Baptist churches!


"Gospel regeneration" has been stressed until it has neared the point of the teaching of Free Will Baptists more than Sovereign Grace Baptists. Some even see no difference between the gospel as preached by Arminian Baptists and that preached by Sovereign Grace Baptists. They inconsistently contend that the Arminian gospel is the same as ours, but then throw a fit when it comes to Arminian baptism, although the Bible teaches baptism is a picture of the gospel. Another pillar is tottering.

THE PILLAR OF MORALITY

Sad to say, there is another growing problem which I never expected to see. I refer to the moral declension in our churches. I continue to be appalled at the growing open sin of adultery among some preachers and deacons in our ranks! Preachers I considered strong in the faith have left the wife of their youth

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Cockrell's Corner



(The views expressed in this column are strictly those of the editor of this paper. They do not necessarily represent the views of supporters or readers.)

Where Have All The Strong Men Gone?

Since my father passed away in September of 2002, I have witnessed many changes in our Sovereign Grace Baptist churches. Many of these were foretold by my father and other men like him. To many it seems that the devil has taken control of the wagon and is holding the reins. He is driving hard to destroy the strength of our churches. And to a great extent has done just that. I have noticed a decline in the steadfastness of sound Baptists. This includes both preachers and church members.

In times past when these doctrines have come under attack strong sound men would take a firm stand and defend these doctrines. Many would take sword and shield and fight to help keep or strengthen those who might not be as sound in the faith from being overtaken. But today this is no longer seen among our brethren. It seems that most have lost the zeal and desire to "stand fast for the faith." When doctrinal problems or questions arise they seem to turn a deaf ear or look the other way. It has become the norm of "anything goes as long as it doesn't cause me any problems."

Some men seem to be spending much time in chasing legalism and "new light" doctrines. Others say "they are too busy to take time out for God." Excuse me! What ever happened to putting God first? I have heard some say that their family comes before God. Well, I guess I'm from the old school. When I was growing up I knew my place in my father's line of priorities wasn't first. As a child I learned early on that God and His work was first, then the rest of us came after. Today many have placed family, jobs, sports, entertainment, and a variety of other things before the Lord's work. This is a sign that points to the nearing of our Lord's return. People are forsaking God to be with the world. Did not our Lord teach to forsake all and follow Him?

No longer are men really sitting down and reading and studying the Bible. How can we defend truths and fight against heresies if we do not know the Word of God?

You ask, "Where have all the strong men gone?" Many have already been called home. Others are aged and in poor health. The number of old, sound, steadfast, solid-as-a-rock men of God are quickly dwindling. Will we ever see a new generation of men, who will not falter or turn aside with every wind of doctrine? Will we ever see strong men of faith and practice like Harold Harvey, E. D. Strickland, and Milburn Cockrell? Only the Lord knows.

If you are older I ask that you, **"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle"** (II Thess. 2:15). Help teach and train young members for the service of our Lord. Don't be afraid when they make a mistake to tell them and counsel them. But do it in the right spirit and frame of mind. Do it in love and understanding. Remember you were once young.

If you are young don't be afraid to admit you don't fully understand a doctrine or other parts of the Bible. Ask older brethren, but most of all read and study the Bible. Spend much time in prayer and ask the Lord for wisdom and understanding. Don't be swayed and tempted by the new ideas. Stand strong and firm. Remember it is better to stand as a lone strait oak tree than in a forest full of willows that lean whichever way the wind blows. **"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"** (II Tim. 2:15). **"Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life"** (Prov. 4:13).

My father was one that many, young and old, called for advice on doctrinal, church, spiritual and many other matters. Many brethren I have talked with recently say they miss the wisdom and knowledge of my father. I admit I miss it as well, more than most I'm sure. I just earnestly pray that the Lord will once again raise up more strong men of God, ones who will stand firm in the truths of the Bible, prove all things and hold fast that which is good, whose wisdom and knowledge might be sought after like that of Solomon, who can once again be strong and mighty men for our churches.

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A Brief Look at Our

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for a whore. Our churches are filled with people who have broken homes. Most preachers are silent about this problem, lest they offend some good-paying members.

I am utterly astonished to see that some see no evil in a preacher living with a number of women as wives who are not his wives. If any one dares to raise questions about this he is branded a trouble-maker who seeks to destroy the ministry of our best preachers. The words in the Bible about adultery and lying means nothing to some preachers and their churches.

Verily, if we cannot agree that lying and adultery are sins, then it stands to reason we cannot agree on anything, and that we are hopelessly divided. It is now no longer doctrinal issues which divide us; it is moral issues as well. Unless these moral problems are checked we are doomed to death and destruction. God will not bless a people who try to justify the sins of lying and adultery.

None of the facts that I have called attention to in our ranks are pleasing to me. The knowledge of these things is very grievous to this writer. How he would like to see unity on the three great pillars once again, but he does not expect to see it. Instead, I expect the apostasy to gain strength in the next few years. God is slowly but surely removing our leaders. T. P. Simmons, Berlin Hisel, Rosco Brong, E. G. Cook, and Roy Mason are no more. Most of our preachers are middle aged or older. In 10 to 20 years most of the present population will be no more. Who will take our place? How many young preachers do we have who are sound? Who will teach the world the truth in the next generation? Will our doctrines all but fade from the American scene? God only knows.

A SOLUTION

None of the three pillars will fall to the ground unless we let them. We can reverse present trends. We could have a revival. We could rise up with united voices and defend the great truths which have distinguished our people in the past. Those of us left who still believe the old truths need to stand up and be counted. Truth needs no apology and error deserves none. Indeed, **"we are left but a few of many"** (Jer. 42:2) and what we do we must do quickly.

What should we do? I want to offer a very good suggestion. Why not have our able preachers to write a brief commentary on the New Testament? Such a book, or books, could remain to teach the next generation as well as the present. Look how the writings of Gill and Graves continue to teach our people. I doubt that any preacher will live long enough to do this work by himself. I

suggest that qualified men be assigned a book of the New Testament and then put these all together. Nothing is needed more than such a brief commentary in my opinion. We sorely need a Sovereign Grace, Landmark Bible Commentary on the New Testament. We have men capable of writing such. Then why not now?

FORECASTS FOR THE FUTURE

The forecasts I am about to give are based on present trends and observations of the past. They do not have to come to pass. We can change the future. No one would hope to change this future more than the writer of this article.

The churches and pastors will continue a gradual decline doctrinally and numerically. As the older pastors die, young men from other groups will take over a great many of our churches and lead them into Arminianism and universal church heresy. Bickering and backbiting will continue until we are hopelessly divided so that most cooperation among the churches will cease in missions, education, and publication work. A few sound preachers will be overworked, trying to preach and pastor the sound churches which remain. The present generation will leave behind very little written material to teach the next generation.

This is a dark and dismal picture, but I fear it will become a horrible reality in the next 10 to 20 years unless we wake up now!

Let me assure and reassure the readers of the BBB that as long as I keep my right mind and physical health I will do my best to keep the BBB in the mail. We will not diminish from the three great pillars though all others forsake them.

"My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen" (I Cor. 16:24).

The Apple Tree

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pictures of one another, as they commend one another for their excellent qualities. They also are found telling each other how much they loved one another by using various metaphors. The book is one of experience as it describes a pure and genuine love between two individuals and the emotions associated with it.

In our text the Shulamite girl likens her shepherd king to an apple tree who afforded her protection, provision, and refreshment. I see in our text the peculiar relationship that Jesus Christ and the believer share in way of intimate communion. As believers, we have the wonderful privilege of sitting at the feet of Jesus to partake of the precious fruits of grace that the blood of His cross has yielded. It is our glorious privilege to commune with the Most High as we drink in His fellowship and taste that He

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The Apple Tree

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is gracious.

I have a growing fear that modern-day Christianity has degenerated into a religion of cold, hard facts without any genuine experience of the joy and love that fellowship with the Saviour affords. There are many in our day who can recite the Apostle's Creed, parrot confessions of faith, and memorize doctrinal truths, and yet remain unhappy and discontent. I am not downplaying doctrinal truth, but we must never think that that is all there is to Christianity. Christianity is not simply an adherence to a system of revealed truth, it is a living faith in a loving Lord. There is an aspect of the Christian faith that is experimental, where our heart, emotions, and affections are drawn to the One who is Altogether Lovely. In Romans chapter 5, Paul begins by describing the believer's position of justification. He then describes the actual experiences associated with the life of a Christian. Romans 5:3-5 states: **"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."** The love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts! God's love is something that we actually experience and enjoy. I believe the Shulamite girl's satisfaction and delight was bound up in her relationship to her shepherd king in the same way in which the believer delights himself in the Lord.

THIS APPLE TREE IS DISTINGUISHED FROM ALL THE OTHER TREES

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." The picture that she is drawing is that there are many trees in the woods of various shapes and sizes, even as there are many different kinds of men among the sons of men. But there was one tree that stood out from the rest. One tree that was unique from all others in that it offered satisfaction and solace to her thirsty and weary soul. Even though other trees in the wilderness may have been older, more stately and beautiful to the eye, only one could meet her needs. Only one tree was exalted and given a pre-eminent place in her eyes. This is how the girl described her relationship with her shepherd king. Her beloved was exalted above all the sons of men.

In the same manner, the Lord Jesus Christ stands apart from all men and all religions in the fact that He alone is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him. Before we were saved we wandered through the wilderness of the world and sought refuge from many types of unfruitful trees that could never

satisfy our needs. The things of the world and the religions of carnal men can never satisfy the longing soul. Jesus Christ is the only person who can give the sinner peace with God. His shed blood is the only refuge for a guilty, condemned sinner. The finished work of Christ is the only way of acceptance with God. All the ordinances, rituals, and religions that men may devise can never wash away one sin, can never comfort a guilty conscience or deliver from Hell. Yet Jesus Christ secures all of this and more. Colossians 2:9-10 states: **"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."** How we ought to rejoice in knowing that: **"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"** (I Cor. 1:30-31).

C. H. Spurgeon said: "You remember when you first came to that precious tree whereon the Saviour died, and found that your sin was blotted out, and that you were accepted in the Beloved, and were made to be henceforth an heir of Heaven. Oh the lusciousness of the fruit which you gathered then! Oh, the delightful quiet of that shadow under which you sat that day; blessed be his name! You had searched among the other trees, but you found no fruit there: you tried to rest in the shadow of other boughs, but you never rested till on that blood-stained tree of the cross you saw your sin put away and your salvation secured, and then you rested and were satisfied."

THIS APPLE TREE WAS HER REFUGE

"I sat down under his shadow with great delight." The term shadow in the Scriptures often speaks of protection from harm or refuge from danger. In order to understand the metaphor aright you must think of the hot sun scorching the wanderer's head and body. Under the shadow of the tree there is comfort and protection from the heat. This also pictures what Jesus Christ is to the believer. It is Christ who shields us from the wrath of God, the terrors of the law, the fiery darts of Satan, and the threats of the world. He is our refuge. He is our protection. God's anger, like the hot noon-day sun, abides on every unbelieving sinner. There is no escape from the anger of God except through an interposer.

What is a shadow? Is it not caused by the interposition of a tree which comes between us and the sun? If we sit under the shadow of a tree, it is the tree which receives the heat, and we escape it. In like manner, Christ is our glorious Interposer and Substitute. When we hide beneath His merits and blood we are screened from the wrath of God. God's wrath cannot come on us, because it has come upon Him on our behalf. He is the one who bore the heat of the wrath of God

on the cross so that we may enjoy eternal rest and refreshment in Him. Proverbs 18:10 states: **"The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."**

It is interesting to note that it was not until she sat down under the shadow that she had true refreshment. It is not until we cease from our own works and rest completely in the finished work of Christ that we enjoy genuine assurance of salvation. All of our efforts to be justified by the deeds of the law or by our own works are vain, foolish, and to no avail. It is only in Christ that we find true rest for our weary, sin-laden souls. Jesus said: **"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"** (Matt. 11:28-30).

Oh, what a glorious day it was when we entered into the rest of the Saviour! **"For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said. . . For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his"** (Heb. 4:3a, 10). The rest and peace that we enjoy in Jesus Christ is something which the world knows nothing about. Peace through the blood of His cross is one of the chief treasures God has bestowed upon His elect from His inexhaustible storehouse of grace. Is it any wonder why Paul exclaimed: **"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. . ."** (Gal. 6:14).

THIS APPLE TREE WAS HER SOURCE OF REFRESHMENT

She was not satisfied and refreshed by merely taking refuge from the heat of the sun, and looking upon the luscious fruit that hung from its branches. No, she must eat of the precious fruit in order to satisfy her hunger and thirst. She must be nourished by the sweetness the tree afforded her. Does this not speak of the fellowship which we enjoy in the presence of Christ? We must not be satisfied merely with a refuge from the heat of God's wrath. There is spiritual comfort and pleasure to be experienced by sitting at the feet of Jesus and drinking in His fellowship and excellencies.

John Gill wrote: "She sat here with delight; and indeed it could not be otherwise when its shade was so agreeable, and the fruit so sweet: this pleasure and delight of her's arose from the enjoyment of Christ's presence, 'in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore;' from the discoveries of his love to her soul, which is better than life, and all the comforts of it; and were had in the exercise of faith upon him, in the actings of which grace the soul is filled with 'joy unspeakable and full of glory'."

As she ate of the fruit she was

satisfied and her body was nourished and strengthened. The world and all its dainties offers the true saint of God no nourishment and strength. In fact, the world and the flesh sap our spiritual strength. It is when we feed upon Christ and His Word that we are strengthened in the inner man. The promises, which are exceeding great and precious, make the Word of God: **"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, then much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."** This is what led Job to declare: **"Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food"** (Job 23:12). Dear saint, are you fainting in the way? Has your spiritual strength been sapped? Then you must at once flee to the presence of Christ and His Word. There you will find fresh reservoirs of grace to nourish and strengthen you on your pilgrim journey.

It is also interesting to note the posture she employed while eating the fruit, she sat down under its branches. She did not eat the fruit hurriedly on her way to do something else, she relished it while sitting peacefully under the tree. Our lives have become so hurried and rushed that we often fail to spend time **"in the secret place of the Most High."** It is little wonder why we experience little power and the peace of God when we rush through our spiritual exercises with little profit or delight. Have we not wrongly equated spirituality with religious activity and busyness?

True service flows from a heart that is filled to overflowing with the glory and excellency of Christ. We must incorporate spiritual worship and fellowship in our lives if we are to know and serve God aright. Psalms 4:4 states: **"Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."** Psalms 46:10 declares: **"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."**

James Durham commented: "These sweet fruits are neither eaten, nor the sweetness of them felt by believers, till they go to Christ's shadow, and sit down delightfully under his righteousness; then they become refreshful."

We will find more than enough time to do other things after we have placed fellowship with God as our top priority. While Martha was nervously serving and complaining the Lord said: **"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."** The good part which Mary had chosen is revealed in Luke 10:39: **" . . . Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word."** When will we learn that the key to service is communion and

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The Apple Tree

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fellowship with God?

II Corinthians 3:18 states: **“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”** We will experience genuine revival in our hearts if we will only avail ourselves the blessings of enjoying the presence of Christ in fellowship. Hosea 14:7 says: **“They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”**

CONCLUSION

Dear reader, what is it in your life from which you derive satisfaction and delight? Is it television, or sports, or entertainment, or your job? If so, you are like the members of the church at Ephesus who Jesus rebuked by saying: **“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”** Can you not remember the time when Jesus Christ, His Word, prayer, and fellowship with the saints of God delighted and satisfied you completely? When service to God was not looked upon as drudgery, but as a glorious privilege to be enjoyed? In those days there was no excuse able to keep you away from the things of God. In fact, you tried to put everything else out of the way so as to have the opportunity to become better acquainted with the Lord of glory who reigned supremely in your heart. What has happened? Has God moved or Christ become less precious? or is it that you have allowed the things of the world to crowd out your devotion?

“Delight thyself also in the LORD, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” You cannot delight in Christ if you are going after the things of the world. **“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”** And so you cannot enjoy Christ and the world at the same time. Please repent, and quickly return to **“The Tree of Great Delight”**, where you will be refreshed by the fresh fruits of grace obtained through fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.



The Accepted Time

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when someone is stressing the immediate need of the unsaved. So many people in Christianity today use these verses to emphasize to the lost that, “Today is the day to be saved.” Now, I will not deny that there is truth in this statement. Certainly we don’t want to ever teach that the need for salvation is not a dire and pressing need. The Bible teaches us plainly that all men have sinned, and that all men have a need for a Saviour. We read about the publican that prayed to God in Luke 18:13, **“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”** All men need to cry out to God, and all men need to repent and turn from their sins. The Lord said in Matthew 4:17, **“..Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”** And the Lord said about the sick and dying condition of men, **“..They that are whole need not a physician: but they that are sick.”** (Luke 5:31).

We also do not want men to think that we are preaching a Gospel that does not have the power and ability to save every individual that we might preach to – if it be the will and purpose of God. In other words, just because we believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation, it does not mean that we doubt the authenticity or the ability of the salvation message that we present to men. Remember, the Lord said, **“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”** (Matt. 11:28). And the Lord said through Isaiah, **“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price”** (Isa. 55:1). And we read in Revelation 22:17, **“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”**

I think that we have the duty and obligation, as churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as individual members of those churches, to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. And a part of that gospel is to cry out unto the lost to “Come!” And I believe that this call is genuine, even as the command of the Lord Jesus Christ

was genuine when He said, **“..Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”**

However, I do want to say this about these verses that we have just read concerning the call that goes forth. In each case you will find that there are conditions placed upon those calls. I suppose that there are some among those that hear or read this message, that might perhaps, immediately cry out, and say, “See, I told you that those folks at Indore, and all of those Sovereign Grace Baptists really don’t believe in preaching the Gospel to all people after all. I knew that they didn’t believe that anyone could be saved.” Well, before you get the wrong idea about the true and biblical gospel that we preach, let me point out some things in the verses that we have just read.

In Matthew 11:28 the Lord Jesus tells those which **“labour and are heavy laden”** to **“Come unto me.”** So really, He is calling unto Him those that feel the burden of their sins. And perhaps you could make the case that He is calling unto Him those who may be saved, but are burdened by the sins and trials of this life. But, any one that doesn’t feel the burden of sins or trials or the burdens of this life, is not even asked to come.

In Isaiah 55:1 where we have also read, we find that the call goes out to the **“one that thirsteth,”** and to the one that **“hath no money.”** These are the ones that should **“..come ye to the waters..”** These are the ones that can **“..come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”** You see, no one will come to drink of the waters if they are not first thirsty. And those that seek to buy and eat using the monies or works or righteousnesses of this life, will not be able to buy the wine and the milk that can only be given freely through the grace of God, and the love of Jesus Christ. So this call in Isaiah 55:1 really only goes out to those that know that they have a need, and to those that know that they are not qualified in and of themselves, to purchase the remedy for their need.

And then, in the last example that I used in Revelation 22:17, we notice again, that though the call goes out to **“Come,”** still, only those will come that are **“athirst.”** And the verse also mentions that those who come are the ones that **“will.”** In other words, those that obey the call, and those that do actually **“Come,”** must be the thirsty ones, and the ones that have a desire to do so. In fact, in reference to this desire to come, let’s read Psalms 110:3, **“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power..”**

So, though most often, our text verse found in II Corinthians 6:2 is used to call men unto salvation, I believe that we must beware that we don’t go too far. Given the verses that we have just read, it must be seen that there are conditions placed upon the call to salvation. Now, as before, let me hastily add that these

are not our conditions, but rather these are conditions that the Lord God has set forth. He will always only call those that He has given the desire and the will to come. He will always only call those to whom He has given a thirst and a hunger. Now, we don’t know who those willing and thirsty ones are. Therefore, as Revelation 22:17 reminds us, it is our duty and responsibility to call and to preach unto all. (See also Mark 16:15.)

However, isn’t it interesting to notice that the Lord Jesus Christ goes about telling every man to repent, for indeed this is the commandment of God – that all men are required to repent. But, whenever He issues a call, it is always a qualified call. This is because if any man ever knew the hearts and minds of men; and if any preacher ever knew who it was that would be saved, and who it was that was the elect child of God – that person and preacher was (and is) the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having said all of this, I do agree that it is right and proper to emphasize, from time to time, the fact that II Corinthians 6:2 does remind us that today is the best day to believe. Indeed, we do not know what tomorrow might bring. James told those that he was writing unto, **“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”** (James 4:14). Certainly, tomorrow will not be any better than today as far as believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can use these verses to mention to the lost that certainly their lives could end at any moment, and who knows what the Lord might have in store for them? If a lost person feels the workings of the Holy Spirit, and he feels a thirst for the things of God, and if he has a desire and a Heaven-sent will to come to the Lord Jesus Christ – then, by all means, do it today! However, we should never use II Corinthians 6:2 to instruct the lost that, **“The Lord Jesus may be coming to you today, for today is the day of salvation. And if you do not heed His call, then He may not ever come to you again. In fact, this may be the last chance that you have of ever being saved!”** To me, any preacher or church that presents a message such as this to the lost, must also be presenting a God that is not sure of His abilities, and must not even be sure of who it is that He has designed to save.

THE ACCEPTED TIME TO SERVE

Now, for just a few moments, let’s look at another way that we might apply II Corinthians 6:2. Let’s read the verse again: **“(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)”** I want to make two more primary points. What I want to attempt to make clear first, is that really,

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Tune in to the

Berea Baptist Broadcast

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

The Accepted Time

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if you read the context surrounding this verse, it seems to me that the Apostle Paul is quoting this Old Testament scripture so that he can cause the Corinthians (and us as well), to understand that they (and we) are living in the accepted time to serve. Remember that our text verse is a parenthetical statement. If you read II Corinthians 6:1, 3 in sequence, you would read it this way: **"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain...Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed."** Notice that the Apostle Paul talks about being **"workers"** in II Corinthians 6:1. And notice that he also, in the same verse, voices a concern, hoping that the Corinthians have not received **"the grace of God in vain."** And then, in vv. 3-10, he goes on to speak of the **"ministry,"** and of the ways in which we can show ourselves approved in the ministry of God.

So, I think something that the apostle Paul is teaching us here, is that we are living in the **"time accepted"** to serve the Lord. He quotes the Old Testament scripture to remind the Corinthians that the Lord has promised to hear His people, and to succour His people in the day of their salvation (or in the duration of their salvation). Now, with that Old Testament promise in mind, the apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, **"...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation..."** What a wonderful promise we have! What a wonderful opportunity has been given to us! The Lord has promised a day of salvation in which He will hear and succour His people! Now, the Corinthians have that great privilege! And now, you and I have that same great privilege. Do not go about living in such a way that some might wonder if we are **"workers together with him,"** or that others might question that we might have received **"the grace of God in vain."** But, live your life in such a way that others will see you as a worker in the cause of Christ; and live your life in such a way that others will see the grace of God in your life. Do this, because now is the accepted time. Tomorrow will not be a better day to serve the Lord – now is the accepted time.

THE ACCEPTED TIME TO SAVE

The last point I want to make concerns the accepted time of the day of salvation. You know, Solomon said, **"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die..."** (Eccl. 3:1-2). I think that in reality, a better application of our text verse (instead of emphasizing the imminent doom that faces lost men and women if they don't repent and believe) would be to emphasize that the Lord is no uncertain God; and as a certain God, and as a sovereign God, He

has determined the day of salvation and the accepted time to save every one of His elect. The accepted time of the day of salvation is actually dependent upon our sovereign God, and not upon the fickle fancies of any of His created beings.

In fact, I think this is very important to emphasize to even the lost. When you were quickened by the Holy Spirit, and when you were first coming to the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, didn't you rejoice in the knowledge that your Saviour and your God was completely capable and in control? Isn't it a good thing to teach the lost that God is a sovereign God and that He is in control of the day of your salvation? Won't the lost feel in that declaration (if the Lord has decreed that they should be saved) a burning desire to come to the Lord, for He must have certainly called them this very day!

I am sure any application of II Corinthians 6:2 that serves to exalt God and His Son Jesus Christ, while at the same time debasing man and his abilities, is a good and proper application of the verse. For this reason, I believe it is right and proper to see in this verse the fact that it is the Lord Who has **"heard"** us in His **"time accepted."** And it is the Lord Who has **"succoured"** us in the **"day of salvation."** Therefore, it is the Lord's salvation, administered by the Lord, in the time that is appointed of the Lord. This is what we should be emphasizing to the lost.

Remember what the Lord told Zaccheus, **"...This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"** (Luke 19:9-10). We often times refer to the Samaritan woman at the well, and we often mention how that the Lord **"...must needs go through Samaria"** (John 4:4). We do this because we know, without a doubt, that that woman at the well could not have been saved without Jesus Christ. You see, salvation comes when the Lord comes – and only then. We read in Zechariah 9:9, **"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."** So many people today take II Corinthians 6:2 and present Jesus Christ to an individual as a last-chance choice which they must make – now, before it's too late! However, when our Saviour comes to us in the day of His salvation, He will come as our **"King cometh unto thee."** And, He will come **"having salvation"** for us. There will be no choice to make – He will call and we will come.

CONCLUSION

There is much we can learn from studying II Corinthians 6:2. And there is much we can teach others from this verse, but let us not be hasty and ascribe

meaning to this verse only because so many others use it in a certain way. Religious men have often misused verses of the Bible to further their own understandings and the way that they teach the Bible itself. Just because it makes a good emotional plea, and just because it can be used to incite a response from the lost, is not cause for us to limit our understanding of II Corinthians 6:2. There is much to be learned here for all of us, both the saved and the unsaved. We

who are saved can see that the salvation which we have is now, and that now is the accepted time to serve God, and to make full proof of our service to Christ (see II Timothy 4:5). And those that are unsaved need to hear that salvation comes at the time and the discretion, and indeed at the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. No man can thwart Him when He comes – for, indeed, what man who is thirsty would turn from *the fountain of living waters?* ♦♦♦♦♦

THE BIBLE AND NEWS PAPER

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

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

RELIGION IS "UNDER ATTACK"

Conservative Christians have been saying it for years. Now, a survey conducted by a group that often leans to the left is saying the same thing: religion is "under attack" and losing influence in American life. Sixty-four percent of the American people believe that religion is "under attack," according to a new poll released today by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The poll found that 53 percent of Americans likewise believe that religion as a whole is "losing its influence in American life." The Anti-Defamation League has been a strong advocate of "church-state separation" and has often sided with the American Civil Liberties Union and other liberal groups in debates about religion and public life. However, a spokesman for the group acknowledged that the feeling that religion was under siege may be contributing to efforts to tear down church-state separation.

U.S. SEEKS TO RESCUE U.S. SEX SLAVES

Wade Horn, the assistant secretary for children and families at U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has launched a program designed to help law enforcement and faith-based groups identify and assist the victims of trafficking. The Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking campaign aims to bring back to safety some of the 20,000 people brought into the U.S. each year against their will, mostly for the sex trade. "We're going around the country mobilizing community after community to develop coalitions to attack this problem," Horn said. "We know that human trafficking is not just an issue in a few places in America, but it unfortunately is in many different places in America." Janice Crouse, senior fellow at the Beverly LaHaye Institute, said those efforts are vitally important because victims seldom will seek help on their own. "They think that if they go to the police, the police will rescue them -- but the police will throw them in jail," she said. "They will be

fined. They have had their passports taken away from them. They've been beaten to the point that they are scared to death of anybody other than their pimp."

HIV UP IN GAY COMMUNITY

The rate of newly diagnosed cases of HIV infections has dropped in the African-American population, but has increased significantly among homosexuals, The Los Angeles Times reported. According to a November report from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), new diagnoses among gay and bisexual men of all races rose 8 percent last year. Infections among blacks dropped 5 percent, though blacks are still 8.4 times more likely than Caucasians to contract the disease. Dr. Ronald Valdiserri, acting director of the CDC's National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention, said experts aren't sure what's behind the increase in the gay community. The previous three years had seen little increase in the percentage of new cases. The statistics include data from 33 states. Of those states, 38,685 people were diagnosed with HIV in 2004 -- 71 percent of those were men.

VIRGINIA CHURCH TRASHES ALL MARRIAGES

Clarendon Presbyterian Church (CPC) in Arlington, Va., will not have weddings anymore. In protest to the state's ban on same-sex marriages, CPC pastor David Ensign announced at a recent human rights ceremony honoring his church that he will renounce his state authority to perform marriages and will instead opt for "celebrations of commitment." Heterosexual couples that have their union "blessed" in a "celebration ceremony" will have to be officially wed by a justice of the peace at the courthouse, according to the Associated Press. "What we're saying is that in the commonwealth of Virginia, the laws that govern marriage are unjust and unequal," Ensign said. The church

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and pastor's actions come as the state's General Assembly is preparing to consider a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages. The amendment was cleared by the General Assembly last session and must be agreed upon again before a statewide referendum in the next year or two. "I think it is a shame that this clergyman would seek to undermine traditional marriage, which is the foundation of American society," said state Sen. Nick Rerras, R-Norfolk and a sponsor of the legislation. "It's a terrible message to send to our youth."

SEX, SEX, SEX AND MORE SEX

(EP)--The study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that "television these days is loaded with sex, sex, sex - double the number of sex scenes aired seven years ago," according to the AP. Last year, there were 3,800 scenes with sexual content contained in 1,100 shows researchers studied.

The Kaiser study also found that 70 percent of all shows on TV include some sexual content, defined as anything from discussions about sex to scenes involving everything from kissing to intercourse. And shows that aired during prime-time - when children and teens are most likely to be watching - on the major broadcast networks (ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox) contained even more sexual content at about 77 percent.

SOUTH AFRICA APPROVES GAY MARRIAGE

(EP)--South Africa's highest court ruled in favor of gay marriage Dec. 1, a landmark decision that clears the way for the country to become the first to legalize same-sex unions on a continent where homosexuality remains largely taboo.

The decision does not take immediate effect, however. The Constitutional Court, which decided it is unconstitutional to prohibit gays from marrying, gave Parliament a year to make the necessary legal changes. That disappointed gay rights activists, some of whom have been waiting years to wed.

South Africa recognized the rights of gay people in the constitution adopted after apartheid ended in 1994 -- the first in the world to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. But the government has opposed attempts to extend the definition of marriage in court to include same-sex couples in the mostly Christian country.

INDIANA STATEHOUSE PRAYERS CAN'T SAY "JESUS"

(EP)--A federal court ruled Nov. 30 that when the Indiana State House opens for session each day, it cannot include a prayer that mentions the name of Jesus Christ.

A lawsuit, brought by four people represented by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), claimed the 188-year-old tradition of prayer in the State House promoted Christian values.

District Judge David Hamilton found that

the practice of invoking the name of Christ in prayer was unconstitutional because it is considered an establishment of religion.

Hamilton did not bar prayer, but he said, "The individuals do not have a First Amendment right to use an official platform like the Speaker's podium to express their own religious faiths."

A 1983 U.S. Supreme Court decision upheld the right of government bodies to open sessions with a prayer pointing to an "unambiguous and unbroken history of more than 200 years." The decision did, however, say that prayers can't promote one religion over another.

Lawmakers and historians reacted negatively over the weekend to a federal judge's ruling that the Indiana Legislature could no longer mention the name of Jesus during prayer. Republican Brian Bosma, speaker of the Indiana House, called it an "intolerable decision."

Of the 53 prayers offered in the 2005 session, 41 were given by clergy from Christian churches.

MINNESOTA PASTORS LATEST TARGET OF GAY ACTIVISTS

(EP)--A gathering of pastors in support of a ban on same-sex marriage in Minnesota was disrupted Nov. 10 by a bomb threat, the latest of a string of incidents involving increasing violent actions by pro-homosexual protesters.

Some 300 pastors and religious leaders met at Grace Church in Minneapolis to get advice from the Minnesota Family Council about how to protect traditional marriage through a state amendment. About 75 protesters gathered outside the church - including openly gay former Minnesota Vikings defensive lineman Esera Tuaolo -- proclaiming that the Bible supports gay marriage.

The meeting was disrupted for about 30 minutes while authorities conducted a sweep of the building after the church received a bomb threat.

The threat is the latest extreme protest directed at pro-family groups. Last month in Boston, Focus on the Family's Love Won Out conference was besieged by more than 1,000 pro-gay protesters shouting obscenities at the downtown church where the event was held; and on Nov. 7, a homosexual-activist group stormed into the Washington, D.C., offices of the Family Research Council to protest its support of abstinence education.

SOME CHURCHES CLOSED FOR CHRISTMAS

(EP)--There's an old joke that some people will darken the door of a church only on Christmas and Easter.

Now, make that just Easter.

Some mega-churches, following the lead of Willow Creek Community Church, will be closed this Christmas.

Central Kentucky's largest church will be shuttered and dark on Christmas Sunday. Southland Christian Church near Lexington where about 7,000 people worship each week,

said the move is designed to allow staff and volunteers to spend the holy holiday with their families.

Scores of other well-known churches are joining the Christmas shutdown.

Megachurch officials around the country consulted with each other before deciding to take the day off. Cally Parkinson is a spokesperson for Willow Creek Community Church, the Chicago area's largest church and a bellwether for the "seeker" movement. She said, "It's more than being family friendly. It's being lifestyle-friendly for people who are just very, very busy."

The move is drawing mixed reviews. David Wells, a professor of history and systematic theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, told the Associated Press, "This is a consumer mentality at work: 'Let's not impose the church on people. Let's not make church in any way inconvenient.' I think what this does is feed into the individualism that is found throughout American culture, where everyone does their own thing."

CASINOS GET IN LINE FOR HURRICANE RELIEF

(EP)--Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., is working hard to make sure a tax-relief bill for victims of Hurricane Katrina does not wind up helping to rebuild casinos, liquor stores and massage parlors.

The Senate has already passed the bill. Wolf said the House vote expected this week is the last stand.

There is precedent for excluding morally questionable industries from congressional aid packages. Wolf said he wants it applied to the current tax-relief package.

"Why can't -- or more accurately, why won't -- we continue to say 'No' to using our constituent's hard-earned tax dollars to subsidize massage parlors, liquor stores and casinos," he said. "They all said they had insurance. So they have insurance. Secondly, they all said they were going to rebuild and they're now rebuilding and ready to open. Thirdly, they said they were going to be 'bigger and better.'"

Chad Hills, gambling analyst at Focus on the Family Action, warned that casinos are poised to take advantage of desperate and unemployed Katrina victims.

"We need to be asking ourselves why a \$73 billion gambling industry [is] standing in the same line to get money as people who have lost family members, their homes, everything they ever owned," he said.

"Their response is, 'Well, if they're giving out money we're going to take advantage of it.' They're opportunists," he said. "They're opportunists with people, they're opportunists with our money, and they're opportunists with our government."

NATIONAL BRIEFS

(EP)--So-called "atheist avenger" Michael Newdow now has U.S. money in his cross-hairs. The man who sued to have "under God" removed from the Pledge of Allegiance has announced plans to sue the U.S. Treasury

Department to get rid of "In God We Trust." Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, said Newdow could be ignored if it were not for activist judges who have the potential to make him "lethal."

(EP)--Kevin Martin, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), told a forum of lawmakers and regulators Nov. 29 that not only should the cable and satellite industry clean up indecency on television, but also allow subscribers to choose what channels enter their home. "Cable and satellite television offer some great family-oriented choices, but parents cannot subscribe to those channels alone," Martin said. "Rather, they are forced to buy the channels they do not want their families to view in order to obtain the family-friendly channels they desire. I think the industry needs to do more to address parents' concerns," he added. "You can always turn the television off and block the channels you don't want. But why should you have to?"

(EP)--Southern Baptists in Georgia are disassociating themselves from a historically Baptist school that has hosted "gay pride" events and has increasingly bucked the conservative theology of the Southern Baptist Convention. The decision, approved by 98 percent of the "messengers" at the recent Georgia Baptist Convention, will be reconsidered at next year's annual meeting. If ratified then, Mercer will no longer be considered a Georgia Baptist school or receive \$3.5 million a year in funding from the Convention.

(EP)--The Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board has adopted a new policy that forbids missionary candidates from speaking in tongues. The policy, adopted Nov. 15 during the board's trustee meeting in Huntsville, Ala., reflects ongoing Southern Baptist opposition to charismatic or Pentecostal practices. "In terms of general practice, the majority of Southern Baptists do not accept what is referred to as 'private prayer language,'" said a denomination announcement. "Therefore, if 'private prayer language' is an ongoing part of his or her conviction and practice, the candidate has eliminated himself or herself from being a representative of the IMB (International Mission Board) of the SBC (Southern Baptist Convention)."

(EP)--The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Nov. 28 that Missouri's ban on partial-birth abortion is unconstitutional because it lacks a health exception, The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported. The decision followed a six-year battle -- the state law banning partial-birth abortion was passed in 1999, but was immediately challenged. Paula Gianino, president and chief executive officer of Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region, celebrated the decision. "We argued all along that Missouri's abortion ban was unconstitutional because it failed to protect

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Bible & the Newspaper

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the health of a woman during pregnancy," Gianino said. "Every major decision by a court in this country, including the United States Supreme Court, has said that any attempt to ban abortion must always include two exceptions or protections -- to protect both the health and the life of a woman in the event of any serious medical crisis or emergency." Samuel Lee, head of Campaign Life Missouri, said the decision highlights the need for a national precedent in favor of life.

(EP)-Life Decisions International (LDI) released a revised edition of what it calls The Boycott List on Dec. 1. The list identifies corporations that support Planned Parenthood, the world's largest abortion-advocacy group, and the largest abortion provider in the United States. Corporations on The Boycott List for the first time include: Altria (which makes Nabisco and Kraft products), Circuit City (retail electronics outlet), and SBC Communications (which includes AT&T, Cingular Wireless, Southwestern Bell). The new Boycott List also cites the Girl Scouts, Rotary Clubs, The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, and the YWCA as organizations that support Planned Parenthood with funds, partnerships, or cooperative programs.

NATIONAL BRIEFS

(EP)--A Roman Catholic commission has advised Pope Benedict to drop the teachings about "limbo" from the Roman Catholic Catechism. Limbo, according to medieval theologians, is neither heaven nor hell, but is where babies go if they die before they are baptized. The pope is already on record as questioning the existence of limbo and pointing out that it has "never been a definitive truth of the faith." He headed the commission when it began to study the issue last year, while he was a cardinal.



LOVE

Part 2

By John Harvey
(18?? - 18??)

III. THE MEANS BY WHICH OUR LOVE

TO GOD MAY BE PROMOTED.

1. *By contemplating the divine character.* "My meditation of Him," saith the Psalmist, "shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." He was anxious to act and think according to the will of God; hence he prayed, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Ps. 19:14).

To contemplate the divine character affords peculiar interest and spiritual

profit to every Christian. The more we know of God and the excellencies of His character, the more we shall be constrained to love Him. Do we contemplate His power? It is illimitable and eternal. He not only flashes the lightnings out of His quiver, and rides upon the wings of the storm, but He can bind the elements and hold the winds in His fist. The prophet Isaiah describes the omnipotence of God, "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." Do we contemplate His wisdom? The sun, moon, and stars declare it; spring, summer, autumn, winter, day and night evince it: "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge."

"The heavens declare Thy glory, Lord, In every star Thy wisdom shines."

Do we reflect on His works and munificence? The granite mountains, the green clad hills, the verdant valleys, the calm lake, the heaving ocean, the cooling breeze, the mild breath of spring, the silent dew, the refreshing shower, the ripe fruit, the golden grain, all manifest the works and munificence of God. Do we contemplate His love? How charming is the theme! "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10). Here is love immeasurable and unsurpassed.

"Could we with ink the ocean fill,

And were the skies of parchment made;

Were every blade of grass a quill

And every man a scribe by trade;

To write the love of God above

Would drain the ocean dry;

Nor would the scroll contain the whole

Though stretch'd from sky to sky."

Our love to God will be further promoted--

2. *By an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures.* "Search the scriptures," diligently, seriously, and frequently; they are the rule of our faith and practice, our directory and guide to the heavenly world. None ever followed their instructions and were lost, foundered, or struck on the rocks of error. The Scriptures are a mirror in which the divine attributes are exhibited, and the divine purposes revealed. Scriptural knowledge, reduced to practical purposes, is the most important knowledge, the results of which are the most glorious and beneficial; it strengthens the principle of love, and gives us clearer views of God.

"The rolling sun, the changing light,

And nights, and days, Thy power

confess;

But the blest volume Thou hast writ
Reveals Thy justice and Thy grace."

3. *By frequent intercourse with God.* We cannot urge too earnestly the necessity and importance of prayer. It should be personal fervent importunate, and confidential; this will give exercise to all our Christian graces, and bring us into communion with the Most High. The advantages of private prayer are great. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:6). Public, private, and family prayer fans the flame of love, secures the divine favor, and increases our happiness. Having noticed the nature, manifestations, and means by which our love to God may be promoted, we will conclude this address with an inquiry, a caution, and a warning.

1. *Are we cultivating the fruit of the Spirit?* Let the importance of the subject lead us to self-examination and humility. We might have been the subjects of Jehovah's displeasure, in consequence of our rebellion against Him; but He hath loved us and procured eternal redemption for us. We were enemies, but now are we reconciled to God through the death of His Son. When reviewing our past conduct as professing Christians, we discover many imperfections and omissions of duty. Is there not sufficient cause for humiliation before God? And should we not individually pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me"? Let the love of God stimulate us to renewed exertion in His cause. Let it be observed, at all times, that the principle by which we are actuated is that of love; and that all our words, works, and dealings are pervaded by a spirit of love. Let us breathe the atmosphere of love, aim at high attainments in religion, and a diligent cultivation of the celestial principle explained and enforced in this address. Let our time, talents, and influence be enlisted in the prosecution of our heavenly vocation. "Let brotherly love continue." How glorious will be the result when love shall universally triumph! Hail, happy day! "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:9-11).

2. *A caution.* This may be necessary to check delusion. The Pharisees were proverbial in their professions of love to God, but in works denied Him. They wore broader phylacteries and longer fringes to their garments than other

people. They aspired to the chief seats in the synagogue; were highly gratified when greeted in the markets with Rabbi, Rabbi, or Master, Master. They repeated long prayers in public places; compassed sea and land to make proselytes; were remarkably strict in the payment of tithes; cleaned the outside of the cup out of which they drank, and the dish that contained their food; built tombs, and ornamented the sepulchers of the prophets, as a memorial of veneration to their memories; but they were influenced by no higher motives than to be seen of men. Well might the Saviour compare them to "whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness."

But love to God does not consist in ostentation, empty expressions, feigned compliments, brilliant fancy, polished language, nor refined appearances; but in humility of heart and obedience of life. "Let love be without dissimulation," "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29).

Sincerity is one characteristic of the Christian, and is requisite to the performance of every duty, both to God and man. Every dissembler and hypocrite will be detected: "I the Lord search the heart and try the reins of the children of men." They will be excluded from the kingdom of Heaven, for the Saviour hath said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

The apostle Paul shows that without love, gifts, knowledge, faith, and benevolence are unavailing, in a spiritual point of view. "Though I speak with the [gift of] tongues of men and of angels," --though I could rival the eloquence of Massillon, or vie with the oratory of Demosthenes, and utter my sentiments in strains as distinct and harmonious as angels around the throne of God--"and have not love, I am as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy," and could describe future events with the copiousness and sublimity of Isaiah; or portray scenes looming in the distance with the vividness and accuracy of Nahum; "And though I understand all mysteries," am competent to grapple with every chronological difficulty, could trace the genealogy of every person and tribe from Cain, the murderer, to John, the Evangelist, could give a lucid exposition on every abstruse subject; explain every figure, type, metaphor, parable, and

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Love

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allegory; and could enumerate every catastrophe that has occurred from the expulsion of Satan from Heaven to the present hour. **“And have all knowledge,”** and with ease could travel the whole circle of the sciences: had I the poetical genius of Homer, the historic information of Herodotus; could figure on the canvas with the artistical correctness of Zeuxiz; examine cause and effect, describe the position of the earth, and tour through the sidereal heavens with the ability of Thales; could approximate to the critical exactness of Zoilus; were as conversant with the elements of geometry as Euclid; or had the inventive powers of Archimedes; were versed in law like Blackstone, or in politics like Pitt; in fact, had I the wisdom of Solomon, and could speak of trees from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; yet, without love, all would be unavailing. **“And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.”** **“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,”** though my name be at the head of every subscription list; though I contribute liberally to the funds of every charitable institution of the land, relieve the destitute, and give all my goods away to feed and clothe the naked, even until I am reduced to a state of penury and utter destitution myself; **“And though I give my body to be burned,”** am willing to lay down my life, and agreeable that my body be consumed to ashes, for the sake of any philanthropic cause, or the general interest of society, and have not love, **“it profiteth me nothing.”**

The same apostle has not only pointed out the importance of love, but also drawn an admirable portrait of it. **“Love suffereth long, and is kind”**---is neither impatient nor cruel; **“love envieth not”**---repudiates a spirit of hatred and bitter feelings; **“love vaunteth not itself,”** is not ostentatious, but humble; **“is not puffed up,”** but free from pride or presumption; **“doth not behave itself unseemly,”** but is always respectful and consistent; **“seeketh not her own”**---is neither selfish nor craves monopoly; **“is not easily provoked”**---doth not take offence at any frivolous thing; **“thinketh no evil”**---doth not look upon others with jealousy and distrust; **“rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth”**---abhors the former, but indulges and exults in the enjoyment and diffusion of the latter; **“beareth all things”**---sinks not under the weight of persecution or inhuman treatment; **“believeth all things,”** so far as they are correct and Scriptural; **“hopeth all things”**---puts the best construction on every thing; **“endureth all things,”** with fortitude and submission. **“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is**

charity” (I Cor. 13:13).

3. A warning. To you who are strangers to the love of God, the Saviour on one occasion, when addressing the unconverted, said, **“But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you”** (John 5:42); which declaration is applicable to you. What! No love to God, Who hath created, preserved, and redeemed you? No love to Christ, Who hath suffered, wept, and died for you? How ungrateful! How reckless! How criminal! And how ruinous! You are haters of God, rejectors of Christ, and are cherishing principles which will involve you in interminable ruin. You are on the road to an awful doom; and every step you take brings you nearer hell, where there is **“weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.”** **“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha”** (I Cor. 16:22).

Did you once love God, but are now enemies to Him? Let me entreat you once more to listen to His voice: **“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent”** (Rev. 2:4-5). Renounce your hostility to God this hour, this moment; and earnestly and penitently seek by faith an interest in the atonement of Christ; for He is ready now to heal your backslidings, and love you freely.



At Ease in Zion

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concerning Israel, then apply these things to our own lives:

I. AT EASE IN EMINENT RESPONSIBILITY

Israel's was a great responsibility. Israel was, figuratively speaking, the Lord's publishing house in the Old Covenant times. It was their duty and privilege to publish, to make known, the name and greatness of the Lord, Jehovah. It was their duty and privilege to so live and conduct themselves among or rather before, the nations of the world at that time in order that the excellency of the power of Jehovah over the idol gods of the nations should be manifested. And when Israel did according to the will of the Lord this was so. But the time came when they desired to be as the nations around them; they wanted riches, and worldly honor, glory, and power, and they became willing to sacrifice the “old paths” in order that these might be gained. But when they did this they lost their real glory and honor. Instead of trusting in the living and true God, and instead of obeying Him and seeking His honor and glory, they began to trust in their own kingdom and in their own so

called great men, then their honor and glory as a nation, a peculiar nation, began to fade away and die. The condition of these people in the world today is the price they paid in order to have honor, prestige, a name, and glory after the worldly fashion. Not much is known of them, nor much is cared for them today in the world.

When God's people forget their real duties, responsibilities, and obligations to their God their true honor and glory will soon fade and die, and they will not attain the honor and glory even in this world they desire.

The church is under tremendous responsibility today to God. She is His light house in this old world of sin and sorrow and death. But the church of today has, to a great extent, lost the good feeling and respect of men because she is trying to be like the world; she is at ease; she doesn't realize her need of God; she does not take pleasure in seeking to honor and glorify the name of the Lord. When the church loses sight of her Head and Lord and Lawgiver and seeks to make herself a name as an institution she loses her true glory, her honorable position and her true dignity.

Too many churches today are seeking to entertain rather than to instruct, and warn the lost; but when the church enters into a contest with the world in entertainment she is bound to lose. The church is not an institution to entertain the world, but to warn it and show forth the name of the Lord as the all-glorious one. We boast today of our elegant, stately, and elaborate edifices, our trained choirs, our scholarly preachers; we boast of all our organizations, our excellent programs; we boast of our wealth, and of our accomplishment, but where is the name of the Lord honored in all that is being done today? In spite of all our ecclesiastical machinery, and in spite of all our boasted things the world is going farther and farther away from God.

We need an awakening; we need to see ourselves as God sees us. God has given us the picture, but we can't perceive it. We are too carnal, too worldly, too formal to comprehend our true spiritual condition today, and we can't even see that the world has lost its respect for the church as a holy, godly institution. If all the money that is being spent today, that is being wasted in all the ramifications of the churches were used to honor God, more souls would be led to Christ and God's name would be glorified and the true cause of Christ would be in much better state than it is. Will it ever be any better in this age? We are fearful!

II. AT EASE IN CARNAL SECURITY.

A proud and haughty spirit is always the accompaniment of carnal ease and security. The people of Samaria did not feel their utter dependency upon God, but they trusted in the mountain

of Samaria, that is, in its power, and they trusted also in their rulers; they thought they did not have any need of the Lord; they felt a sufficiency in and of themselves. They lay upon their beds of ivory, they stretched themselves upon their comfortable couches, they ate the lambs of the flock; they thought they had plenty, what need had they of the Lord?

Men just do not realize with what ease God can take all these things upon which they depend away from them! In times of prosperity men are so apt to forget God; forget that their power to get wealth, or to make a livelihood, comes from God. They were proud and they were haughty in their spirit. They were very boastful, no doubt. When men begin to think they are dependent upon no other than themselves they will grow to be proud, haughty, and boastful. But we must remember God's warning that **“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”** When men reach that place in their lives when they think they do not need God, then, God usually teaches them they need Him, and that they cannot subsist without Him. **“O why should the spirits of mortals be proud?”**

The church today is in a condition comparable to that of Israel in the days of which our text is a picture. They are saying in action, if not in word, **“We have need of nothing,”** and they are not conscious that they are poor, naked, and blind; we need to go to the Lord that He may anoint our eyes with eyesalve that we may see; we need to go to Him that we may be clothed upon with our house which is from above, and that He may bestow upon us the true gold of His love, grace, and mercy. O, how needy we poor mortals are!

III. AT EASE IN GREAT PRIDE.

The fact has already been mentioned that pride usually, if not always, accompanies a feeling of carnal ease and security. Israel prided themselves even in their relation to God, and looked with disdain upon other nations. A spirit or feeling of independency will beget also a spirit of pride. Men will think too much of themselves. They will become lovers of themselves more than lovers of God. A proud spirited man is detestable in the sight of other men, and we are told that pride is one of the seven abominations in the sight of God. But it is easy to see how that a feeling of independency and pride will make one at ease in Zion. He takes it that all is well; he needs to exercise no concern about himself or about any one else. But we can always know that such a one, above every one else, needs a touch of the Lord Jesus to make him know his weakness, nothingness, and unworthiness. Pride will induce indulgence; Israel drank wine in bowls, and they invented themselves instruments of music. There was a spirit of hilarity and frivolity; they

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

The Bible states that God predestined His chosen elect before the foundation of the world to life everlasting, saving them from the wages of sin, death and hell. On the contrary, does that mean that the non-elect were predestined to hell before the foundation of the world? - Kansas

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It is important for us to remember God predestines everything for ultimate good (Rom. 8:28) and for His glorious purpose, which He purposed before the world began. God is even sovereign over all evil according to Isaiah 45:7 **"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things."** God can even use evil for His ultimate good purpose like He did with Joseph's brothers. They sold Joseph into slavery because they hated him, but God's ultimate plan was to save Israel through this sinful action. Joseph later told his brothers **"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive"** (Gen. 50:20).

The fact that God has predestined evil is not questionable. The Scriptures speak plainly on this point. Jude 4 reads, **"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation..."** We also find Peter making a similar statement in I Peter 2:8, **"And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."** Paul says in Romans 9:17-18, **"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."** He goes on to say in verse 21, **"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"**

God is not like man and cannot be judged by men. On the contrary, He is the Great Judge of the Earth who will judge all men. It is not for us to decide whether God is right or wrong in His actions. He is the one who defines righteousness and holiness. He is the standard of all truth and goodness. **"Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments"** (Psalm 119:137).

We can only know the mind of God to the degree that He reveals it to us in His

word. Otherwise, it is only speculation and sin to try and figure out how and why God ordains all things, including evil. **"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law"** (Deut. 29:29). Paul spoke along similar lines when he was teaching about how God cast away Israel so the world could be reconciled (Rom. 11:15), and how he expected Israel to return to Christ one day. He said in Romans 11:31-36, **"Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."**

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One would be naïve to believe that some "Sovereign Gracers" don't believe this. I have been around some who hold this position. However, like many modern doctrines, the predestination of the lost to Hell is not to be found in the Word of God.

Sadly, those who believe that the lost are predestinated to Hell have a poor understanding of Total Depravity and all its ramifications. Because of the Fall, all are dead (to God) in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). Without the Grace of God, every person without exception would be on a one way course to the depths of the Lake of Fire. All, without exception, naturally reject God and His truth. All, by nature, reject the Savior and His Gospel. As one can clearly see, people are headed to Hell (actually, the Lake of Fire throughout eternity) without God predestinating them for it. Man's sin merits him eternal punishment. There was no need for God to predestine

him to Hell for man was already worthy of that. The need for man was not that God would predestinate him to Hell as man was going that direction on his own, but, that God would reach down and save him. God, in His Sovereign Grace, chose to save some. Why He did this, He only knows. Why He chose to save the ones He did, He only knows. The point is this, had God not chosen to save some, all would utterly be lost. The fact is, God chose to save His elect and simply left the reprobate unto his own devices.

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The first statement is accurate and biblically based. Every time the word predestinate or predestinated is used in the Bible it has to do with the eternal purpose of God with regards to the elect. These two words are found in four verses in the New Testament (Romans 8:29, 30 and Ephesians 1:5, 11). It is interesting to note that in each context predestination has to do with the eternal purpose of God in conforming His chosen to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before the world began God unconditionally elected a definite number of people in Christ who in time are regenerated and drawn effectually to Him by the Holy Spirit. The very moment a child of God is born again, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the elect and begins the process of sanctification. The process of sanctification ultimately is consummated in glorification when the elect will finally and forever be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. This glorious transformation will take place in the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the Rapture of living believers. Predestination, from beginning to end, has reference only to the elect who will be ultimately conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

There is never a statement in the Scriptures that links the word predestination to Hell. Predestination always has reference to God's elect and never to the reprobate. However, it is a fact that God in His infinite wisdom and immutable decrees, determined that the reprobate would die in their sins, rejecting the message of the Gospel

of their own accord. No one who goes to Hell will have God to blame because of His sovereignty. The damned will be fully responsible for their own sin and rebellion.

I agree with the explanation of this mystery by the learned John Gill who wrote:

"If men were chosen from the beginning, that is from eternity to salvation; then those that were not chosen, or not ordained to eternal life, were foreordained as early to condemnation... And indeed, there can be no new decree, appointment, or purpose, made by God in time; if the decree of election was from eternity, that of rejection must be so too; since there cannot be one without the other; if some were chosen before the foundation of the world, others must be left, or passed by, as early..." (A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity, p. 177).

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Ephesians 1:4-5, **"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,"**

Romans 8:29-30, **"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."**

Isaiah 55:8-9, **"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."**

That is a good question and I'm sure that neither I, nor my colleagues in this forum, can answer it to anyone's satisfaction, including our own, especially in as short a forum as this. Perhaps it would be best to approach this question by briefly touching on four points; foreknowledge, predestination, God's plan, and a quote from Augustine, three of which are seen in the Scripture verses we've used as a text. Needless to say we cannot thoroughly digest this all here.

Foreknowledge, election, and predestination cannot be divorced! Foreknowledge in the scriptural use

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

I know you believe in election, but would you please explain John 3:16-17. These verses say "the world," not the elected or chosen. – North Carolina

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Before I give my explanation of this beloved text I would like to quote A.W. Pink who wrote:

"Anyone who has examined a concordance and looked up the passages where "world" occurs, soon discovers that this word is used in the New Testament in quite a number of ways and with widely different latitudes, so that nothing can be determined for certain by the occurrence of this term in John 3:16. Sometimes the "world" signifies the unbelieving as in John 15:18, in others it includes none but believers as in Romans 11:12, etc. Sometimes the "world" denotes the material system, created by Christ (John 1:10), in others it is applied to a mere handful of people as in John 7:4 and 12:19. In the great majority of instances it is a general and indefinite expression which has reference to the Gentiles in contradistinction from Israel after the flesh." (The Atonement, p. 257).

The context always should determine the interpretation of the word "world" as it relates to God's purpose in salvation. It is interesting to me that the Holy Spirit inspired John to use the word world quite often in his writings. John was a Jew. Jews entertained the idea that they alone were God's chosen people. However, God had a plan that included both Jews and Gentiles throughout the entire world. In fact, there will be folks in Heaven who have been redeemed by Christ's blood "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9). God's plan of redemption is not limited to one race of people, it extends to the elect throughout the world, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. Only the elect are eternally loved and chosen by the Father, redeemed by Christ, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. However, they are scattered throughout the entire world among all kinds of people.

It is relatively easy to interpret the usage of the word "world" in John 3:16-17. The "world" that God loved so much that He sent His only begotten Son to die for are those who believe on Him and who are given the free gift of eternal life. It is the world of believers in Christ who have repented of their sins and embraced the saving message of the Gospel. They

are partakers of Christ and eternal life. This world of believers will never be condemned because Jesus died in their stead and put their sins away.

It is clearly stated in the context that those who do not believe on Christ prove their hatred for God and will be condemned to an eternity of God's infinite wrath (v. 18-21, 36). This is another world comprised of unbelieving reprobates who die in their sins. It is this world of unbelievers that Jesus referred to in His priestly prayer: "...I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (John 17:9). Christ has redeemed and intercedes for the world of the elect, but not for the world of unbelievers who die in their sins.

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"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:16-17).

Jesus Christ came into the world to reconcile the world to God. Through Adam, sin entered God's good creation and corrupted it. Christ came to undo the curse and redeem the world back to God. I John 4:14 says, "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

We are mistaken if we suppose "world" (cosmos) means every single person without exception, for we know that not every single person will be saved. (I personally, have never met an Arminian or Calvinist who believed every individual will be saved, though there are people who believe that). The term "world" refers to God's good creation as a whole. In Jesus Christ the whole creation is reconciled to God as we read in Colossians 1:20, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Also in Ephesians 1:10 we find, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in

one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."

We must remember that the earth was cursed because of man's sin. In order for salvation to be complete, the curse must not only be lifted from humanity, but the plant and animal kingdoms as well. This is why in Isaiah 55:12-13 we read, "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Isaiah also prophesied of a day when "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:6-9). Through Jesus Christ, God's whole creation is rescued from the curse.

Salvation is not an escape from the physical world to some disembodied state of splendor, but the hope of our salvation is our bodily resurrection from the dead, when we shall inherit the world to come and everlasting life which God promised to His people (Matt. 5:5; Rom. 4:13; 8:32; Heb. 2:5; Rev. 21:1-7). God makes all things new and freely gives to the saints all things in Christ.

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For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

This is a dilemma that has plagued Christendom since the Augustine/Pelagius and Arminius/Calvin debates. Yet we believe that Scripture plainly teaches that "whosoever will" may come (Rev. 22:17) while also teaching that no man can come apart from the special enabling of God (John 6:44), and at the same time that all the elect will come (John 6:37. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." It is upon this very promise of Scripture that the great Charles Spurgeon based his willingness to give invitations (not prolonged altar calls).

We first need to establish three principles: 1) the principle of II Peter 1:20. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation," that is to say that any verse or passage of Scripture must be interpreted in the light of the rest of Scripture; 2) this question is a common and valid question between the 'horns of the election/free will dilemma'; and 3) that the question is asked in sincerity, not as a debate.

We need to 'take this great verse apart' and look at it piece by piece.

"For God so loved." We see the love of God, even for the lost, in many places. Notice Ezekiel 33:11, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live;" and Luke 19:41, "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" with 13:34, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

These verses must be seen along with Matthew 11:20-26 (too long to be fully quoted here), including "if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon" (2nd class condition, but they weren't) and ending with, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

"The world" "The world," like "all" must always be understood in its context, both local context and overall context. We need to understand that 'world' here is the same as 'world' in John 12:19, "behold, the world is gone after him" where it obviously cannot mean the whole of human population.

"Whosoever believeth" Look back at how our Lord ended His expression of compassion to Jerusalem, "and ye would not." He said again in John 5:39-40, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Lost, depraved mankind will not/cannot come to Christ (John 6:44) because they are spiritually dead. But to His elect (see previous question) He gives spiritual life

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At Ease in Zion

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were useless so far as the Lord's work was concerned. They were hindrances to the Lord's cause. Such a spirit in the hearts of men today renders them helpless and impotent in the work of the Lord.

IV. AT EASE AMIDST THREATENED JUDGMENTS.

"Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!" When God is angered men have no reason to sleep. Reckless indifference in either business or religion is a forerunner of certain ruin and failure. Careless sleepers among alien sinners are in danger of eternal destruction. Sleepers among the children of the Lord are in danger of losing their reward; they will lose it if they are not awakened. Just when men feel the safest, is the time usually of their judgments. How secure do many feel today, but we fear destruction is just ahead for them. **"What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise and call upon thy God."**

In order to help arouse the sleepers let us call some of their names:

1. Presumptuous. We name the first one, because he is, no doubt, the soundest sleeper of them all, presumptuous. He is described in the first verse. They trusted in the mountain of Samaria, that is in the power of that kingdom, or government. How presumptuous one must be to think that any earthly power, rite, or institution can save him. **"Put not your trust in princes."** They are just as powerless as you. Don't trust in any religious rite; to do so is pure presumption. Baptism, nor any other rite can save.

2. Not-Now, or Procrastination. **"Ye that put far away the evil day."** You that think the Lord will not come soon; that the day of judgment is a long way off. Death is a long time off. You better wake up; the time may be nearer than you think.

3. Evil-Doer, or Sin-Lover. They love to chant to the sound of the viol; they are the sort that love pleasure, etc.

4. Love-Self. They lie on their beds of ivory, and have no regard for the need of others. Selfish, boasters, proud.

5. Crossless. **"They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph,"** the thought of Christ brings no penitence to their hearts.

Let us sound the gospel trumpet and ask the Lord to use it in awakening the sleepers to a sense of their responsibility; if they are among the lost that the Lord will convict them of their sins. The time is short. Let us be up and about our Master's work!

Forum #1

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deals with a previous acquaintance. It is not that God foreknew that any given person would 'accept Christ' (as the

common expression goes) but that God had a previous, intimate relationship with His elect. It is beyond the ability of the human mind to fully understand the fall, its effect on mankind, and the predetermined plan of God. We have only to believe what the Scripture teaches – that we not only are now, but were His sheep; a lesson often missed in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Romans 8:29-30 teaches us that predestination has to do with those whom God foreknew. Yet there does seem to be a sense in which predestination to hell can be seen in such verses as Matthew 26:24, **"The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born,"** and Jude 4, **"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation"** This is known as the doctrine of reprobation, that is to say, simply that some weren't chosen and the end results of not being chosen were inevitable..

A good analogy would be this. You are looking over the cabbage in the grocery store. Some of it has spoiled. So you choose the head you want and pass over the rest. The head of cabbage you chose is 'predestined' to become cabbage salad.

In understanding God's plan, Augustine explained it this way. "God thought it better, and more indicative of His power and glory, to bring good out of evil rather than prohibit evil all together."

RAY BENNETT

Forum #2

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so that they can come, can believe on Him. Psalms 110:3, **"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power"**

We suggest that our Lord uses the term "whosoever" because it is an open invitation, just as the offer to Judah through Jeremiah was a valid offer, and because it removes any and all excuse for not proclaiming the gospel message to all people when ever we have opportunity.

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This question is often posed to those of us who believe in the Doctrines of Grace. I shall endeavor to answer it as simply as I can.

First of all, I would like to point out that nothing is said of election in John

3:16-17. It neither says God chose or God didn't choose a people in this verse. I am not implying that I don't believe that God chose a people to salvation. The Scripture is amazingly plain about that. I am simply asserting that the passage before us today says nothing of election and is a poor argument against it because of that point. I continue to be amazed that people quote this passage as an argument against election when it is not even spoken of in this verse.

Let us consider the word "world" in this passage. A. W. Pink, in his wonderful work entitled "The Sovereignty of God," has an appendix addressing this very word. It is translated from the Greek word "kosmos." This word has several possible renderings. Some of the possible renderings are "the universe," "the actual planet," "the human family," "the ungodly multitude," "world affairs," "any general collection of particulars of any sort" (i.e. the world of believers). None of the possible renderings of this word include "every descendant of Adam without exception." This is not the meaning of the word in John 3:16 nor is it the plain contextual meaning of the word. God loves His creation. He created it. Obviously, it isn't "good" today as it was when it was created because of sin. However, the Scripture says God loves His creation so we must believe that He does. It does not, however, say that He loves sin. So, we can see that though God loves His creation, He doesn't love everything about it (namely, the sin in it). God has a general love for mankind. I do not mean that God loves every descendant of Adam because the Scriptures tell us that He doesn't. He hated Esau (Rom. 9:13). He hates the **"workers of iniquity"** (Psa. 5:5). Some say God hates the sin and loves the sinner. This verse tells us that God hates the **"workers"** of iniquity—not just the iniquity. This having been said, God has a general love for mankind—His creation. This is what John 3:16 speaks of. This general love for mankind as His creation, however, does not mean that God loves every individual without exception and this passage doesn't say anything related to that.

TODD BRYANT

Rebellious Child

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among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear." (Deut. 21:18-21).

In the January 1989 issue of the Berea Baptist Banner the late Milburn Cockrell wrote an article called "What's Wrong with the Kids Today?" Since then the article has been put in tract form and is available through Berea Baptist Bookstore, I would encourage the reader (that is if you're serious about child rearing) to get yourself a copy!

Although it has only been a few years that Brother Cockrell went home to be with the Lord, I think to myself, what would he write today about the youth in America? Because our youth are certainly ten times or more, worse than when he wrote his article back in 1989.

The opening Scripture tells of days gone by when children were dealt with if they were rebellious and wouldn't listen to their parents. As always, the first thing I will hear is, "That was the Old Testament, that doesn't apply for today." And my reply is always the same, "Then incest, murder and stealing, etc. do not apply either, for they were forbidden in the Old Testament also."

See, that is the mind set of our society today, I call it wrong thinking, and because of this wrong thinking our prisons are full of one time children that were never dealt with as a child. There are too many today that think their children can do no wrong and if they do, it is someone else's fault, or something else caused their child to act that way but it's never the child's fault.

Children today, in my opinion, are being ignored. You parents will hate this but it is true, parents are so busy with their own lives they pay little or no attention to their children at all. The response, "Are you telling me I don't love my children?" No, you said it, not me! That very question shows a sign of guilt right off. Here is a quote from Brother Cockrell's article, "It is a known fact that most parents do not love their children as they should! We live in a time when even parents are **"without natural affections"** (II Tim. 3:3). In all too many cases, children are conceived in lust and born into the world unwanted. We hear much about "unwanted pregnancies" and kids whose parents have "kicked them out." Babies are left in motel rooms, bus and railway depots, on the doorsteps of houses, on the side of the road, or in garbage cans! They are neglected and forgotten because they are in the way of worldly pleasures. Children who grow up without love generally have no love for their parents or anyone else!"

Tell me parents; does your child have a TV, phone, video game or computer in their room? When you punish them do you tell them to go to their room? Oh! Good punishment, get them out of your sight so you don't have to deal with their problem. And if they don't have these things in their room are they in your house so they can utilize their time on them, instead of other things, like sitting down to a home cooked meal or family time together? Here's one, when was the last time dad sat down with the family and read the Bible, you know "The Old Black Book that our fathers USED to read from?" This is what I meant when I said, "children are being ignored by their parents." Here is another quote

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Rebellious Child

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from Brother Cockrell's article "Why are youthful crimes and delinquency at an all-time high? Why are civil authorities wondering what to do with all the teenage crooks? Why do children roam the streets of our cities all hours of the night? Why do boys and girls run away from home? Why are so many kids on drugs? What is the real problem? In most cases it is because the parents do not love their kids! Even an animal knows when you love it, and a kid has more sense than an animal."

How about the parents that say, "My child is out of control, and I just don't know what I'm going to do!" Well, many parents have found the solution, and I don't know why everyone doesn't do this. Just give them a Time Out. Here is how it works, "Now Johnny, if you don't use your quiet voice you're going to get a time out." Don't you just love it? Most children that I've seen today don't need a time out; they need a knock out! Yeah, I know that's terrible, well this preacher doesn't think so. I have been in the store and heard children screaming to the top of their lungs because mom said "No!" And then they tell their mothers to "shut-up; I hate you." But wait, it's time for one of those time outs! I was in our local Junior High School and heard a boy swear at the principle and tell him, "you can't touch me, my dad will sue."

Hear is one for you. My wife and I went to our grandsons' elementary school this year to help walk all the first graders to the library. We were walking behind him and another boy in his class (all the students were put in pairs with a partner) that continually pushed, punched and hit him and kept pestering him with the arm of his jacket. Now my grandson is no angel but he knows I don't put up with any foolishness, so he didn't retaliate but I have to confess, I would have liked to have seen him blacken this kid's eye. I told this boy that that was enough and to knock it off. And he turned to me and said, "I don't have to listen to you, you're not my dad." Well, my wife and I just looked at each other, so I told him again to stop and again he said, "You're not my dad." If I would have done that when I was a kid, man look out. Now many will say, I am so tired of hearing that stuff, "when I was a kid." That's why things are the way they are today with our children, parents are totally out of control too.

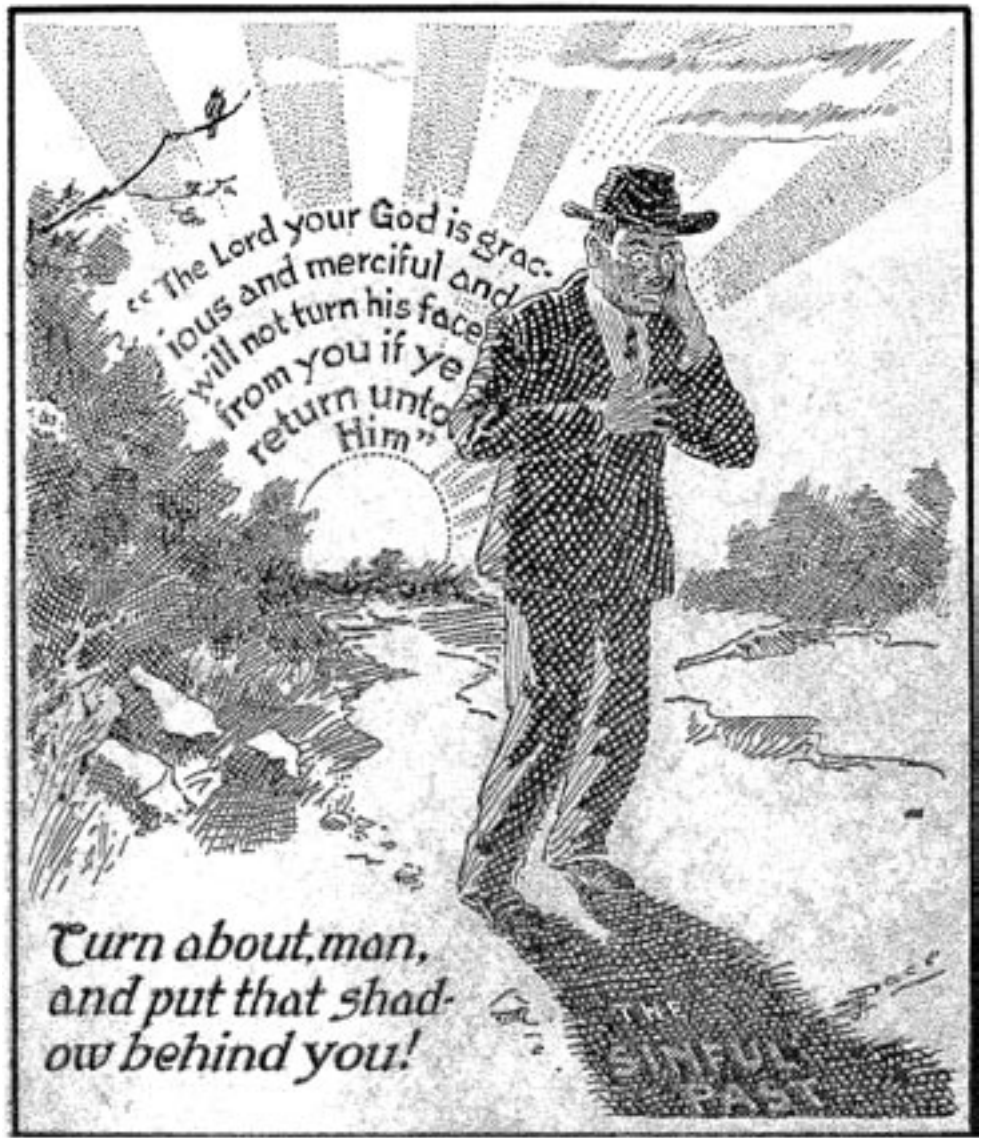
Kids today seem to say what they want and do what they want. It has even infiltrated the Church. Pastors, teachers or any one in authority is just someone that is an old fogey and doesn't understand them today. Parents have this philosophy also. They say, "Well, I had to do that when I was a child and I am not going to make my child do what I had to do," so they do nothing. Little do parents

know that with that kind of thinking comes no discipline or responsibility for the child. And you dare not even bring up about correction or using the rod for they will not hear of it.

My question then to parents is this, "What is wrong with God's way?" I have asked some to read every Scripture that has to do with discipline. I believe that if we handle it God's way, then our children will be better for it. Let's look at a few of these Scriptures to see what God does say! This one is for all you mommies that think your little darlings are just so precious that you think they do no wrong. **"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."** (Prov. 29:15). I have seen this more times than I care to, and the mother's reply is (when they no longer can control their child and throw up their hands in total confusion and frustration), "I'm a bad mother." The child did no wrong, it's just that they are bad parents. It is a silly statement but some parents believe it's true!

Many kids today say, "You don't understand." Well, no, you don't understand, I am the parent and you will listen to me, when is the last time you heard a parent say that? **"In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding."** (Prov. 10:13). So see, I understand it totally. God tells parents how to help our children understand. I want to stop right here and explain something. If a person doesn't like what God says, they can take that up with Him when they see Him. I am called of God to preach and teach the whole council of God whether the reader or anyone else likes to hear it or not. I didn't make the rules but I will try to enforce them to the best of my ability. You can even call me legalistic, which some have recently, but as long as the pages are intact in my Bible that say, **"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."** (I Pet. 1:15-16), I will make a hard stand for the truth.

When a child is born he/she doesn't come with instructions. This is why God gave us His Word in the form of the Bible, and it is our instruction manual for life and that includes child rearing. You can argue, jump up and down and throw yourself on the ground in a fit of rage, but it will never change what God says about bringing up your child. The old saying says, "The proof is in the pudding." Well the proof is that your way doesn't work, because as I said, our children are out of control. Never have I seen such disrespect as now. I blame the parent 100% with this acceptance. There always seems to be what was called the black sheep of the family. I have had first hand experience with our son. He could almost have been a candidate



for Deuteronomy 21:18-21. We raised two children in a Christian home, same church, same school, same rules but our son and daughter are as different as night and day when it comes to listening to old dad. I will say, I made some mistakes with him that I made up for with our daughter who is 4 years younger than her brother, but even with that there was a difference in their rebellious ways. My wife and I were very young and young Christians too, so we didn't learn about God's way of child rearing until our son was older and the damage had been done. Although I feel parents are responsible, I also feel that Hollywood, Rock Music, and our ever-changing School system deserves part of the blame. Many readers may be too young to remember movies like "Rebel Without A Cause" and "The Wild One" and Rock Music Stars like Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis but you can still watch them to see what I am talking about. For my wife and I, it was The Beatles and The Monkeys and a host of others. These all were powerful tools Satan used to influence our youth. Today it is far worse, the sexual and language content of movies, music and video games are so bad that the influence on our young people is such that the parent better stand up and be the parent or all our children will be lost to the world.

I also feel that the same blame must be put on the child. Brother Cockrell said it best, "Young men and women

can't blame their ills entirely on the older generation. These hippies and hoodlums are responsible for their own conduct. They are not forced to follow in the steps of their elders when their steps erred. Youth have brought themselves to this hippie way of life, and they are responsible for their own conduct before God. **"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God"** (Romans 14:12). He called them hippies and hoodlums; I don't know what he would have called them today, other than out of control. They have "No Fear" and people in authority, teachers, law enforcement, pastors, etc. are an inconvenience and just something that is in their way of expressing themselves.

Something else is on the rise and that is body piercing and tattoos. It has even infiltrated the Church; this ought not to be. It used to be thought that only in a drunken stupor would some one get a tattoo but it seems it is a pain endurance thing, a dare if you will, a bet, etc. Here is what the Bible says about it. **"Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD. Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness."** (Lev. 19:28-29). Now, look at verse 29, **"Do not prostitute thy daughter."** I point this out because someone again is

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Rebellious Child

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so you're not screaming and chasing your child all over the house in anger and missing your target. Child abuse and a good old fashion whippin' are two different things. Another reason I like a rod or switch is that it is flexible enough that it won't break any bones (wooden paddles are to hard and can damage) but a switch stings like mad and that I can attest too. That's why I don't believe in the "My parents did that to me and I'm not going to do that to my children theory." I got plenty of whippings and it didn't kill me, "**Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.**" (Prov. 23:13-14), but what it did do was change my thinking the next time I wanted to do something I wasn't suppose to, "**the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.**" I believe the biggest mistake a parent can make in raising their children is to withhold correction from them. My kids thanked me for being hard on them and I believe any child would have more respect and believe the parent truly loves them and cares what the child is doing. I know I had more respect for the teachers that were tough with me, I don't hold it against them, I respect them even today.

I have learned that the most offensive subject to a person is to tell them how to raise their children. Yet it is still one of the most neglected Bible principles we have today. I would like to close with a final quote from Brother Cockrell because even though he wrote this back in 1989, it is very fitting for the conclusion of this article, "Why are youthful crimes and delinquency at an all-time high? Why are civil authorities wondering what to do with all the teenage crooks? Why do children roam the streets of our cities all hours of the night? Why do boys and girls run away from home? Why are so many kids on drugs? What is the real problem? In most cases it is because the parents do not love their kids! Even an animal knows when you love it, and a kid has more sense than an animal!"

What can be done about crimes committed by teenagers? The policeman's club and the jailor's cell will not solve the problem. Neither will nine o'clock curfew laws, nor reformatories, nor orphan asylums. Church-sponsored ball games or parties are not the solution. What we need are some parents who love their children, who will take time to train them in right and wrong, who will teach them the Bible, and who will discipline them for misconduct. We need parents who set a good example before their children and who regularly go with them to Sunday school and church. Down the drain with modern psychology, which rejects God and the Bible and says we ought not to whip a child." Amen! ❖❖❖❖❖

Ananias, The Liar

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when in nearest approximation to the divine? As with the body, there are times when that which is unpleasant to the taste and produces severe pain, works greater positive good, lays a foundation for higher, more permanent enjoyment, than does the most delicious fare: so is it with our souls; there are periods when a contemplation of unpalatable but important subjects, subjects relating to our own deficiencies or sins, or the vices prevailing in community, which, though they may not afford immediate pleasure still, in the end, do greater good, are better adapted to elevate the tone of our character and rectify our conduct, than other themes which are by far more pleasurable in themselves.

You will see the appropriateness of what I have said, when I announce as my theme, ANANIAS, *the Liar*.

In discussing this I shall have much to say about the vice of which this man was guilty, and with which his name is associated in the sacred history. You will pardon me, if pardon is needed, if I call this by its real name. I shall not choose mild words: I shall not call it by the gentle terms, "prevarication," "departure from the truth," or even "falsehood-making," but style it exactly what it is, "lying!" Our business, however, at the outset, is with this man, and the historical facts concerning him which the Bible has preserved for our benefit.

It falls in with a collateral object of these lectures to notice the *period at which he lived*, and the circumstances under which he appears in the connections of the sacred narrative.

The bloody tragedy of Calvary had been enacted. The resurrection from Joseph's new tomb had transpired on the third, the appointed day. Forty days afterward, His earthly work being consummated, our Lord ascended from Olivet's summit in a cloud-chariot to Heaven, bearing with Him in His glorified body the scars of the atoning sacrifice. Ten days after that occurred the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Ghost upon the gathered and waiting disciples. At this time Jerusalem was full of strangers. There were Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia, Judea, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Lybia, Rome, Crete, and Arabia. These were Jews and proselytes dwelling in those regions who had come to attend the great annual feast of the Pentecost. Public and private houses were filled with these strangers. Amazed indeed were they at hearing the apostles, whom they knew to be Galileans, preach to them in their own varied languages. Some, astonished, exclaimed, "**What meaneth this?**" Others mocked, and said, "**These men are full of new wine.**" A vast crowd collected around them, and Peter--the

very man who in an evil hour had thrice denied his Lord, but who was now the bold and dauntless preacher--heedless of their ridicule, arose before that mighty multitude and proclaimed to them a crucified and risen Christ, charged upon them the guilt of His death, and proffered forgiveness through repentance. When his sermon was concluded, a murmur, alight at first, but gradually growing louder and louder, arose from every part of the vast audience. At length it burst forth in the cry, "**Men and brethren, what shall we do! !!**" Then Peter, with the glow of holy triumph on his face, with a voice like a trumpet, responded, "**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**" The result of that sermon was, as you may remember, that three thousand men and women were converted and baptized that very day, and fear fell on every soul.

Now look at the *circumstances*. From embracing about six hundred, the Christian church in a single day came to number nearly four thousand souls, and subsequently received additions daily to its membership. According to a custom of the time, at great feasts in Jerusalem, like the one mentioned, there was always somewhat of a community of goods. No Jew stranger hired houses or beds, or household utensils; but these were freely offered by the inhabitants, as well as water provided for him at the public expense. But you can conceive how natural it was, from the deadly hostility of the city authorities to Christianity, for them to withdraw all hospitality from its converts. Such was the case. These were, consequently, thrown entirely upon their own resources. What, then, was to become of these thousands of converts, many of whom were doubtless very poor and far from their homes? With a truly Christian spirit, "those who had them sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all as every man had need."

In view of this fact many have asked whether Christianity does not always require a community of property in Christian societies? The Shakers affirm that it does. But we deny their affirmation for the following reasons. *First*, neither Christ nor His apostles ever published such an arrangement. It was not *enjoined* in this case. It was but the outburst of Christian liberality to meet an emergency. *Second*, no primitive Christian society was organized on such a basis. It was practiced in no place, at no time but this. *Third*, it would be impracticable as a universal custom. Nor does Christianity contemplate such a merging of individual and social interests as such an arrangement involves, adapted as it is to destroy individual enterprise and family organizations. Still Christianity does, both by precept and

example, enforce upon those who have property the duty of assisting any of their brethren who may be in circumstances of need.

Recurring again to the circumstances in which we find our representative man, we learn that "very many having sold their possessions, gave the money to the apostles," who with it supplied the wants of the needy disciples. Of all of those donors, the names of two only are recorded--one is Joses, surnamed Barnabas; the other is Ananias.

You have now before you the historical circumstances surrounding our representative man. Let us next examine *what is recorded of him*. The record is brief. Immediately preceding it the liberal, honest conduct of Barnabas is described, who, "**having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.**" Then, as if to show that there were bad as well as good men engaged in this service, the record proceeds from this account of Barnabas with an ominous "**But.**" It says, "**But a certain man named Ananias**, (it does not tell where he lived, nor what his business was) **with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.**" Imagine, now, this man as having turned his possessions into money, and according to an agreement with his wife, keeping back a part of the sum, and bringing only the balance, *while professing to bring all*. He has laid this before the apostles, and waits complacently to receive their benediction. Look at him! What can be the matter? Why does he not gaze manfully up into their faces? Why does his cheek grow pale? What means that trembling of his whole frame? Something surely is wrong. See how the eagle eye of Peter is fixed upon him, seeming to pierce him through and through!!! How he quails under that searching gaze! Surely conscious innocence never writhes thus under either the eye of man or God; conscious guilt does under both. Hark! Peter speaks. His tones are low, deep, awful. His face betokens amazement and an almost terrible solemnity as he says: "**Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?**" Then I see him lift his hand, and I hear in his solemn voice the knell-tone of hopeless doom as he adds, "**Ananias: thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God!**" Look now at the convicted liar. What agony his countenance betrays! How he trembles! Ah! He falls heavily to the earth. His body moves not. He is *dead*. While the beholders quake with fear, the young men

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whose business it is to perform various offices at the assemblings of Christians, lift up the corpse, fold its flowing robe around it, carry it out, and as the Jews immediately interred dead bodies when not to be embalmed, they bury it. Three hours afterwards, his wife, not knowing what had transpired, came in, and being questioned, told the same lie, met the same fate, and the same young men who, acting as bearers, had borne her husband to the grave, now carry and lay her by his side in a dishonored and premature sepulcher.

This brief but really terrible narrative is rich in practical suggestions. It will be profitable for us to candidly consider these. You observe the strange fact that *this single passage in this man's history is all that is recorded of him*. So that God has preserved for the world, through all time, this record of a lie, and its consequences. Can any one doubt, therefore, the propriety of my calling him Ananias, the Liar? Can any one doubt that he is a *representative* man? or that God designed that this history should illustrate the fearful nature of that vice, which is perhaps the most prevalent of all vices, found in all classes of society, in all degrees of civilization, ramifying every department of life, from blooming youth to decrepid age?

1. We here see developed what constitutes *the essential nature of a lie*.

Where is the lie in this transaction? There are certainly points in it of themselves commendable, such as his apparent sympathy for the needy, which led him to turn his property into cash for the ostensible purpose of assisting them, and bringing the money to the apostles to be thus distributed. There was no necessity laid upon him to do either. No apostolic *command* had required it. The property was his own. He had a right to do with it what he pleased. After the sale he need not to have laid a farthing of the proceeds at the **"apostles' feet."** But when he professed to bring all of the purchase money, while bringing only a part (and that probably a very small portion), he deliberately attempted deception, and that *deliberate intention and attempt to deceive* constituted the lie. This ever constitutes lying, *an intention and attempt to deceive*. What is truth? What is *moral* truth? It consists in an honest intention and endeavor to convey to another the conception of a fact precisely as it exists in our own minds. What is *physical* truth? It consists in an attempt to convey to another the conception of a fact as it actually exists. These do not always coincide. You may innocently have obtained an incorrect conception of a fact, and honestly endeavored to convey it to another as it existed in your mind. In that case there would be a

moral truth and a physical untruth, for you honestly told it as you understood it; you did not intend to deceive, and yet the thing was not really as you represented it. So, conversely, there may be a moral falsehood in the statement of a literal truth, as when you tell the truth, relate a thing as it really is, while you suppose it to be different and intend to deceive. In such a case, although you told the literal truth, not knowing it to be such, and intending to deceive, you would be guilty of falsehood. *Pure truth is communicated only when, having a correct conception of a fact, you intentionally communicated it to another precisely as it exists in your mind.* Just as the law has it, "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Every thing different from this, containing what this record ascribes to Ananias, intention and the attempt to deceive, is lying. It was on this account that Peter said to him, **"Thou hast lied."**

2. In the case of Ananias we have developed *not only the nature of a lie, but also one form of lying.*

It is astonishing to reflect upon the many forms in which lies are told. I do not know, however, that it ought to astonish us, for as truth appears in ten thousand forms of beauty and usefulness, so we might expect that the opposite should be as varied in its manifestations as are the developments of universal depravity. Harken to the list which the most thorough writer upon the subject has made out. I refer to "Mrs. Opie's Illustrations of Lying," a book which I recommend as worthy of a place in every family library. She describes the whole subject with much ability, and presents touching illustrations of every form of this vice. The following is the catalogue she has prepared:

1. Lies of Vanity---which include all those false expressions by which persons attempt to deceive others in regard to what administers to their own vanity.

2. Lies of Flattery---which include all those efforts, by deceptive phrases, to administer to the vanity of others.

3. Lies of Convenience---which include all that class of falsehoods which are told to avoid being disturbed, or having our convenience in any way infringed upon.

4. Lies of Interest---which include all false representations made to promote selfish aggrandizement.

5. Lies of Fear---which include all false expressions uttered through lack of moral courage to tell the truth, through fear of wounding the feelings of others, or bringing upon ourselves the legitimate consequences of our actions.

6. Lies of Malignity---which include those expressions willfully intended to injure the feelings or reputation of others: all that large class included under the general terms of "backbiting," "insinuations," and other forms of detraction.

7. Lies of Benevolence---which include

all falsehoods told to promote good objects; and all deceptive withholding of the truth, when it is supposed that such deception will do good.

8. Lies of Wantonness---which include all those which are told through a foolish contempt of the truth, and a depraved fondness for inventing falsehoods.

9. Practical Lies---that is, not spoken, but acted out falsehoods.

Under this last classification we must place the sin of Ananias. Bear in mind that the record does not represent him as having uttered a single word. He did not say, "I give to you, apostles, all the proceeds of my property for the benefit of the poor;" that would have been an outspoken lie. But what he had not the courage to say, he did; the deception which he dared not put in words, he acted. Thus it is with us; when we intend by our conduct to produce false impressions, we are guilty of falsehood as really as he was.

Now, in regard to this vice, the prominent forms of whose development we have thus indicated, there are several astonishing facts to be noticed; such as its almost universal prevalence in some form, and the number and variety of excuses and palliations which are made for it, and mild names which are appended to it, and the wonderful skill developed in graduating its moral character. Hence we hear of "innocent, harmless" lies, "white" lies, "little unimportant" falsehoods, when the fact is, that if there be the essentiality of a lie in a given transaction at all, then you might as well talk of innocent harmless sin, white, moral blackness, or little, unimportant guilt, as to apply these deceptive phrases to it. Another astounding fact in regard to this matter is, that while, as I shall show you, the Bible abounds with denunciations against it, the pulpit is so silent in regard to it. I confess, to my mortification, when, after looking through my own sermons, upon almost every subject within the range of ministerial discussion, I could not find a single discourse upon this sin, nor could I remember ever to have made it a distinct topic of discussion. And I suppose that what is true of my ministry in this regard is also true of that of the mass of my brethren. Why is this? Why this apathy?---this compromise with a vice more prevalent than profanity, licentiousness, intemperance, or theft, and yet belonging to the same class of immoralities? Can this be accounted for except on the theory that we have not, for some cause, realized its injuriousness and guilt? Had we been duly impressed with these, we could not have remained silent. I submit to you that the evidence is clear that the God of truth has preserved this record of a lie and its consequences on the sacred page, that it might aid us in obtaining proper conceptions of the nature and guilt of this sin. I firmly believe that He did. Let us pause then to

consider.

3. *The guilt of lying, both as taught and suggested by this brief record of our representative man.*

Doubtless there was a special peculiarity attending this case not found in most others, but the essentialities of all lying are ever the same. That peculiarity is indicated by the expression, **"Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?"** To understand this, you must remember that the apostles were acting under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit. Ananias knew this, and yet he attempted to deceive them while acting under that inspiration, and therefore Peter said that he had **"lied unto the Holy Ghost,"** Whom, you will observe, the apostle calls **"God,"** for he said **"Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."** Peter was a Trinitarian you perceive, for he thus recognized the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, and told this man that the chief guilt of his crime was found in the fact of its criminality in the sight of God. All the peculiarity, therefore, of the lie of Ananias, consisted in the fact that it was specially against the Holy Ghost, under whose divine direction the apostles were acting. But all lies are sins against God, and consider, I pray you, what every such sin is in its direct relations to Him.

1. *It is a violation of the law of veracity; that law which demands perfect truthfulness from every being in the universe.*

This forbids the utterance of what is known to be false, the utterance of what we do not know to be true as truth; the utterance of what may be true in such a way as to give false impressions, by exaggerating some circumstances and extenuating others, through which method a half truth becomes a whole lie. Therefore, every falsehood is a violation of this law, rebellion against this righteous enactment of Heaven, and a blow at the moral government of God.

2. *Moreover, it is in direct violation of express commands of God.*

I quote you some of these. Exodus 20:16: **"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor,"** but every falsehood concerning a being is bearing false witness against him. Leviticus 19:11: "Ye shall not lie one to another." Proverbs 6:16: **"Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile;"** 6:19: **"The Lord hates a false witness that speaketh lies;"** 12:22: **"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord."** Of the prince of all evil our Saviour said, "The devil is a liar and the father of it." Ephesians 4:25: **"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor."** Colossians 3:9: **"Lie not one to another."** In the description given by the ascended Lord of the spirit world, as recorded in the last chapter in the Bible, we read these emphatic words: **"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may**

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have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

3. Behold its guilt as developed in its terribly mischievous results. I refer not now to its punishment but to its legitimate consequences. What tongue shall tell, what pen shall write, what imagination picture these? Think you not, on the theory that up to this time Ananias had been an honest man, a shudder shook his moral nature when he deliberately purposed this falsehood? How its commission degraded every element of his nature, and covered him with shame!

And after the habit of falsifying has once been formed in any mind, then whatever of purity or beauty existed there before is gone. The moral sensibilities are blunted, the heart is hardened, the entire nature debased, and the individual appears contemptible in the sight of every honest man and woman. Tell me, are there many worse things that can be affirmed of a man or woman than to say of him "he is a liar," of her "she is a lying woman?" When this is done, not by the poisoned breath of private slander, but upon proof clear and indisputable, do you not avoid such persons? Do you not banish them from the sacred realm of social intercourse? Is it not one of the greatest insults which you can offer a true man to call him a liar? This vice is a clear exponent of character. Whoever will deliberately lie is essentially, and, it is to be feared, permanently ruined. Lord Bacon quotes Montague as having said, "If it be well weighed to say a man lies, it is as much as to say that he is a bravado toward God and a coward toward man. For the liar insults God and crouches to man." Aristotle was once asked, "What does a man gain by telling falsehoods?" He replied, "Not to be credited when he speaks the truth."

Think of its results in families and communities. What distrust, wrath, dissension, quarrels, and bitterness it engenders! How it changes friends to enemies, introduces broils and altercations into circles of business, politics, and religion; tears down the fair fame of its objects; blasts hopes and breaks hearts; yea, sometimes pursues to the death! No wonder that a poet exclaims,

"Oh! unblest falsehood, mother of all evil,

Thou art the misery making demon of the world."

4. Its guilt is seen in the penalties which God's moral government has and will inflict upon liars.

For the last time look at this record. The wicked design formed by Ananias

and Sapphira, their deliberate purpose to lie, is consummated. What follows? Both are detected, as all liars are sure to be sooner or later. Both are covered with shame. Was this all? Nay, nay, one after the other, with the paltry price of the lie in their hands, they are stricken by the retributive power of God, fall dead at the apostles' feet, their bodies borne away to an ignominious grave, and their names consigned to eternal infamy. This was an extraordinary case, you may say, and met an extraordinary punishment. I admit it, but affirm that authentic history furnishes not a few instances of similar facts, where persons have met a similar fate in the very act of committing this sin. Consider attentively, I beseech you, the following developments of the penalty which a righteous God has annexed to this violation of His law. Psalm 63:11: "**The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.**" Proverbs 6:13: "These are six things the Lord doth hate: yea, seven are an abomination to him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren." Proverbs 12:19,22,19:5 "**The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment: lying lips are abomination to the LORD, but they that deal truly are his delight. He that speaketh lies shall not escape.**" In regard to the final doom of all who persist in the commission of this sin one passage in the New Testament will suffice. It is indeed terrible. Observe, I pray you, the characters with whom liars are classified, and the certainty and fearfulness of their fate. Revelation 21:8: "**The fearful, and the unbelieving, the abominable, and the murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.**"

I close this lecture with an appeal to two classes of persons.

1. To parents. I beseech you to cultivate a love of truth and the hatred of a lie, as an essential part of the home education of your children. Such education is the earliest and most influential of all the instruction your children shall ever receive. It moulds their characters and shapes their destiny. And if you can, by the blessing of God, which is both proffered and promised to you, succeed in making them truthful, you thus lay broad and deep the foundation of a pure and lofty character. Why have the pyramids of Egypt withstood the assaults of centuries? Chiefly because of the breadth and strength of their bases. And so, alas, shall our children acquire characters able to withstand all the stormy perils of life, if their bases shall be formed of unwavering truthfulness.

To accomplish this *we must be perfectly truthful* ourselves. If we are ever careless in this regard, our children certainly will follow our example. As an aid in this momentous work tell them of the beauty of truth, the ugliness of falsehood; the blessedness of the former and the certain wretchedness of the latter; the eternal life promises of God connected with the one and the eternal death-doom he has inevitably associated with the other. Tell them this story of Ananias and Sapphira. Tell them that the Almighty Jehovah, their Father in Heaven, "loves children who will not lie."

Furthermore, we must encourage them to tell the truth. Even when they have done wrong, do not by severity drive them into falsehood, by endeavors to conceal it. Nay, encourage them to confide in you, and be willing to acknowledge the whole truth. O forgive, cheerfully forgive any childish folly, or even any more serious wrong doing, upon an honest confession of it. Let your little ones know you will do it. Let them see that no offense in your sight can approximate the meanness and guiltiness of lying. O, parents! It is better by far to have "children that will not lie" than to have pretty children or smart children. Such will assuredly be sources of comfort and consolation to your future years, blessings to society and to the world. God help us in this matter, for, as a general truth, they will be just what our example and discipline are adapted to make them.

2. I appeal finally to all *young people*, whose characters are being formed, who have yet reputations to make. Friends, I beseech you, as one of the most important of all possible acquirements, study to attain a deep and abiding appreciation of the beauty of truthfulness and the loathsomeness of falsehood, the virtue of the former and the wickedness of the latter. I assure you that even a well-grounded suspicion that you will lie will undermine the confidence of all the good in you. I assure you, that the possession of no single or combined qualifications will secure for you such universal respect, as the knowledge that your veracity is impregnable. Are you a clerk, and does your employer require you to swerve from the truth? Look him steadily in the face, and tell him that if he would give you his whole stock of goods you can not lie. If he discharges you, and it is known that a poor young man has lost his situation because of his fidelity to truth, a hundred true men will interest themselves in your behalf, while God shall say, "Well done, noble youth." Should you be pursued by detractive opposition, you may exclaim,

"Put up your paltry weapons,

They edgeless are to him who fears them not;

Rocks have been shaken from their solid base,

But what shall move a firm and truthful mind?"

I charge you, friends, that no vice sooner stupefies the conscience than this. He who tells one falsehood is in great danger of becoming an habitual liar, and an habitual liar soon loses all moral discrimination. One lie is a fearful sin in itself, but it rarely ever stands alone--it requires many others to prop it up, and soon involves in unexpected guilt. I assure you, that with the habit of stern, uncompromising truthfulness, you shall have a peaceful conscience, the respect and love of your fellow-men, and the unflinching favor of the God of truth; but that with untruthfulness in any of its varied forms, you shall have a hardened heart, a benumbed moral nature, the derision and distrust of all the good, the wrath of the Almighty, and, in the end, "shame and everlasting contempt."



The Whole Truth

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experienced some emotional excitement as they prayed through on the mourner's bench because of a graveyard tale told by a famous evangelist. Many of these people have not been to church since they were baptized. They live as they did before uniting with the church. They drink, smoke, curse, lie, cheat, and steal like those who make no profession of faith. They seem to be religious, but they are really not saved. They do not attend church unless someone dies or gets married. They never pray or read the Bible. Such persons have never been born again!

Some Baptists tell sinners to just believe and everything is alright. They say, "Just let Jesus come into your heart and be saved forever. It doesn't matter how you live or what church you belong to." To tell the lost sinner such without additional instructions is to preach a lie. It is dangerous to preach a lie. Such unscriptural practices have given critics a perfect right to accuse Baptists of preaching a dangerous gospel. Sad to say, this accusation is not without some foundation, for the Arminian evangelism of our day practiced by some Baptists has produced a great religious body which has a name to live but is dead.

So many ministers seem so intensely anxious to make everything so easy and simple for the sinner that their preaching becomes extremely one-sided. The gospel the average person hears nowadays is nothing more than a carnal, earthly, worldly gospel which offers false peace. The gospel preached in the average pulpit is not a delivering gospel. It leaves people in the world to live instead of changing them into new creatures. It lulls the conscience and leaves the soul in its old habits and old ways of living. It fixes it so there is no difference between the church and the world. Everywhere you can see

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The Whole Truth

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the great number who make professions under such preaching and who live low as a consequence.

In this message I want to present the whole counsel of God. I desire to set forth salvation by the free and sovereign grace of God. Then I further seek to present the kind of life a child of grace lives.

SALVATION BY GRACE

Titus 2:11 declares: **“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.”** How wonderful is the word salvation in the ears of a condemned sinner! Salvation is a miraculous work performed by the Holy Spirit. It is an inward work. It is God speaking into existence a new creation. It is passing from spiritual death to spiritual life, from darkness to light. It is being born again.

When we are saved Christ rescues our soul from Hell. He plucks us as a brand out of the burning. He takes us out of the miry clay of condemnation and out of the pit of our sins. He sets our feet upon the Rock of Ages and establishes our going. He puts a new song of prayer and praise in our mouths (Ps. 40). He sends forth His Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts and to teach us all things. He raises us up and causes us to sit in heavenly places.

The man who has not come to see salvation to be wholly by the free grace of God is a stranger to the Holy Writ. Our text says the grace of God brings salvation. It does not offer it to men upon certain conditions as Arminians teach. The sovereign grace of God brings salvation from sin and wrath. The free favor and the good will of God, not any merit or desert in the creature, gives deliverance from death and Hell. The gospel of grace is preached unto all nations for the obedience of the faith (Rom. 16:25-26).

Ephesians 2:4 says: **“. . . by grace ye are saved.”** Peter said in Acts 15:11: **“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus we shall be saved, even as they.”** Salvation is by grace that it might be by faith. It is of grace that it might not be of works.

The Bible is plain. Men are saved by grace separate and apart from human merit. We often hear the expression “grace plus nothing.” This is true if you understand it only to apply to the matter of salvation. But the whole sphere of the Christian life and walk are not included under this description. The grace of God that brings salvation hath appeared indeed, but that grace certainly is not grace plus nothing. Instead, it is grace teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

Some say that every child of God is under the most sacred obligation to live a righteous life. It is said that he ought to

exert himself to live the best life possible in the flesh, but it is added that if he does not live a righteous life he will be saved by grace anyway. It is this misinterpretation of salvation by grace which constitutes the dangerous gospel.

THE GREAT CHANGE WHICH SALVATION MAKES

The Bible expressly teaches that a child of grace will live a righteous life. II Corinthians 5:14-17 says: **“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. . . . Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”**

Those who partake of the life of Christ do not live unto themselves. Those saved by grace **“live. . . unto him which died for them, and rose again.”** Christ died that they who share with Him the new life may cease living to themselves. Their love for their Redeemer constrains them to live a Christian life.

The child of grace is not a victim of self-love, for the old life of sin passed away. Grace makes a great change in the soul, so great a change that the believer is **“a new creation.”** Regenerating grace makes a new world in the soul. The recipient of saving grace can say with Paul: **“For me to live is Christ”** (Phil. 1:21). He can truly say: **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”** (Gal. 2:20). The child of grace is **“always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in”** his body (II Cor. 4:10).

To the Corinthians Paul wrote: **“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”** Then after speaking these plain words, he went on to say about the Corinthians: **“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”** (I Cor. 6:9-11). Some of the Corinthians before their conversion were adulterers, thieves, drunkards, and revilers. Paul said: **“And such were some of you. . . .”** But this was not true of the Corinthians when Paul spoke, for they had been saved by God's grace and washed in the blood of Christ. These were no longer adulterers, thieves, drunkards and revilers!

But someone will say I know a man saved by grace who is a drunkard and adulterer! You may know of such a church member in this permissive age, but you do not know of a man saved by grace who habitually drinks and commits adultery! Paul said such people had never been washed in the blood of Christ. They are, according to Paul's own testimony, deceived persons who will miss Heaven as far as Hell is from Heaven!

KEEPS THE COMMANDMENTS

I read in I John 2:3-4: **“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”** Those who know the God of all grace do not live a life of disgrace. There is within them a desire to keep the Lord's commandments and there is some degree of action accordingly. The child of grace does not disregard the spiritual duties which Christ imposes upon His disciples. The professed disciple who lives in open rebellion to Christ's commands is living a lie. In chapter 3, verse 22, John in positive language says: **“We keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”**

DOES RIGHTEOUS DEEDS

I John 3:6 tells us that those saved by grace do not make a practice of sinning: **“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.”** A man saved by grace does not belong to the sin sphere. Sin is not the law of his life: **“Whosoever is born of God doeth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. . . .”** (I John 3:9-10). This is not the language of sinless perfection, but it is language which indicates a man saved by grace does not live a wicked, sinful life. The general course and tenor of a redeemed man's life is toward righteousness.

WHAT THE GRACE OF GOD TEACHES US

Jude warned centuries ago of ungodly men who were **“turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.”** They taught that as men were saved by grace, and not by works, they could continue to gratify their evil desires and yet be saved by grace.

The Apostle Paul is the great expounder of the doctrine of grace. All other Bible writers put together did not use the word grace half as many times as he did. But Paul never did teach that man could believe in Christ for salvation, and then go on living an unrighteous life, and finally be saved by grace. He ably refutes this idea in Romans 6:1-2: **“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”** The grace of God does not relieve any man of the

necessity of living right. The truth is that it is the grace of God which saves a man which causes him to live right. If one who professes to know Christ does not live right, he is a stranger to the grace of God.

According to my text, the grace of God teaches us three things. First, it teaches us to abandon sin. It causes us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. The saving grace of God teaches us to **“put off the old man with his deeds”** (Col. 3:9), to **“crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts”** (Gal. 5:24), to reckon **“yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin”** (Rom. 6:11), to not let sin **“have dominion over you”** (Rom. 6:14), to mortify the members of our body (Col. 3:5), to **“make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof”** (Rom. 13:14), and to turn away our eyes from beholding vanity (Ps. 119:37). God's grace teaches us to put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications and to keep our body in subjection.

The grace of God which brings salvation teaches us to make a conscience of that which is good. Verse 12 of Titus 2 says: **“We should live soberly, righteously, and godly.”** The child of grace refrains from evil that he might perform good works. We are commanded in Romans 12:9: **“Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”**

Nearly all the great texts of salvation by grace through faith are accompanied by a definite insistence upon good works which only a new creature in Christ can produce. Ephesians 2:8-9 is followed by these words in verse 10: **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”** Titus 3:5-7 is followed by verse 8 which reads: **“This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.”** I would sooner expect to see the devil in Heaven than a man who is saved by grace and has no good works! A man is not saved by good works, but those who have been saved by grace are careful to maintain good works!

The grace that saves us will teach us to love, fear and obey God, to depend upon Him, to devote ourselves to Him, to observe all those religious duties He has appointed, to pray to Him, to praise Him, to mediate on His Word, to attend public worship, to be baptized and to observe the Lord's Supper. The saving grace of God teaches and requires such deportment. It is obligating and constraining. It constrains us to love God and live for Him, to lose our life for the gospel's sake, to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, to do all for the glory of God, to put the

♦ (Continued on page 259)

The Whole Truth

(Continued from page 258) ♦

kingdom first, to seek the salvation of the lost, to make a fair show in the flesh, to be blameless and harmless the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, to go on to perfection, to keep His commandments. If the grace of God does not cause a person to do these things, then grace would be disgrace!

Do not misunderstand me. These things are performed by those who are saved by God's grace. It is worse than foolish to prescribe all these good works to the alien sinner as a means of being saved by grace. To do this is like prescribing actions to a person unborn as the means of being born. Good works are seen in the lives of those who are already saved by grace. These good works are the evidence of spiritual life, not the cause of it.

The grace of God teaches us to look for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Verse 13 of the text says: **"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."** Those saved by grace are living in expectation of seeing Christ at any moment in the clouds of Heaven. The man who does not daily look for the Redeemer's return knows little about God's grace.

I'm not what I want to be. I'm not what I'm goin' be, but I thank God, I'm not what I was before He saved me by free grace.



Walking with God

(Continued from page 260) ♦

will not walk with God. **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."** It is worthy of note that Methuselah, the man whose lifetime measured the forbearance of God, His delay in visiting a wicked world with its deserved destruction--- this man Methuselah lived longer than any other man. Surely this goodness of God, His mingling of justice with mercy, ought to lead men to repentance.

Enoch believed in God as Judge, and walked with God 300 years.

GOD AS SAVIOR

God's only way of bestowing mercy is in and through His Son. This has always been true, and this redemptive work of Christ was first announced in the garden of Eden.

Enoch learned what every child of Adam needs to know: that there is no escape from God's judgment except in His grace and this grace is in Christ. God has only one way of salvation and never had any other. All the true saints of Old Testament days were saved by believing the promises of God concerning the Messiah Who was to come, just as all the saints of this age are saved by believing

the testimony of God's Word concerning this same Messiah Who came over 19 centuries ago.

Any religion that rejects the plain teaching of God's Word about His Son, any religion that holds forth any hope of salvation other than Jesus Christ alone, is contrary to the will and word of God, and will lead its worshippers to Hell. Enoch walked with God because he believed in Him as Savior.

GOD AS REWARDER

According to Hebrews 11:6, the man who comes to God must not only believe that he is (namely that He is the God of the Bible) but also that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Because of the false teachings of false denominations of so-called Christianity, most Christians today are completely confused on the subjects of salvation and rewards. The Bible teaches that salvation is by grace through faith, but rewards are according to our works.

Sad to say, the only concern of millions of people who think they are Christians is to escape Hell and get to Heaven. Such an attitude is certainly not pleasing to God.

The true child of God with a real experience of God's grace is constrained by the love of Christ to serve Him. Whatever your religion or denomination, if you have not in your heart that love of God which makes you want to obey and glorify Him, you have no right to call yourself His child. Jesus said, **"If God were your father, ye would love me"** (John 8:42).

Moreover, we have it as a true command from our Lord that we are to **"lay up treasures in heaven."** It is not pleasing to our Lord that we should come into His presence in the world to come as spiritual paupers. We can have eternal rewards, incorruptible treasures, in Heaven, if we will faithfully serve Him on earth.

Enoch walked with God because He believed in God as the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

NEWNESS OF LIFE

If you are a child of God and know what it means to walk with Him, you may learn from Enoch to maintain that walk, that habitual fellowship with God, to the end of life's pilgrimage. If you are not a child of God, believe in Him now as your Judge and as your Savior, and then having become a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, rise to walk in newness of life and trust Him as your Rewarder according as you diligently seek Him.



BACK IN PRINT

We are pleased to announce that the book is back in print and available for purchase.

Death and the Hereafter

by Milburn Cockrell

Retail Price \$6.95

Please add \$2 P/H.

CHOSEN, REDEEMED AND CALLED

by John Gill

The subjects of effectual vocation, they who God calls by His grace to His eternal glory (I Peter 5:10) are those who are chosen: **"Whom He did predestinate, them He also called"** (Rom. 8:30). Election and vocation are of equal extent. The objects are the same, neither more nor fewer. They that were chosen from eternity, are called in time; and they that are called in time, were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. The "vessels of mercy, afore prepared unto glory" are explained and described by such whom God hath called; not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles (9:23, 24). They are such who are in Christ, and secured in Him; for they are called according to the grace given them in Christ Jesus before the world began. And as grace was given them so early, they themselves, in some sense, must then have a being in Him; which they have through being chosen in Him, and thereby coming into His hands, as they are secured and preserved in Him, in consequence of which they are called by grace.

Thus stands the order of things as put by the apostle Jude (V.1). **"To them that are sanctified by God the Father"**; that is set apart by Him in eternal election; **"and preserved in Christ Jesus"**; being put into His hands by that act of grace; **"and called"** in virtue of the foregoing acts of grace. They are such who are redeemed by Christ; vocation follows redemption, and it the certain consequent of it: **"I have redeemed thee: I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine"** (Isa. 43:1).

Election, redemption, and vocation, are of the same persons. Those whom God has chosen in Christ are redeemed by Christ, and who are chosen and redeemed are, sooner or later, called; and the reason of their being called is because they are redeemed. **"I will hiss for them, and gather them for I have redeemed them"** (Zech. 10:8). Those that are called are for the most part either the meanest, or the vilest among men, the meanest as to their outward circumstances. **"Not many mighty, not many noble are called."** And the meanest as to their internal capacities; **"Not many wise men after the flesh."** The things of the gospel and of the grace of God, are **"hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes"** (1 Cor. 1:26; James 2:5; Mat. 11:25). And oftentimes some of the worst and vilest of sinners are called by grace; publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God when scribes and pharisees did not; attended the ministry of the Word, and were called by it, when they were not. Christ came, as He says, **"not to call the righteous, but sinner to repentance"** (Matt. 9:13; I Cor. 6:11).



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 11-1-2005 to 11-30-2005

Beginning Balance	\$1,522.26
RECEIPTS:	
Arthur D. Richardson, Cedarville, WV	100.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	19.44
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	1,100.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Berea M. B. C., Mansfield, OH	50.00
Berea M. B. C., Westpoint, TN	150.00
Bethel M. B. C., Pasadena, TX	100.00
Bible Believers B. C., Naples, ID	150.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne WV	300.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	125.00
Central Avenue B. C., Tamps, FL	385.00
Charles Smith, Louisville, KY	10.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Faith M. B. C., Lynn, AR	50.00
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	25.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Hillcrest B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM	100.00
Leston Farrell, Des Allemands, LA	100.00
Lord's C. Beverly Hills, Goose Creek, SC	400.00
Morris St. B. C., Hobbs, NM	300.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Bristol, TN	10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Ocoonita M. B. C., Keokee, VA	40.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Philip C. Parks, Flint, TX	13.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Columbus, MS	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	60.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Wake Forest, NC	100.00
Subscriptions	309.64
Dividing Checks	125.00
Sub Total	\$5,037.08
TOTAL	\$6,559.34
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	629.00
Postage	981.77
Supplies	431.23
Wages	2,600.00
FICA	198.91
Dividing checks	165.00
Total Expenditures	5,005.91
.....	1,553.43
Bank Charges	16.39
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,537.04

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 11-1-2005 to 11-30-2005

Beginning Balance	\$3,208.05
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	450.00
Berea M. B. C., West Point, TN	100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	200.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	125.00
Calvary Ind. B. C., Everson, WA	300.00
Anon	1,000.00
.....	2,175.00
Dividing check	1,000.00
.....	3,175.00
TOTAL	6,383.05
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	360.00
Postage	9.25
Dividing check	1,000.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1,369.25
.....	\$5,013.80
Interest	+53
.....	5,014.33
Less Corbin, KY fund balance	- 1,011.52
ENDING BALANCE	\$4,002.81
CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT	
Beginning Balance	\$171.52
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT	160.00
TOTAL	11.52
RECEIPTS:	
Anon	1,000.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,011.52

Walking with God

By Rosco Brong
(1908 - 1985)

"Enoch walked with God" (Gen. 5:22-24).

"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" (Heb. 11:5).

The word "walk" in Scripture often refers to the life, conduct, or behavior. So when we read that Enoch walked with God, the meaning is not merely that he took a few literal steps in the company of God, but that his life was a life of fellowship with God. The statement in Hebrews makes it clear that this walking with God, this conduct of life in fellowship with God, pleased God. The apostle John was writing about this kind of life in I John 1:6,7: **"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."**

AGAINST THE WORLD

Enoch walked with God and so enjoyed fellowship with God while the world in general was departing from God. The world was walking in sin, becoming more and more sinful until the people of this world brought upon themselves the judgment of God in the flood of Noah's day. But while the people of the world walked in sin, Enoch walked with God.

It is still true that if we would walk with God, if we would have fellowship with Him, if we would be His friends, we must be separate from the world, we must count the world an enemy. **"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"** (James 4:4).

Too many Christians would like to walk in fellowship with the people and in the customs of this world and still claim the fellowship and blessings of God. Too many of us have forgotten the teaching of Jesus that His true and faithful disciples are not of this world. Too many would like to escape the persecution which the Bible declares is the necessary experience of **"all that will live godly in Christ Jesus"** (II Tim. 3:12).

Enoch walked with God because he was not afraid to walk apart from and contrary to the world.

A HABITUAL WALK

"Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters" (Gen. 5:22). Many Christians try to walk with God a little while and perhaps even at repeated intervals in times of revival, but turn aside to walk with the world



at other times. Surely such an inconsistent walk is not pleasing to God.

If we really know what it means to walk with God, to enjoy His company, and have found this

to be a better way than the ways of the world, surely the wise course is always to walk in this better and happier way. Yet, how often do even the true people of God turn aside from fellowship with Him and return again, at least temporarily, to their old sinful ways!

Enoch walked with God not only for a day, or a year, or during a small part of his life, but made it his habitual practice; day by day, for over three hundred years, he walked with God. It was this consistent walk that obtained for him the testimony that he pleased God.

READY FOR HEAVEN

Enoch's fellowship with God was such, that at the end of his walk on earth he was ready for Heaven without the necessity of natural death and resurrection. He was **"translated that he should not see death"** (Heb. 11:5).

Certainly, even with the closest walk of fellowship with God in this world, we shall experience a great change when we move to realms above. But God's people are admonished in His Word to live in this world as citizens of Heaven. We shall have a better home in eternity or a better place in that home in proportion as we shall have spent our time here preparing for it.

This does not mean that getting to Heaven depends on our life here, but our position, our rewards there, on the authority of our Master, will be according to our works. Therefore we are advised, **"set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth"** (Col. 3:2).

Of course, **"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"** (I Cor. 15:50). Hence the necessity of the resurrection of the saints who die, or the translation of those who are still living when our Lord returns (I Cor. 15:51-54).

Undoubtedly, before we can enter into the presence of our Lord in glory, we must leave behind all that pertains to this present evil world. If we have lived worldly lives after trusting Christ for salvation, we shall indeed get to Heaven if we are truly His children, but **"so as through fire"** (I Cor. 3:15). Faithful children of God will prefer, as did Enoch, to be strangers and pilgrims in this world as that in due time they may be at home with the Lord, rather than to be at home in this world and strangers to Heaven.

WALKING BY FAITH

Even as we **"walk by faith, not by sight"** (II Cor. 5:7), so it was by faith that Enoch walked with God and obtained the testimony that he pleased God. Whatever may have been the means by which Enoch came to know God, without doubt he heard often from Adam himself the account of the creation and fall of man, and God's promise of a Savior. It is possible that God revealed Himself to Enoch in other ways, but we can be sure, since Adam did not die till Enoch was 308 years old, that the warnings and promises of God's Word had been often heard and certainly believed by this man who walked with God.

That Enoch walked with God by faith is not mere supposition, for we are plainly told in Hebrews 11:6 that without faith it is impossible to please God.

GOD AS JUDGE

At the first mention of Enoch we read that he **"walked with God after he begat Methuselah"** (Gen. 5:22). The very name Methuselah was an expression of Enoch's faith in God as the Judge who would send a flood of waters to destroy the world at the time of the death of Methuselah.

Thus the faith of Enoch included the recognition of God as Judge, and this is necessarily true of saving faith. Much of modern so-called Christianity fails to

recognize God as Judge, and even denies His right to judge His own creatures according to His own will. But such religion is not only vain; it amounts to open rebellion against the authority of God.

Enoch believed the warnings as well as the promises of God's Word, as does every true child of God. Sinners who do not believe in His judgment certainly

◊ (Continued on page 259)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Windsor Baptist Church in Windsor, IL is searching for a pastor. Their pastor of twenty-six years has recently resigned. They are a small church in number, but strong in the Doctrines of Christ.

If any brother would be interested in more information contact John Gregory at 2 Oakmount Dr., Sullivan, IL 61951 or telephone (217) 728-9966.

The Olmstead Baptist Church of Olmstead, KY is pleased to announce that BaptistArchive.com, a new free digital archive of Independent Baptist sermon audio is now online!

To begin listening, point your browsers to: <http://www.baptistarchive.com>

Literally thousands of sermons have been recorded onto audio cassettes, CDs, and DVDs--many of which may never be listened to again. We started BaptistArchive.com in the hopes of digitizing a significant portion of these sermons and making them available for free download on the Internet. Once a sermon has been added to BaptistArchive.com, it can be heard by anyone in the world with Internet access, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The sermons on BaptistArchive.com are even accessible in countries like Saudi Arabia where the preaching of Christ is prohibited by law! We believe this work has the potential to be both a great blessing to Christians worldwide and a powerful medium to publish sound Gospel preaching among the world's unsaved.

If you have access to a collection of sermon tapes, CDs, or DVDs and would like to see them digitized and added to BaptistArchive.com, please get in touch with us by e-mail at contact@baptistarchive.com.

A new book is available titled "Sowing the Seeds-A Family Devotional in Story Form" by Elder T. Matthew Stepp. This book is a collection of sixteen Family Page Stories that appeared in the Baptist periodical, "The Voice in the Wilderness." Parents can read these stories with their children that are guaranteed to provoke questions about how God's Word applies to our everyday life.

Also Elder Matthew would like to make known his availability to come preach for anyone that's interested; temporarily or permanently as the Lord leads.

For more information or to purchase a copy of his book contact him at rtstepp@citynet.net or write to him at Rt. 1 Box 271-B, Given, WV 25245.

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