

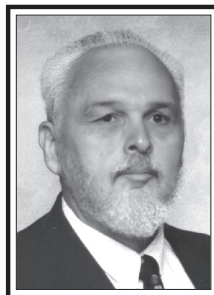
# The Berea Baptist Banner

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

## The Knowledge of the Holy Ones

By Curtis Pugh  
of Poteau, Oklahoma

Our primary text is Proverbs 9:10 where it is written: **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."** One thing about Hebrew poetry needs to be remembered. Ancient Hebrew poetry such as our text probably did not rhyme even when originally written. It most certainly does not rhyme in



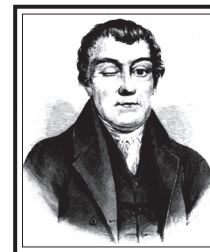
sound when translated into English, but presents instead the beauty of corresponding and sometimes expanding thoughts. Any rhythm, cadence, or rhyming of sound is lost in the translation. However, the "rhyming" of thoughts shines  
♦ (Continued on page 2)

## The Christian Armour

By Christmas Evans  
(1766 – 1838)

**"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked"** (Eph. 6:15-16).

The complete armour of soldiers, in the days of the Apostle Paul, consisted of seven different parts; the whole of which he makes use of figuratively, to represent the



Christian's warfare against subtle, deceitful, and invisible enemies, the principalities and powers,

the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places; who were not only going about like roaring lions, seeking whom they might devour;  
♦ (Continued on page 4)

## Good News

By Paul Stepp  
of Indore, West Virginia

**"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country"** (Pro. 25:25).

Our text verse speaks of **"good news from a far country,"** and compares the effect of that "good news" to **"cold waters to a thirsty soul."** The picture that is being painted for us is that, just as a thirsty man longs for – and then is satisfied by cool water – even so, a longing soul desires – and then is satisfied by "good news" from a dis-

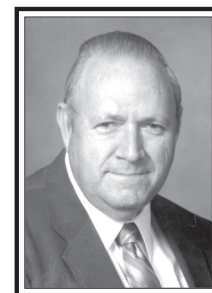


tant land, be it friend or loved one. Though it is true that any good news that we receive in this life, especially that which we receive from a distant land, or a distant loved one, is very dear and very satisfying; I think that it would be good for us, to apply this truth to the "good news" of the gospel, and the "good news" of the  
♦ (Continued on page 16)

## The Church at Pergamos

By Milburn R. Cockrell  
(1941 – 2002)

**"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because**



thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of

Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come  
♦ (Continued on page 10)

**Bless God for your afflictions, and your afflictions will be your greatest blessings.**

**"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"**

(II Corinthians 4:17).

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The purpose of the Berea Baptist Banner is as follows:

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

## Knowledge of the

(Continued from page 1) ♦

through to those who read their Bibles looking for it. Often a truth is stated first in one way and then the same or a kindred truth is stated in different words. So the beauty is not in similar sounds, but in parallel thoughts. The truth is established by building upon or modifying a previous statement. When next you read the Psalms or other Old Testament poetry look for this kind of construction.

Our aim is to understand and appreciate the phrase "**the knowledge of the holy**" which is found in the second part of this couplet - our text. This exact phrase is found in our Bibles only here and one other place which we will examine a little later. But before we examine the second part let us look at the first of this verse. First, remember that the word "LORD" in all capital letters is the English word we know as Jehovah. This is the name of God which carries the idea of the "I AM" - the eternally living One. In the Masoretic text (the authoritative text for the Hebrew Old Testament) this word appears well over six-thousand-five-hundred times, but the King James translators only translated it as JEHOVAH four times. James Strong says our King James Bible has it as "LORD" 6,510 times, as "God" 4 times, as "JEHOVAH" 4 times, and as a "variant" 1 time, thus making the total translations of the Hebrew word 6,519 times. I have used the term "word," but as you may remember, the Hebrew is actually the tetragrammaton written as "YHWH" or "JHVH" or "YHVVH," or "JHWH." (Tetragrammaton means "four letters"). The King James translators used the word "Jehovah" for the

tetragrammaton. "Jehovah" is the vulgar (common) pronunciation that was used in England in A.D. 1611. And so it has passed down to us today. In order to arrive at an English pronunciation vowels must be supplied among the four letters and so the word "Jehovah" came into being. Exactly how the ancient Hebrews pronounced this word is unknown as far as this preacher has been able to learn. We cannot see that this matters inasmuch as the spellings of names of persons, and places and their pronunciations have often changed down through the centuries.

The thing to remember is that Jehovah is the proper name of God. The Hebrew Elohim or Eloheim when used with singular adjectives is translated as "God" and when used with plural adjectives is translated as "gods" in our King James Bibles. (Jehovah is not a title such as the word "Lord" when printed in our Bibles in mixed upper and lower case letters). Jehovah is the name by which God revealed Himself as the self-existing one: the Redeemer, the source of life: the "I AM." God revealed Himself thus to Moses, saying, "**And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you**" (Ex. 3:14). So it is in our text (Pro. 9:10) which we quoted at the first of this article, we need to understand that the first part of this poetic statement can be translated thus: "**The fear of JEHOVAH is the beginning of wisdom.**" And so we are brought "face to face" as it were, with Jehovah: not just God, but the fear of the "**I AM THAT I AM.**" Such a respect, awe, and trembling at His Word can only be the work

♦ (Continued on page 3)

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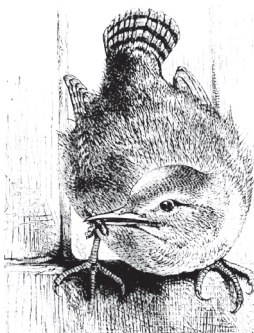
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# Knowledge of the

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of God within an individual. Such a **“fear of JEHOVAH”** prompts “godly sorrow” which initiates and perpetuates not only a first time experience of repentance, but a lifetime of repentance, (see II Cor. 7:10).

Now the second part of this couplet appears in our Bibles as, **“and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”** However, as several commentators note, the word “holy” is plural in the original. It means “the holies” or “the Holy Ones.” John Gill notes that the same plural Hebrew word appears in Joshua 24:19; Proverbs 30:3; and Hosea 11:9. Thus far in my research I have not learned why the King James translators chose to render this plural Hebrew word as a singular English one. Perhaps this term “the holy” is another of those old Catholic church words that King James instructed them to keep. Perhaps there was another reason, but we cannot think of a good one that would excuse such a misstep. So let us understand that the second part of our couplet says, **“and the knowledge of the Holy Ones is understanding.”**

The teaching of this verse stated negatively is this: no one has wisdom or understanding apart from the “fear” and “knowledge” of JEHOVAH, the Triune God. Those who do not **“tremble at his word”** (Isa. 66:5) and who do not **“know him that is true”** (I John 5:20), do not have true wisdom or understanding. Let us hasten to add that it is not wisdom or understanding that enables people to know God. God cannot be put under a microscope or any modern scientific device and examined in that way. He must reveal Himself. In creation,

by means of human consciences, and in the Word of God He has revealed Himself. In the first two of these ways, creation and conscience, the revelation is a general one so that all men are without excuse. The Bible is a special revelation and in a different class than the first two. By it salvation is made known to God’s elect people. Those not spiritually enabled to understand the Bible only see religion in that Book. That is the limit of their experience. But there is a further revelation (if we may use that term) or perhaps a better word is enlightenment. John Gill called it “spiritual and evangelical wisdom.” For when God calls a person to Himself, the Spirit of God enables the spiritually dead sinner to live and understand. He does not just improve on human wisdom, but is Light within the regenerate. God does not call wise men to salvation for the most part, and if He did, their natural wisdom would not help them to understand the things of God. In I Corinthians 1:26-29 God’s Word specifies the kind of people God calls to salvation: **“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.”** The world’s nobodies are called to be God’s somebodies. Better stated, the world’s nobodies are called with a call that makes them God’s somebodies. A few “wise

men after the flesh” are called, but “not many.” This enlightenment or “spiritual and evangelical wisdom” is seen when Paul exhorted the congregation in Ephesus to live holy lives saying, **“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light”** (Eph. 5:8). In Ephesians 1:17-19 Paul wrote to that same ekklesia concerning his prayer for them saying: **“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.”** So it is that those whom God regenerates are **“light in the Lord.”** They may be uneducated men and women, but they are enabled to have understanding and wisdom. And those so enlightened are told to “walk as children of light.”

Another place where this same plural Hebrew word is translated as a singular word is Proverbs 30:3 where the writer penned the words, **“I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.”** At first glance the penman may seem to be writing words of disapproval or criticism of himself and his lack of knowledge. Since we have a couplet again here, as in our first text, let us examine it piece by piece. The first phrase is: **“I neither learned wisdom.”** He does not say that he does not have wisdom, but that he did not learn it nor discover it for or by himself. John Gill in commenting upon the

phrase “I neither learned wisdom” says the word “wisdom” means, “... spiritual and evangelical wisdom; that is, not of himself through the mere strength and force of his genius and natural capacity, or of others; he was not the son of a prophet, nor brought up in the schools of the prophets; he did not learn it, nor was he taught it by men; for this is not acquired by human teaching; it is what comes from above, from heaven, and by the revelation of God.” I think Gill is correct. The writer is saying that this “spiritual and evangelical wisdom” is not of a man himself as a source. So it is with all of God’s true children. The religious world may promote its pride-filled little ditty at Christmas time, saying, “Wise men still seek Him,” but the true children of God should know better – or surely will learn better. We seek Him each and every day, and have since the day of our regeneration, but it is not our wisdom that causes us to desire Him and regard Him far above the price of rubies and diamonds.

The second part of this couplet says, **“nor have the knowledge of the holy.”** Again we point out the meaning of the plural phrase, “of the holies,” and think the meaning is actually “of the Holy Ones.” Again we quote the long departed and highly educated John Gill who wrote, “...or rather of the holy Persons in the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit; their nature modes of subsisting, perfections, purposes, and the like; at least not a full and comprehensive one: or of holy things, of the holy Scriptures, and the holy doctrines of them; however, not what is perfect and complete.” It was true of the penman of Proverbs as it is true of all of God’s regenerated ones: our wisdom is not something that we obtained from any source other

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than God. And we did nothing to qualify for it nor to instigate our receiving it. It is all of grace. The kind of wisdom spoken of here cannot be imparted by parents however hard they try, nor from schools or even seminaries. Nor can the "school of hard knocks" as we say, impart this kind of wisdom. We, like the first of this couplet must say, "I neither learned wisdom." That is, I claim a supernatural enlightenment: I do not claim any effort on my part enabled me to have this knowledge nor did my own natural ability cause me to know Him - as if such things could aid me in knowing God. In fact, the writer means what we all who know God must say: had God not supernaturally intervened in me and my life, the Word of God - the **"things of the Spirit of God"** would still be **"foolishness"** to me. Had He not given me the ability to know the things that are **"spiritually discerned"** I would have no real wisdom at all (I Cor. 2:14). Today we may say with Paul, that to us what he called, **"Christ crucified"** would still be **"foolishness"** as it is to all Gentiles left to themselves. Had God not supernaturally intervened and done His regenerating work in our innermost being, we would be unenlightened and Christ-less (I Cor. 1:23).

As to the second part of this last couplet, **"nor have the knowledge of the holy,"** we say this: while we claim to know the Holy Ones, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we do not have complete knowledge of Him. We think we shall continue to be enthralled with learning of Him throughout the infinity of eternity. Even when in glorified

bodies, how can we finite beings ever comprehend the Three-In-One who is infinite and **"his ways past finding out"** (Rom. 11:33)? Nevertheless, as our first couplet says, **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy [Holy Ones] is understanding."** And as our second couplet teaches, such knowledge is "too wonderful" for us. God-given "wisdom" is jarring to that which the world calls wisdom, but harmonizes with the Psalmist who wrote: **"O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul**

**knoweth right well"** (Ps. 139:1-14). And so we, like Spurgeon, ascribe all our change to God! It is God who has given us life and immortality and brought those things to light to us through the gospel (see II Tim. 1:10). The blessing of knowledge, wisdom and understanding of God within us are all attributable to God. Be of good cheer, Brethren, look up! God has begun a good work in us. Part of that good work is causing us to have a bit of His wisdom and understanding and knowledge. And He shall perform that good work in us until the return of Christ (see Phil. 1:6). For now is our final salvation - the redemption of our bodies - **"nearer than when we [first] believed"** (Rom. 13:11). Rejoice that you know what the most intelligent of natural men cannot know. Let them call us fools, bigots, fanatics, narrow minded and whatever other epithets they can invent. We care not for the epithets of men: we are concerned with what epitaphs God might compose about us. We stand in a long line: a remnant of people down through the ages to whom God has made Himself known. And this in itself makes us different. Let us not rejoice in being different, but let us rejoice in Christ and be willing to be different in and because of our knowledge and understanding. Old John wrote, **"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life"** (I John 5:19-20). Selah.



# Christian Armour

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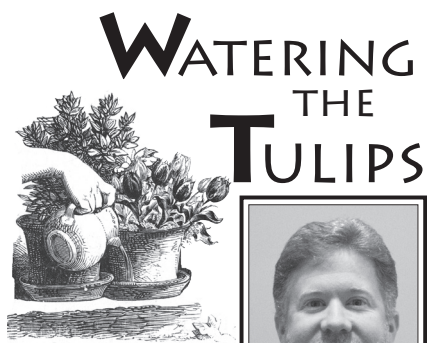
but church militant engaged in spiritual things; like the frogs in Egypt on Pharaoh's table and bed-chambers, swarming up from the sea of man's self-importance, self-interest, and self-righteousness, headed by their general, the prince of darkness.

Though some of these armour were to defend those parts which are nearer the set of life than others; yet they are all of the greatest importance to the soldiers of the cross, ---engaged in the spiritual warfare. Whoever will neglect one of these weapons, or any of these defensive armour, is certain of being wounded. Also they make up a complete coat of arms, invented by infinite wisdom, and not one of them can be had without the other; though some of them might appear brighter than others in different characters at different times, as one Christian is excelling another in one thing, and may be deficient in other things. Some excel in courage, others in zeal, others in faith, others in love and affection, and some keep their shoes cleaner than others. The whole armour of God is necessary that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand with our loins girt about with truth. Truth is strong, and the strength of fidelity, sincerity and punctuality, are indispensably requisite to fight well under the banner of the cross. Though we are weak, yet are we strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might; for as our day, so our strength shall be. The power of God is manifested in our weakness. And the grace of God is sufficient for us.

In this engagement, with the enemies of our souls, we must have on the breastplate of righteousness,

♦ (Continued on page 5)





By Todd Bryant  
of  
Northport, Alabama



## Ambassadors for God

**“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”** (II Cor. 5:20-21).

Paul considered himself an ambassador for God. That is, he knew his calling was to spread God’s message...to give man God’s instructions. The same is true for believers today. In simple terms, believers were called by God to know Him and to make Him known. This is Paul’s declaration.

So, what is it that Paul preached? What was God’s message to mankind that he was called to share? That seems to be a simple question. But today, one would think otherwise. In this short space, let us seek to expound this important passage.

Paul declared this to mankind, “We implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” You see, none of us naturally are in harmony with God...not even as a baby. We are all born sinners with a sinful nature. Paul Washer recently was giving a lecture in which he said, “I’m about to give you the

worst possible news – God is good.” The crowd immediately replied, “Why is that bad news?” Washer’s response was simple – “Well, God is good... and we are not.” Certainly, this speaks loudly of the need for reconciliation. That is what the Apostle Paul preached and that is what we are to preach.

Notice, Paul did not limit this to any one group of sinners like we have a tendency to do. Oftentimes, we almost justify one sin by categorizing another as heinous. But the truth is, all sin is heinous to God. It is a stench to God’s holy nostrils. So, we need to be reconciled. But how?!

Simply, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Jesus...God’s perfect, holy Son...the very image of the invisible God... lived a perfect life completely free of sin. He did not deserve to die. Yet, He willingly laid His life down for sinners “that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” That is, just as our sin was imputed to Christ at Calvary, so His righteousness is imputed to us when we are brought to faith by God’s grace (Rom. 3:22).

So, there are basically two points here. First, to those that are yet in their sins, be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ! Repent of your sins and trust Him. We pray God opens your heart to this message even today! Secondly, to the believer, you, too, are an ambassador of God. Share the Good News of Christ’s sacrificial death with sinners. Are you not glad somebody shared it with you?



## Christian Armour

(Continued from page 4) ♦

which is a most excellent armour to defend us from Satan’s temptations and the snares of the world. We must also have our shoes on; ---a conversation worthy the nature and requirements of the gospel of peace, and holiness. Above all the “shield” of faith, ---a broad piece of defensive armour held on the left arm to ward off the blows of the enemy, and preserve the heart from the deadly arrows; by which ye shall be able to **“quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”** And take the helmet of salvation, to defend your heads from the poisonous arrows of your enemies, and proceed conquering and to conquer, cutting down your foes, on the right hand and on the left, with the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God. **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints”** (Eph. 6:18). Always recollecting that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual, and mighty through God to pull down the strong holds of darkness.

From the words of our text we would consider,

I. The armour of defense; and

II. The usefulness of these armour.

I. But we would notice first, the “armour of defense.” Though the shoes of the **“preparation of the gospel of peace”** is mentioned first in the text; yet as the Apostle says **“above all,”** or “before all things,” according to the Welsh version, taking the shield of faith; we would in the first place notice, that excellent defensive armour, the *shield of faith*. And here it may not be improper to glance at the “nature of faith.” What is faith?

There are many passages in the Word of God showing the importance, the value, and the effects of faith; but there is only one showing what it is in itself; and that you will find in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews and the first verse. **“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,”** or as it may be read, the “confidence” of things hoped for, the “conviction” of things not seen. I am surprised that so little notice is taken of this passage by divines in treating on the nature of faith, that they wander in the wilderness without a guide to direct them, and undertake such a long, and dangerous voyage, without a helm nor a compass; it is no wonder therefore that some of them are making faith to be every thing; and others making it almost a thing of naught. According to the description that is given of faith by the apostle in the above chapter; we find that it is made up of two things. “A conviction of the truth of the testimony relative to invisible things, and a confidence in the character of the invisible testifier or promiser;” this is the foundation of waiting for the good things that the invisible God has promised, which agrees with the Welsh translation of the above passage. In this sense the term **“faith”** is understood by all men. Here, then, is no mystery. In the common transactions of business, men understand one another very well on this subject. Here is a man who has a note of some considerable amount, sufficient to support him comfortably, if he were to live to the age of Methuselah. Ask him, what does he think of that note? “I am confident, he says, that the note is genuine.” What is the reason then that you are not more cheerful and happy? “I have no

♦ (Continued on page 6)

# Christian Armour

(Continued from page 5) ♦

confidence in the bank," he replies. The man hath no faith. It is true he believes, he believes that the note is not a counterfeit, he believes it to be genuine; but such a belief yields him no consolation; there is no alteration whatever to be seen in him; there is none in his countenance, in his dress, nor in his walk; but if he believed that the note was genuine, and was confident that the bank was good, then you should find him to be quite another man. These two emotions of the mind united, constitute, in my humble opinion, the nature of faith---the faith of the gospel without which is it impossible to please God. Believing the truth of the gospel respecting invisible things, and having confidence in the power and faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises, is faith unfeigned, that worketh by love, that overcometh the world, and is infinitely precious.

Every one of you believes the truth of the gospel; but many of you have not the least confidence in the character of God: notwithstanding the promises of the gospel contain a sum sufficient to make you comfortable and happy to all eternity, as such the testimony is worthy of all acceptation; but you have not accepted it any more than if it did not belong to you. In the gospel there is a pearl of great price, an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away; but you are careless and indifferent about it, you never asked for it, for you never prayed to God; your walk, your life and conversation is not such as will lead you to the possession of it: in short, you have no faith; that being the case language is not able to express your miserable condition.

The specimens of faith recorded in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, present before us a very strong and striking evidence of "confidence," in the promise, the power and faithfulness of God, and in His character and general dealings with men. Abraham, if thou wilt offer thine only son Isaac, what will become of the promise? My mind is easy, I will do what God commanded me, being confident that He is able to raise him up from the dead, that my offspring will be as numerous as the stars, and the sand on the sea shore, and that the Messiah shall spring from him. In Isaac thy seed shall be called. So Abraham determined to offer up Isaac on the altar by strong faith in the promise. By faith in the "power" of God, and in obedience to His command, Moses instituted the passover, and went through the Red Sea. By faith in the "power and authority" of Christ the Centurion's servant was healed. Only speak the word said he, for by Thy word the world was made, and Thy word is powerful and efficacious enough to heal my servant, though Thou hast given me no promise to that effect. By faith in the "character" of God, and His "habitual practice," the parents of Moses hid him on the banks of the Nile. ---They are making a basket, and are daubing it with slime and pitch, and put the child in it on the river side. ---Amram and Jochebed, why do you believe that the child will not be drowned in that river? We are confident that God will do unto us good. Remember us, O Lord, with the favor that Thou bearest unto Thy people, is our prayer, O visit us with Thy salvation. Thy character is the essence of goodness, mercy and compassion; Thy habitual practice, is to do good unto all them who trust in Thee, and Thou art a God that hearest prayer.

Faith is the same in its nature, whatever the foundation and object of it may be; but it is not so in "degree." Some are weak in the faith, and we read of some having little faith, and of others being strong in faith giving glory to God. Faith is represented in the Word of God by a variety of expressions.

Believing the testimony of God, which is called the belief of the truth; to rely and stay on the Lord---coming to Christ and beholding His glory---receiving Christ---putting on the Lord Jesus---committing the keeping of our souls to Him, as our faithful Creator and our most glorious Redeemer. But all this is implied in the description given of faith; by the author to the Hebrews: ---It is well known that the old road to life by the law was, "do this and live;" but under the gospel, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, for he is the way, the truth and the life; by faith alone we can be united to Him, by the eye of faith we see His glory, and by the hand of faith we receive every blessing from Him. ---There is no truth more visible, nor oftener repeated in the Bible, than the absolute necessity of faith in the righteousness of Christ. **"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."**

---This important truth contains a summary of the gospel. ---The truth which God hath blessed for the conversion of sinners every where and in every age. This was very visible in the case of Martin Luther. With all his erroneous principles, the remains of the corruption of popery with which he was still contaminated; he was very clear on this subject. This was the master key which opened the iron gates of the darkness of antichrist that the light of the gospel shined all over Europe; that

the council of Trent, and all the deception and powerful influence of popery could not hide it under a vessel any more. Let us only look at the church of England in the present time, in its weak and languid state, whenever there is a minister in that establishment who preaches clearly and faithfully the above mentioned truth, sinners are converted to God through his instrumentality.

Faith in our text is compared to a "shield." **"Above all taking the shield of faith. . ."** Love is the greatest in its nature, and it will be the greatest in Heaven forever---but faith is the greatest as a shield on the field of battle, and on account of the station it occupies, as we may see in the register of the new covenant, it is the leading principle for the enjoyment of godly life and eternal salvation. Having faith, all that we have to do all the days of our life, is to add to it. **" . . . Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. . ."** and so on as long as you have life in your blood and breath in your nostrils, that you might be neither barren nor unfruitful, but abounding in all these things.

Faith is the wedding ring in the hand of the Holy Spirit, whereby the sinner is united to Christ, the sentence of condemnation removed, and the poor sinner justified; and faith is a living principle in all his obedience to the divine commands. It worketh by love towards God and man.

If God commanded a man to leave his native country, and all that is near and dear to him, and go to a strange land---to offer up his beloved son---to build an ark

♦ (Continued on page 7)



# Christian Armour

(Continued from page 6) ♦

on dry ground---to go to the fiery furnace or the lion's den---and hide himself in caves of the rock from his persecutors, "**faith**" is the grace that will support him---its weight cannot be lost in the furnace, it cannot be burnt in the fire, nor drowned in the water, for the end of faith is eternal salvation, and is "first" and "above" all in the gospel armour---the shield of faith. The "**shield**" was of great importance to the old warriors. Homer the Poet said, that some of the shields of the warriors at the battle of Troy were made of sevenfold thick bull's hide covered with brass. Faith as a shield defends the Christian from his head to his feet, and also defends the other graces, for the shield was moveable and might be placed between the warrior and the enemy's arrow, whether it leveled to the head, the feet, the heart or any other part but his back. The Christian therefore should never backslide; he should never turn his back on the enemy. God has promised to protect your backs only while you are facing the enemy in the path of duty. It is of the greatest importance therefore that you should be careful which way you look, whether backward or forward. David and Peter and many besides them, have been most dreadfully wounded in their backs, because their faces were turned the wrong way. Many professors of religion have been turned to pillars of salt, since Lot's wife, for

looking backward.

Think, O my soul! think seriously of this, and watch and pray with all perseverance. "**Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.**" For he that "continueth to the end" shall be saved; and he that is "**faithful unto death,**" shall receive the crown of life.

Just for a moment look at that. There is Goliath of Gath, the chief of the Giants, down there in the valley, his armour bearer is carrying a tremendous large shield before him; and there is a fine looking young man by the name of David going to meet him without

any weapons of war whatever, ---without any visible shield to shelter him from the destructive weapons of the Giant, he has only his sling and few stones to fight with, and the "impenetrable shield of faith" in the power, faithfulness and goodness of the living God of Israel to shelter him; but while Goliath is raising up his head with the utmost contempt and disdain at the very sight of the stripling youth, behold a stone from the sling lodged in his forehead, and down he fell prostrate to the ground to rise no more.

Faith is a "glass" that can draw fire from the sun; and strength and life from the power of Jehovah. You

that are weak be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

The next armour of defense to which I would call your attention, are *the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace.*

The Welsh translation of the 15th verse reads thus, And having on your feet the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace. (Translator.)

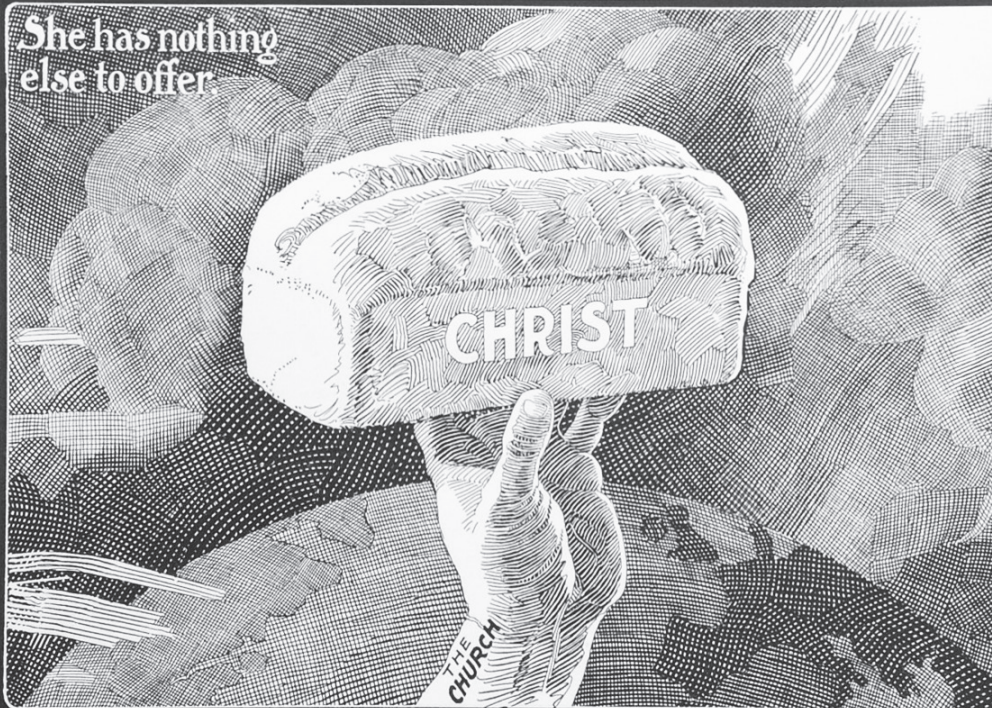
The Christian, when he goes to war, must put on his shoes. Omitting the comparison, the doctrine is this: "That the enjoyment of peace through the death of Christ enables the Christian to walk in the path of duty." It encourages the mind to climb up the mountains, ---the land of miry clay, and the valley of the shadow of death; as the soldier would feel with good shoes on his feet when traveling on a rough road. When David lost the enjoyment of the peace of God, he soon became barefooted and lame; and could not keep up in the rank as usual. The loss of the joys of God's salvation weakened and entirely enervated the soldiers of the cross; but the feeling sense of the peace of God, and the joys of His countenance, founded on the gospel, is not only very encouraging, but it secures and protects like good shoes, from serpents and scorpions, the thorns and flinty stones, and enables the Christian to walk with a firm step in the ways of the Lord, as the man who has good shoes on can walk the road.

To travel the road of hearing, praying, singing, and attending to the ordinances of the gospel, when the mind does not lay hold on any thing, is like walking barefooted on a bad road in a cold day, the feel will soon become cold and benumbed; and the mind will soon be dejected; that is the case

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**"THE BREAD OF GOD IS HE WHICH COMETH DOWN FROM HEAVEN, AND GIVETH LIFE UNTO THE WORLD."** John 6:33

She has nothing else to offer.



ALL NEEDED "VITAMINS" ARE HERE

**Atoning Advocate** **Burden Bearer** **Compassionate Counsellor** **Dependable Deliverer** **Enabling Energizer**

Romans 8:34

1 Peter 5:7

Hebrews 2:17,18

2 Timothy 4:18

Philippians 4:13

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# Christian Armour

(Continued from page 7) ♦

with every one that attends to the means of grace without the love, the peace and joy of Christ in exercise in the heart, which constrain us sweetly to walk the thorny road, and fight the battles of our God. He feels, without these shoes, as if he were slipping and falling every step he moves, and can make no progress in religion; he is afraid to go back, he is afraid to fall, he is afraid to run, and of course he is afraid to fight; to such a soldier I would say put on your shoes and act like a man, and run the race that is set before you that you may obtain the prize; fight manfully under the banner of the cross, that you may wear the crown.

These shoes are of the preparation of the gospel of peace. Had it not been for the gospel there would have been not one weapon for the Christian to fight against the three grand enemies, the devil, the flesh, and the world, and their allied powers. In the gospel we have peace with God, and peace of conscience; and in the gospel arsenal we have all necessary and suitable armour, so that we might be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; and the believer furnished with these heavenly and spiritual weapons, shall overcome his subtle and powerful foes, and at last he shall be made more than a conqueror over them all, through Him that loved him.

In the gospel is truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Here is the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the preparation of the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit, and the spirit of prayer. All these are prepared---ready made on the expense of Christ the captain

of our salvation. The gospel never comes to man empty. It is by the influence of the gospel of peace that men enlist as soldiers of the cross. They are clothed not in a shroud; but with the gospel armour, that they might be active beings, surrounded as they are with so many enemies. Having relish for the feast, the rich provisions of the gospel, they are strengthened to work and to fight. Put on my friends, the shoes of godly life and conversation. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the nature and the requirements of the gospel of Christ. ---Be ye holy in all manner of conversation, for the gospel of peace requires holiness of heart, and holiness of conduct; that you should be holy in the different stations you fill in life; as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and domestics, at home and abroad, in private and in public, in prosperity and in adversity, never forget to put on your shoes. Let your light so shine before men that they might see your good works, and glorify the name of your Father Who is in Heaven. You ought to be as a city built upon a hill, that cannot be hid; and as the salt of the earth, for if the salt has lost its savour wherewith shall it be salted. An intelligent and gifted professor of religion without a godly life, is like a barefooted man, well dressed in his regimentals, but he has no shoes on, ---his life and his profession do not correspond; his feet are wounded, and are swelling most dreadfully; he cannot follow the army; ---down go the sword and the helmet, and the shield is lost, and he is finally taken prisoner by the enemy, and is offered on the altar of destruction. While those who have put on the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace and walk in them, and fight in them, are seated in the heavenly

Jerusalem crowned with honor and glory, exclaiming, not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name O Lord, be all the glory. There are others now busily engaged, well dressed in full regimental on the field of battle fighting with full assurance of victory.

II. We would not notice the *usefulness* of these armour.

They are to defend the soul, from the poisonous arrows of the enemy. The Christian has to encounter a great many enemies too numerous to be mentioned.

"Unbelief," is a very formidable enemy; but it cannot stand before the shield of faith; the very sight of the shield will make it retreat without shooting an arrow.

"Disobedience" is one of the worst enemies in a certain sense, the Christian has. Though it will neither fight nor run away; yet it employs carnal reason, and others to plead and advocate its cause. Obedience to the divine commands, is one of the brightest evidences of true faith. Those two are diametrically opposed to one another; and sometimes cause the sincere Christian to stagger at the tremendous sight of the hill of trial. It requires a strong faith to ascend that hill. Let us pause a moment, and look at good old Abraham going up the hill. The divine command saith to Abraham, **"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."** Carnal reason on the behalf of disobedience, said unto him, If you will keep this command you will break a great many other commands. You must break that strong and powerful knot of Fatherly affection, that is implanted in the nature of man and the great commandment of

the moral law---"**Thou shalt not kill;**" even humanity itself, without mentioning religion, shuddereth at the thought of committing such an horrid deed, and what will become of the great promise of the Messiah from Isaac's loins, upon which you build your faith? If you have a spark of religion and godliness in you, cease from such an act that will make all the nations around you abhor the worship of the true God, and will ever look upon you as a murderer, can your servants look upon you in any other light? and you will most positively break Sarah's heart, you may as well murder her along with him: but Abraham consulted not with flesh and blood, nor paid any attention to the suggestions of carnal reason. With the utmost contempt he looked upon the enemy disobedience, and rose up early in the morning, and took Isaac and his servants with him to the place appointed. He traveled three days with a full determination to cut Isaac's body to pieces, and shed the blood of his heart on the burning altar, and consume it to ashes in the devouring flames; ---though he loved him as his own soul; yet the command of his God was dearer to his heart. **"And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder,"** and "we will" (So is the literal translation from the Welsh Bible. ---Translator.) **"worship,"** and "we will" **"come again to you;"** for he firmly believed that God would raise him from the ashes of the altar, and that they would return together. I imagine I see them building the altar on the mount, and I am utterly at a loss for words to express the feelings of either; when Abraham with one hand laid hold on Isaac, his darling, his beloved son, and in the other hand holding the knife

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# Christian Armour

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ready to plunge it into his heart! I listen not to the solemn sound, for there is none but the dead silence of Mount Moriah, ---earth being not able to speak---Heaven must now intervene. Hark! O how overwhelmingly joyful the sound! I hear the voice of the great angel of the covenant speaking from Heaven, and saying, **“Abraham, Abraham: . . .lay not thine hand upon the lad, . . .for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.” “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from when also he received him in a figure.”**

Mount Moriah signifies, the bitterness of Jehovah: part of the same mountain where David was in great straight and bitterness of soul on account of the destructive sword of the angel of the Lord, and reared an altar and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings upon it, in the threshing floor of Arauna---where thousands of lambs were offered in sacrifices in the temple---and more than all, it was here the Son of God drank the bitter cup which His Father gave Him to drink, and cried out Eloi, Eloi-lama-sabacthani. So that this interesting account of the faith of Abraham manifested on Mount Moriah, naturally led me to look upon a small eminence on the side of that mountain called Calvary. Here I behold two mountains--two Fathers---two altars---two sacrifices---two deadly weapons---manifesting the greatest love in the

most wonderful manner: but the love of God on Calvary wears the crown, and carries the palm. ---The Lord had an undisputed right to demand Isaac from Abraham, whenever he thought proper; but we have no demand on Him. We did not merit such manifestations of love divine. God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, and enemies to Him by wicked works, Christ died for us. We would do well to consider the “active principle,” in this act of obedience---the power of God was not manifested here, in the same way as it is, in making the sun to rise and set, ---in dividing the Red Sea, and the river Jordan; but it was faith, which is of the operation of the spirit of God, was the active principle that made him willing to obey. All the arrows of “carnal reason,” in pleading the case of disobedience, stuck fast in the shield of faith, and did not in the least injure Abraham.

Faith purifies the heart, worketh by love, and it manifesteth itself by good works, in turning sinners from dumb idols to serve the living God. It overcometh the world, and quencheth all the fiery darts of the wicked, or the fiery darts of Belial; according to the Welsh, the devil the prince of darkness whose basket is full of poisonous arrows. He is a powerful, subtle, and invisible enemy, full of fiery wrath and indignation against God and His people; as the darts in the oriental battles were poisoned at one end, and fire set to the other end. The enemy sometimes throws these fiery darts at the Christian, to kindle the same unhallowed fire in his bosom, that he might roast him before the fire of a guilty conscience, and then that he might take and burn him with fire and brimstone in the bottomless pit. From the temptation basket he shot a “deistical arrow” into

the mind of Adam in paradise, which set all the world on fire, that has been burning on the altar of idolatry to this day. He shot an arrow of “sinful lusts” at King David, and the arrow of “the fear of man” at Peter, which most dreadfully wounded them both in their backs. And he shot the arrow of “covetousness” at the heart of Judas, because he had no shield to defend himself, and set him on fire, and burned him most awfully, till he dropped down into the eternal fire of Hell.

The fire set to the tail of Satan’s arrows, has a natural tendency to set the sinner’s heart on fire of the love of sin. By these fiery darts, the tongue is set on fire so that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature. Being set on fire of Hell no man can tame it. It is an unruly, evil, full of deadly poison. And by the fire proceeding from these fiery darts the sinner’s bosom is continually burning with the fire of fear and guilt, under a most awful sensation, and certain fearful looking forward, for judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. The shield of faith is therefore absolutely necessary as a defensive armour, wherewith you shall be able to quench these fiery darts of the devil. The living principle implanted in the heart, quickens the sinner, and makes him active and watchful. All the awful and solemn things of eternity are set before him, on the tables not somewhere at a distance, but in his sight, close by him, right before him. Faith brings before the mind, the one supreme, eternal, almighty, just, holy, faithful, and merciful God. The moral law shining forth in all its splendor, as holy in its nature and just in all its requirements, bearing the impress of the moral perfections of the Deity. It shows stern and inflexible

justice brandishing its glittering sword---and will be no means clear the guilty without a full satisfaction for the offence committed. Then faith points to the Son of God, in all the glories of His person, as God man, in all the excellencies of His offices, as a Prophet, Priest and King; and all the infinite merit of His atonement, by virtue thereof, enemies can be reconciled to God---the naked clothed---the unclean washed---the hungry fed---the thirsty may drink abundantly--and the captives liberated, and brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God. There is a full conviction of the separation of the soul and body by death--the resurrection of the dead---the final judgment---the eternal punishment of the ungodly---and the everlasting happiness of the righteous---and all the glorious blessings connected with justification and sanctification, with a full assurance that God will fulfill His promises.

The love of sin therefore, cannot kindle a flame in the heart protected by the shield of faith; neither is it in the power of guilt to bring that soul to a state of despair, for faith in the blood of Jesus, quenches the love of sin, and where it is in full action, and all its steam and water power in full operation, stimulated by prayer and perseverance, the love of sin cannot make a great devastation.

All these armour are spiritual and durable in their nature. The same girdle, the same breastplate, the same shield, the same sword, the same helmet, the same shoes during the whole warfare. The same light that shined on Paul’s heart in the road to Damascus---the same faith, the same hope, and the same love when he finished his course with joy, triumphing in redeeming love.



# Church at Pergamos

(Continued from page 1) ♦

**unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it"** (Rev. 2:12-17).

The church at Pergamos was the most northern of all the seven churches in Asia Minor. The chief problem in this church was licentiousness, a sin quite common in this ancient city. The church seemed to be greatly influenced by the world, a thing all too common in our day and age. The status quo of this church was low from the spiritual standpoint. It is to be feared that there are many modern-day churches like this historic church.

## THE CHURCH (V. 12)

Concerning the origin of this church, we remain in great uncertainty. But in all probability Paul was its founder. He may have planted it during his two years at Ephesus (Acts 19-20). In Romans 15:19 he said that **"from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."** If you will take a map of these two countries, you can see that these seven Asiatic cities must have lain directly between Jerusalem and Illyricum. Paul could not have fully evangelized the intermediate country without preaching the gospel in these places.

Some person may object by asking, "Do you not realize Paul may have preached in these cities without any fruit to his ministry?" I grant the possibility

of this, but what did he say to the Corinthians? In II Corinthians 2:14 he said: **"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us IN EVERY PLACE"** (emph. MRC). I would further add that in Acts 16:7 we are informed that Paul and Silas paid a visit to Mysia of which Pergamos was the capital. Thus the possibility of Paul's planting of this church is very strong.

## THE CITY (v. 12)

Pergamos was a city of considerable note. In a legend it was supposed to have been founded by a son of Hercules on a lofty hill. Before the time of Roman domination, it was the seat of government of the kingdom of Mysia. This historic old city was situated about 65 miles north of the Caicus River and 20 miles from the Aegean Sea. The word "Pergamos" signifies "high and lofty," or "a tower." This city was built under a very high and steep mountain, upon the top of which a tower was erected by the lords of lesser Asia. Pliny, who wrote but a short time before the Revelation, describes it as "the most famous city in Asia."

The history of this city is of great length. I can only briefly discuss it. Pergamos had a long succession of Attalian kings, the last being Attalus Philometer, who bequeathed his dominion to the Romans. It was the seat of the Roman government in the province of Asia during the time of John the apostle.

Pergamos was known for its literary distinctions. In this city there was a royal library of 200,000 volumes---and all of this some 1500 years before the invention of the printing press. These books had all been hand written. Ptolemy, king of Egypt,

fired with jealousy over the rising fame of the library of Pergamos, prohibited the exportation of the Egyptian papyrus in order to defeat the design of King Eumenes of Pergamos. This circumstance gave rise to the invention of parchments, or the use of animal skins as writing material. The name "parchment" comes from the town of Pergamos.

The city of Pergamos was the city of styles. Any garment from Pergamos was a guarantee that it was the latest fashion. This city was the Paris of its day. In this city was an educational center, having one of the greatest universities of that day. In Pergamos there was also a school of sculpture which is said to have outrivaled anything the world has ever known.

Religiously, Pergamos was the headquarters of heathen worship and the home of pagan divinities. It contained a temple to Aesculapius, the god of medicine, who was worshipped under the form of a serpent. In the courts of his temple harmless snakes crawled on the ground. Sufferers came to sleep here at night, believing if a snake touched them it was the healing hand of the God Aesculapius. This idea was sheer, unadulterated superstition; it was actual Devil worship.

In addition to this main temple, in a grove near by, were temples of Jupiter, Bacchus, Minerva, Apollus and Venus. The worship of these gods was attended by gross immortalities. Pergamos was also a city devoted to the worship of the Roman emperor. In fact, it was the first city to establish such a cult. No wonder Satan's throne is said to be in this city!

## THE CHRIST (v. 12)

The Speaker of the message to Pergamos is described as "he that hath the sharp two-edged sword." Seeing that Pergamos was a royal

city possessing naturally the power of the sword, Christ reminds this church He has a greater sword and the power to use it. In Revelation 1:16 Christ is said to have a sword and again in Revelation 19:15. This sword is said to proceed out of His mouth in Revelation 1:16 and 19:15, denoting the authority of His Word. In Revelation 2:12 it is merely said that Christ has a sword.

Some view this as a literal sword, but others strongly disagree. Some say the sword has two edges---one side for the destruction of his enemies and the other for the protection of His friends. Most believe it is a word-sword, the Bible which is called **"the sword of the Spirit"** (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). They call attention to the fact that the sword is said to go out of His mouth, strongly suggesting it is His spoken Word.

It may have been the Pergamos Church had greatly neglected the preaching of the Word. If they had been using the sword of the Spirit as they should have been, it would not have been necessary for Christ to threaten to use it against them. Only the Word of God could solve and settle the problems confronting this church. Any church not completely governed by the Bible in its faith and conduct is without a chart, compass or anchor---they ride in a drifting ship without a rudder, driven by the uncertain winds of human fancy.

## THE COMMENDATION (V. 13)

**"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest."** The Saviour begins by saying that He knew the setting and environment of this church. How comforting for a pastor and church whose field is difficult and extremely wicked! Some surroundings are

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# Church at Pergamos

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more conducive to success while others make service for God almost impossible. The Pergamos Church was surrounded by gross immortality, intellectual paganism, false science, religious fanaticism and hostile governmental powers.

But before we pass judgment upon a church or a Christian we must consider the environment in which they are. How much have they been called upon to resist? How many temptations have been encountered? What allurements have been presented to their minds? Unlike Christ, we often fail to do this. We judge harshly where the savior would be less severe in His judgment. We commend a great deal where there is little to commend. The great day of judgment will reverse much of the poor judgments of mankind.

**“Even where Satan’s seat is.”** The word “seat” is “throne” in the Greek New Testament and should have been translated such in our version. Various meanings have been assigned to Satan’s throne being in Pergamos. Some say it refers to the idolatrous temples that the Greeks had built everywhere in the city. Still others apply it to the altar of Zeus, which had the appearance of a throne. Some scholars believe it points to the worship of the Roman Caesars. Other good students of the Word make it the famous library with its heathen literature, or the gross immortality in the city. Still a few make it the persecution which had already resulted in the death of one man. Perhaps it may be best to say the term Satan’s throne is broad enough to include all these things.

Was this church out of place?

Is it wrong for a church to be located near the headquarters of Satan? I think not. Jesus promised that **“the gates of Hell”** would not prevail against the church He founded. No war is won by the defensive; it is always won by the offensive. Any army must attack the gates of the enemy, not the gates of the enemy being brought to the army. (Oh, that America could realize this simple fact!) Instead of the churches singing “Hold the Fort,” we ought to sing “Storm the Fort.” Our churches need to charge the gates of Hell. It would seem that the church at Pergamos was waging war right at Satan’s headquarters.

Why are many churches leaving the downtown area? Why do they flee from the maddening crowd and take refuge in the beautiful suburbs? Those who move away from Satan’s headquarters are guilty of desertion in the face of the enemy. Too many churches are leaving the downtown areas to the Salvation Army and the Rescue Mission. God help our churches not to be afraid to battle Satan in his own kingdom.

**“Thou holdest fast my name.”** A name stands for the person represented by the name. The early Christians believed in the name of Christ (John 1:2), prayed in His name (John 16:23) and preached in His name (Luke 24:47). What is meant is that the church had not swerved from the profession of faith in the name of Christ even in the place of Satan’s headquarters (I Peter 4:14).

**“And hast not denied my faith.”** They had not denied the system of truth taught in the Bible. They dared to live it even if they must suffer criticism, persecution and death.

**“Even in those days when Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where**

**Satan dwelleth.”** Antipas was said to have been the pastor of the church at Pergamos and to have been burned to death in a brazen bull filled with fire. His name, “anti-pas,” means “against all odds.” He was well named since he stood against the Devil at the expense of his life.

Our modern churches need some people like Antipas. They need some people who will stand up for Christ and the Bible in a day when scholarship is worshipped, when education is king, when sin is rampant, when church people make more of knowledge than faith. May God help us to remain true to the primitive faith and practice of the early churches even if it means our life.

## THE COMPLAINT (VV. 14-15)

**“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So has thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”**

Just what was the doctrine of Balaam? I have not the time to explain the story of Balaam found in the 23rd and 24th chapters of the Book of Numbers. Balaam advised Balak and the princes of Moab to use the Moabite and Midianite women as instruments to draw the Israelites into idolatrous practices and criminal intercourse. By such evil practices Balaam believed Israel would incur the Divine anger and be cut off in punishment by God.

Balaamism is the idea that fellowship with the ungodly does not contaminate the Christian. It is the teaching that a child of God may freely mingle with the world

without losing any spiritual power or status with God. This was the damnable heresy being taught in the church at Pergamos. The modern teaching that worldliness is no bar to spirituality is nothing but Balaamism.

Some in the church at Pergamos took the same doctrinal position that Balaam held. They taught church members could worship at heathen temples and engage in gross immortality and remain good church members. They said no harm can come to one of God’s elect for his idolatry, seeing it is only the flesh that sins and the soul is eternally secure in Christ.

Sad to say, but all too many modern churches are not free from Balaamism. Liberal preachers teach liberty in Christ means a license to sin. Positionalism has all too often been preached in our Baptist churches to the point of wiping out the line of separation and demarcation between our church members and the world. Such lopsided preaching has filled our Baptist churches with lazy, immoral rascals. Today most preachers spend more time worrying with the goats than feeding the sheep.

Indeed the church at Pergamos had serious problems. Nevertheless, not all the members of this church embraced Balaamism or Nicolaitanism. I include Nicolaitanism because they are one and the same false religious system. Balaamism is the Old Testament word used to describe it, and Nicolaitanism is the New Testament word used of the same teaching. The language of Christ suggests that only some of the members of the Pergamos Church held to these two errors, although this heresy was making its way into the very heart of the church.

♦ (Continued on page 16)

## The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Was it possible for Christ to have sinned? If not, why was He tempted for forty days in the wilderness?

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**"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"** (Heb. 4:15).

This is a good question, but I have sat and listened to many who have argued this point and I have never understood why there is such a problem with it. First, it is like asking "What if," or, "Can God make a rock too big for Him to lift?" when there is no such thing. We can not do that... I mean you can, because it has been done, but there is no validity in asking "What if," because that is not what happened, so why spend precious time debating or arguing the point. IT NEVER HAPPENED...or the God I serve is a liar and does not keep His promises, **"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged"** (Rom. 3:3-4).

The Scripture verse in Hebrews should be answer enough for anyone, why try and make it any harder than it is? Christ was

tempted for us; understand that for US, which is actually quite beautiful, because it shows His humanity. The writer of Hebrews makes it very plain, that even though He had a human side, He did not sin. Not only did He NOT sin, but He could not have sinned or you and I would have "no hope" and would end up in the "Lake of Fire." Sometimes I do not think Christians stop and think what the end results would be "IF" Christ did not do the things He did. But see there again we could ask and ponder "What if" all day long instead of embracing the truth and be happy...very happy that we had a Saviour who did it all that you and I may have **"eternal life!"**

Dear reader and questioner, I do not know about you, but I am tempted every day, however Christ made it possible for me to escape those temptations, **"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"** (I Cor. 10:13). We would do well to do a study on the word "tempted" as well as Hebrews 4:15; I Corinthians 10:13; and others to help our understanding.

Here is one more Scripture that should help in answering why He was tempted, **"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted"** (Heb. 2:18). Oh how wonderful that He is able to **"succour"** (come to our

aid and help us when tempted). Again, He was tempted for us, but unlike us, He DID NOT SIN! God Bless!

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Yes, being all man as we are with the flesh nature, was tempted as we are, if His divine nature did not overrule. **"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"** (Heb 4:15). His divinity insured His victory over temptation.

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**"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began"** (Titus 1:2). In this simple statement of **"God, that cannot lie"** is the vital Biblical doctrine of the impeccability of Christ. The Bible nowhere claims that God does not want to lie, steal, cheat or in any way break the laws of holiness. It unequivocally states that He CANNOT lie! Any English teacher worth their salt will tell you the simple difference between "may" and "can." The former has to do with permission, but the latter refers to ability! Tied to His holy nature, God has

not the ability to sin. Not simply an abhorrence and aversion to iniquity and wickedness, but an inability to even conceive of such actions. Selah! Think about it!

A sovereign God that has made immutable/unchangeable decrees from eternity past MUST not and CAN not deviate from His purposes and pleasures! **"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us"** (Heb. 6:17-18). Two things from this powerful passage: 1) Unbreakable covenants REQUIRE an inability to deviate from a set course. If there was even a one percent chance to break said covenant, then we could not claim immutability, could we? Even if it had remained inviolate up to this point, the future would still have that uncertainty. Which leads us to 2) Eternal security rides on this doctrine of impeccability! If Christ could have fallen into sin via temptation NOW, then He could fall into temptation sometime in the murky future of uncertainty! How could we ever be sure? Certainly, we have **"a strong consolation"** and **"hope set before us!"** Selah! Think about it!

There is a three-fold purpose for the temptation of Christ, none of which really has anything to do with His impeccability. God does not have to prove that once-for-all. It is an eternal constant (James 1:13-15).

First, the Lord submitted Himself to this vicious temptation to be an example for us. **"Submit**

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# The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Is there any event that needs to take place before The Lord returns, or could He come now at any moment?

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I believe the Scriptures teach that the second coming of Christ is an imminent event, meaning that He could come at any moment which is why we are to be prepared for His soon return. We are not told to look for certain events, but rather are exhorted to be: **“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”** (Tit. 2:14). Matthew 24:36, 42, and 44 declare: **“But of that day and hour know eth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only...Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come...Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”** Several other passages reveal that the writers of Scripture believed in the imminent return of Christ (Rom. 13:11-12; James 5:8; I Pet. 4:7; I John 2:28). The last words of the Lord Jesus Christ are recorded in Revelation 22:20: **“...Surely I come quickly...”** He meant exactly what He said. We must be in a spirit and attitude of constant anticipation for the any moment return of the Lord in the Rapture. May God give us grace to reply as John the Beloved did: **“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”**

TOM ROSS

I have to smile a little after reading this question because it was the very last question that was asked me at my ordination by Elder John Massie over 25 years ago. I will never forget it. Elder Milburn Cockrell was the moderator and he was like an auctioneer asking anyone if they had any more questions for me and there was dead silence, and I took this big sigh of relief thinking it was all over and then came the question from Brother Massie.

Though I will tell you I believe that there is NOTHING that needs to take place for the Lord's return, I answered the question wrong, and the instant I did, I knew it. If there was ever a time I knew I was saved, that was the moment. I had such a chill come over me that I knew without a doubt I just answered his question wrong. It was the hottest day we had had in a long time; it was like 95-98 degrees in the building with no air-conditioning. You might say I was literally on the hot seat.

It was not the question so much as how Brother Massie asked it. I should had asked him to repeat it, but like I said, taking that sigh of relief I let my guard down, and I was so upset with myself I almost passed out. But thank the Lord for Brother Cockrell who

came immediately to my rescue and said, “Hold on now, I know this Brother knows the answer to this question, let me rephrase it.” And with the rephrasing of the question, I said that nothing else needs to happen for Christ to come back, **“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost”** (John 19:30). With that saying of Christ everything was accomplished from eternity past, all was done, nothing more needs to be done and I believe that it could happen before this answer goes to print.

I would quote T. P. Simmons here, “It is imminent; by the coming of Christ being imminent we mean that it is “threatening to occur at any moment.” Saved people are to be ever watching and looking for it (Matthew 25:13; Titus 2:13). It is represented in the Scripture as being the next dispensational event.”

There are those who believe that “this or that has to happen before His return” but I am not one of them, **“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus”** (Rev. 22:20). God Bless!

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**“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be”** (Rev. 22:12). I was going to say nope, no way was there an event going to take place, but I have changed my mind

on that. Yes, there is an event that takes place before Christ's imminent return and it is the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The preaching of Christ comes with a warning from those who witness of the separation of man from God because of sins. The warning is in the gospel message, repent or perish. Noah preached righteousness, and Lot was warned, and Lot, too, warned of the impending judgment in Luke Chapter 17. Will He come quickly? Yes, at any moment. Are you watching? All the Saints in the New Testament believed in this very fact.

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The Bible declares that the return of Jesus Christ is imminent! At any moment, the clouds could break open and reveal the Lord Jesus Christ coming for His saints, in what we refer to as the Rapture, or the snatching away (*harpazo* in the Greek; *raptura* in Latin). **“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever**

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# Forum #1

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**yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you**" (James 4:7-8). Three times on the mount of temptation, Jesus Christ answered the enticement of Satan with the prelude of: **"It is written."** His purpose in doing so was to lay down a pathway of escape for us Christians. No matter what the temptation might be, we will find the resources we need in Scripture. **"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"** (I Cor. 10:13). Use our Bibles! Satan hates the truth and it will cause him to flee every time!

The second reason is to make Him a perfect high priest. **"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"** (Heb. 4:15-16). The Bible says He is emotionally touched with the very FEELINGS of our infirmities! Been there, done that! The fact that He did not succumb to the lure of the weary flesh, does not mean that He does not comprehend the danger and peril! Perhaps an even deeper insight into the Redeemer's experience is Hebrews 5:6-9, **"Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Who in the days of his flesh, when he**

**(Jesus) had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation. . . ."** Jesus Christ, to be our High Priest, "learned" or experienced the trials and was made "perfect" or complete in those tribulations and temptations. Praise God and Selah! Think about it!

Thirdly, we understand that the atonement of Christ was a literal imputation of our sins upon Him to carry to Calvary. But also, just as necessarily, the righteousness of Christ's perfect life was imputed to our account to make us worthy of glory and Heaven! And included in that imputed righteous life was a resistance to those temptations to which we succumbed. Where we failed, He succeeded and those righteous actions are imputed to our account! **"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him"** (I John 2:5). Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



No, it was not possible for Christ to have sinned. As the eternally begotten Son of God, Jesus is Divine, equal with the Father and the Spirit in Deity. According to the Holy Scriptures the Deity of Christ is an incontrovertible fact: **"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:**

**God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory"** (I Tim. 3:16). John 1:1 and 14 reinforce the truth that Jesus was absolutely and essentially Divine: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."** As God He was full of grace and truth, meaning that His very essence had no room or capacity for sin, iniquity, or deceit. When Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father He replied: **"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father..."** (John 14:9). Jesus Christ is the only member of the Godhead who is visibly manifest in a human body as God: **"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"** (Col. 2:9). Jesus Christ, as the very Word of God, manifested the excellence, virtue, and holiness of the Godhead: **"Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom he also made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."** The Father even declared and acknowledged Christ as God: **"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom"** (Hebrew. 1:2-3,8). Since Christ is God perhaps the question should

really be, can God sin? The answer is no! I John 1:5 declares: **"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."** God is full of grace, truth, and holiness; there is no room for darkness or sin!

As the sinless Son of God, Christ was the only person qualified and able to redeem the elect out of Adam's fallen race. He was born of a virgin and had a body prepared by God the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work of perfecting all those that the Father had given Him. Luke 1:35 reveals: **"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."** In His body Christ always did those things which pleased the Father, which included the work of perfect redemption of God's elect. Notice the connection between His body being offered as a perfect sacrifice and the complete redemption and perfection of the elect: **"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me... Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God...By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"** (Heb. 10:5,7,10,14). The body and essence of Christ had to be without sin in order for the sacrifice to be accepted by the Father. I Peter 1:19-20 and 2:22-24 bear this out: **"But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without**

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## Forum #1

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**blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you...Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."** It occurred to me while I was typing the Scriptures that God, Who has never had even the thought of sin and Who knows all things at once, would have never foreordained Christ to be the Surety for the elect if there were any possibility of Him committing sin.

Christ was tempted forty days in the wilderness to show His power over sin and Satan. Jesus was acting as the substitute for the elect, thus He was subjected to the onslaught of Satan and the trials associated with temptation. The first man, Adam, failed terribly when tempted as he willfully chose to sin. The second Adam, Christ our federal head, defeated Satan and secured our redemption. Hebrews 2:17-18 declares: **"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted"** (cf. Heb. 4:15; 7:24-27).

TOM ROSS

## Forum #2

(Continued from page 13) ♦

**be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words"** (I Thess. 4:15-18). The apostle Paul was instructing the Thessalonian saints to be ready, watching, looking and to be comforted by the reality of this imminent return! Selah! Think about it!

There are events that have previously taken place which were necessary, but no more are required that we finitely know of. II Peter 3:9 and 15 speaks of the long-suffering of God until ALL of the elect are called. That will certainly happen- each will certainly be called, and God will not send His Son until they are all redeemed and manifested! But since we do not know which salvation we witness will be the last one in this age, then we cannot preclude EACH one from being potentially, that last one- after which the Lord will immediately return!

The New Testament writers were ALL expecting to live to see the return of their King! In our text verse, the Apostle Paul uses the personal pronoun **"we which are alive and remain unto the Coming of the Lord"** three times in the passage. Other times, in other epistles, he projects that same hope for himself and his current generation. See I Corinthians 15:51-52; Romans 13:11; II Thessalonians 2:1; Titus 2:13; Galatians 5:5; Philippians 2:16 and Ephesians 1:14 among others. The Apostle Peter likewise uses that personal pronoun and hope in II Peter 3:13, **"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth**

**righteousness."**

**"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh"** (James 5:8). "Even at the door!" His thought here parallels the Lord's own prophetic promise for the generation of the Rapture- in that James expected that generation to be his own (As should every generation since.). **"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come"** (Matt. 24:33-42). The suddenness of Christ's return, and the snatching away of His people while leaving the reprobates behind is the prominent theme of the entire New Testament! The hope of His coming is the driving force behind every good work recorded in the book and the imminent judgment that awaits those that reject the gospel of

God. (Luke 21:19, 36; Mark 13:13, 32-37; John 21:22).

That there are signs that accompany His coming is evident in Scripture. There is a prophesied apostasy predicted in II Thessalonians 2:3, **"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."** But the man of sin will not be revealed until AFTER the Rapture: vs. 7-8, **"...only he who now letteth will let, until he (the Holy Spirit) be taken out of the way (at the Rapture). And then shall that Wicked be revealed."** So we do not have to wait on the Antichrist! There are also the perilous times of II Timothy 3:1-2,7, **"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves... Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."** Jesus Christ gave ten signs that would occur in Matthew 24 leading up to the Rapture predicted in verse 13. But these either have occurred, or are continuing to occur. Nothing to prevent His coming this day in 2015!

An imminent rapture is the ultimate hope of Jude in verse 21 of his short epistle and also John the beloved as he closes out the inspired canon of God with the reciprocating request for His Saviour to come take him (personally) home! **"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus"** (Rev. 22:20). Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



## Church at Pergamos

(Continued from page 11) ♦

### THE COMMAND (V. 16)

Christ gives this erring church a strong command: **“Repent: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”** The command to repent is addressed to the pastor and the whole church as well as those erring members. This implies that when a few members in a church are permitted to teach wrong Christ holds the entire church to blame for permitting such to go on. Had the church at Pergamos been faithful in exercising its duties and discipline, these heretics would have already been reclaimed or excluded. But this church, like so many of our generation, was more concerned with the security of the individual than the purity of the church.

Christ warned that if the church continued to cowardly neglect its clear duty, He would perform it for them. Jesus Christ said He would fight against these heretical church members with punishment and judgment. He threatened to use the sword of judgment He is said to have in verse 12. Christ would not wait; He would come and judge unless they repented. Christ would not continue to tolerate a church which allowed so great a wrong to remain in its membership.

### THE COMFORT (V. 17)

Following the commendation and command, Christ gives some words of comfort for the troubled church. **“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written,**

**which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”**

Here the overcomer has a threefold promise. First, Christ said He would give him the right to eat of **“the hidden manna.”** There is an allusion here to the manna from Heaven in the wilderness (Ex. 16:16-35) and the pot of manna preserved as a memorial in the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 16:32-34). These Old Testament types pointed to Christ (John 6:47-58), the true spiritual food of the soul. This promise must have meant much to a people who observed so many of their pagan neighbors given over to feeding upon the mysteries of life.

Second, Christ promised **“a white stone.”** What does this mean? This question has no easy answer. Some apply it to the custom of admission to a feast in that day. Some make it a charm worn with the name of a heathen god upon it. Others contend it points to the breastplate of the high priest. Some others make it the token of hospitality used in that day. Other scholars see in it a reference to a sign of acquittal and victory. Regardless of the numerous meanings assigned to the custom of using a white stone in John's day, we can safely say that it was regarded by most as a token of favor, prosperity and success.

Third, the promise concerns **“a new name”** known only to the receiver. This name would be a secret between Christ and the overcomer, a name of honor and happiness; a promotion and a glory to the bearer. No overcomer can ever be deprived of this new name. Would you like to know your new name? Then see to it that you overcome for Christ.



END

## Good News

(Continued from page 1) ♦

Word of God as it is imparted to the souls of men.

God and mankind have been separated by sin. There is now a great gulf between us, which men cannot bridge, and which good works or good intentions cannot overcome. It is safe to say that Heaven – or the place of God's abode – is now far from man, and is comparable to the **“far country”** which is mentioned in our text verse. And yet, we have good news from that **“far country!”** We have the words of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ which have come to us from afar! Matthew Henry said, **“Heaven is a country afar off; how refreshing is it to hear good news thence, both in the everlasting gospel, which signified glad tidings, and in the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are God's children.”**

### SALVATION FOR A THIRSTY SOUL

New Testament scholars will, very often, define the word **“gospel”** as **“good news.”** This good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a necessary ingredient in the salvation of souls. Wherever there is a thirsty soul that is longing for the water of life, the gospel of Jesus Christ is there to assuage that thirst, and to bring salvation to that thirsty soul. Isn't this good news, indeed! The Word of God – Jesus Christ, Himself – is come to us from Heaven (the **“far country”**), and He has brought unto us salvation, and eternal life! **“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel**

**said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”** (Luke 2:8-14). What hope was brought to these lowly shepherds this night! What glories were revealed to them by these messengers from a far country! The news that they heard – the truths which they beheld – were, in fact, the coming of the Saviour, and the only hope for the salvation of the souls of men!

This **“good news”** must be shared with others, and this **“good news”** has been carried into the world. H. A. Ironside said, **“The glorious gospel of the blessed God is the preeminent good news from a far country. It is like a draught of clear sparkling water from a cold spring to a thirsty soul. When weary, famished, and ready to perish, the poor sinner drinks the living water, and it becomes in his inmost being a fountain springing up unto everlasting life.”** We read in the gospel of John, **“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”** (John 7:37-38). The Lord Jesus Christ is that thirst-satisfying draught, which will bring relief and salvation to the thirsty soul.

The Samaritan woman at the

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# Good News

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well is a testament to the thirst-quenching nature of the Word of God, and of Jesus Christ: **“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw”** (John 4:13-15). The Lord Jesus Christ could have, miraculously, provided this woman with water from the physical well, despite the fact that He did not have anything in His possession to draw the water forth. However, the water of the well could only provide sustenance and relief to the mortal and physical body of the woman. But, the spiritual water – the Word of God – could and would provide a draught of everlasting life for this woman at the well.

We read in the book of Isaiah, **“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth”** (Isa. 52:7)! The gospel of salvation is carried forth by those who are empowered by God. And, the beauties of that gospel are reflected in the beautiful and noble countenances of those who are called into the ministry of the Word of God. The world should count itself fortunate, that there are harbingers of the “good news” in every generation.

The Lord Jesus Christ preached and taught the gospel – He was

a proclaimer of the good news of salvation by grace. **“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel”** (Mark 1:14-15). Men must repent, and men must believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour. These are the principal elements of the “good news” which comes from that far country, which is Heaven.

## HELP FOR A NEEDY SOUL

Without a doubt, the “good news” of the gospel is necessary in the salvation of souls. It is also without doubt, that the continual purveyance of that “good news” is integral in the survival and the success of those who have been saved. The gospel is not something that is merely applicable at the time of our initial salvation! Neither is the gospel and the Word of God something that will dry up, or become of no use to us! Each of us must recognize that we are weak and miserable in ourselves, and in need of sustenance and protection. Each of us must realize – sometimes in the face of distress or disaster – that we are needy souls who must depend upon the strength and succor of our God in Heaven. It is at times such as this that we most desperately turn to God, and call upon the relief that is found in the Word of God. Solomon said, **“The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat”** (Pro. 15:30). We need the “good report” of God, which is found in the Word of God. We need the “good news” from Heaven to sustain and nourish us. A “good report” or “good news” is a blessing and a relief to those who are saved. It is like a breath of fresh air from Heaven

itself. The Word of God is full of encouragement and help for those who are saved.

Sometimes the help our souls need may be the love and support of the fellow saints of God, which strengthens and encourages us, so that we can continue on in the way that God has laid out for us. **“I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such”** (I Cor. 16:17-18). This type of “good news” from a far country was very important to the apostle Paul. This is really a very practical application of the principle which is taught in our text passage. It is a very real comfort to literally receive “good news” from our brothers and sisters in a far country. We are encouraged to know that others share our concerns, and others pray for us, even as we pray for them.

We read also in the second epistle to the Corinthians, **“For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more”** (II Cor. 7:5-7). This type of “good news” from a far country – when the people and the churches of God will be a blessing one to another – is still a great help and a great encouragement to the children of God today.

However, I want us all to be re-

minded that we have the Word of God in our midst today. We can take of the Word of God – we can take of this “good news” from a “far country” – and we can find help for our poor souls, and strength for our weak selves. **“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe”** (I Thess. 2:13). It is the Word of God which works in us, giving us the courage, the strength, the will, and the desire to serve and please our God, Who has called us.

Maybe we do not thirst for this Word of God as much as we should. Maybe our hope and our help, too often, might come from ourselves or from mortal men. Though we are saved, we are still needy souls. Though we have been called into the family and service of God, we are still in need of His support and His strength. It is in the Word of God that we will find relief! It is in the “good news” from a “far country” that our souls will find strength! **“I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one”** (I John 2:14). In the Word of God you and I will find strength to overcome whatever may oppose us in this life.

## HOPE FOR A HOMESICK SOUL

As we live this life below, we are constantly reminded of the home that awaits us in Heaven above, and the beauties of Creation as Heaven descends upon earth in

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# Good News

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the last age. Though we are laborers and travelers here, we are not bound to this earth, and our fate is not to live forever as mortals, or expire and disappear without a trace. Instead, the grace of God in our hearts, and the “good news” of the Gospel in our lives, teaches us that there is hope for us, and there is a glorious home that awaits those who are the children of God.

As our homesick souls long for the person and presence of Jesus Christ, the Word of God brings us the good news that Jesus Christ is still yet taking care of us, and He is, even now, making preparations for His return, and our reunion with Him. The Scriptures teach us that the Lord Jesus Christ has traveled to Heaven, which is a far country from us. **“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods”** (Matt. 25:14). The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased our souls; the fact that the Father in Heaven is now our Father; the fact that the Holy Spirit has taken up abode in our hearts; these all give us a desire (and a right) to enter into Heaven and to be with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Since our Saviour has departed us in the flesh, those of us who are brought unto Him through and by the grace of God are “homesick” in our souls, for the person and the presence of Jesus Christ.

Though we may have formerly been at odds with God and the hosts of Heaven, we are now brought near unto Him, and we are given a heart and a desire fit for Heaven. Let me give you a quote from J. Jackson Wray: “Heaven is a “far country,” because we are

by nature so disqualified from inhabiting it. We speak of the fall of man, and this is the measure of it—a fall from paradise to perdition—a fall that only power Divine can span. From this “far country” good news has come. News from a far country is interesting to us, if it is from a strange land unlike our own. If we have those who are near and dear to us dwelling in it. If we hope, or intend, to live in it by and by. Good news has come from this far country, the best and most glorious news that can fall on mortal ear. Angels have brought it. Jesus has brought it. The Holy Spirit has brought it. Holy men, moved by Him, have written and spoken it. Subtle, gracious, secret good news is brought from the far country still.” The “good news” is that we have been saved by the grace of God. The “good news” is that now we have a longing for Jesus Christ, and a longing to be in His presence.

And yet, the “good news” from Heaven will teach us that Jesus Christ is going to return, and His coming must be soon! **“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know”** (John 14:1-4). This is “good news” for a homesick soul! This is “good news” for that soul who has no desire to live forever in this life, but has, instead, a desire to depart this realm, and go to be with Jesus Christ!

You and I, as saved individuals in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation, must look to the Saviour and the “good news” from the

“far country” as our main source of solace in this life. There is hope! The Saviour will return from afar, and He will bring us unto Himself! **“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself”** (Phil. 3:20-21).



## If Not Worship, What?

By Curtis Pugh  
of Poteau, Oklahoma

Many religious groups publicly advertise their Sunday morning meetings as a “worship service.” Merriam Webster Online Dictionary defines worship as “the act of showing respect and love for a god especially by praying with other people who believe in the same god : the act of worshiping God or a god.” The word worship comes from the idea of “worth-ship” or worthiness. God is worthy of respect, love, honor and obedience. The word worship appears forty times in our King James New Testaments. It means to show homage to another by obedience and deference to that one. The Lord Jesus used the word worship many times. In answer to a question put to Him by the Samaritan woman, He replied: **“..Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we**

**worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”** (John 4:21-24).

In the last clause of this text we read, **“they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”** Our Lord did not say that those who worship God should, or ought to worship Him in spirit and in truth. He did not say that it is good or even better if people worship God in spirit and in truth. He emphatically said that if people would worship God they must – repeat **“must”** worship Him in spirit and in truth! In other words, it is necessary that individuals worship God in these two realms: the realm of the spiritual and the realm of truth.

Obviously an individual may go through the motions of worship. He or she may pretend to worship by bowing, praying, praising, singing, preaching, etc., etc. But outward actions do not constitute worship. Worship is a spiritual matter. That being the case, a person who is dead spiritually cannot worship God. How could he? Being dead spiritually means that spiritual things are unknown to him. He has never experienced one spiritual thing in his life other than spiritual death. He may have experienced emotional highs or lows. He may have been thrilled to hear great oratory. He may have marveled at the concept of God and His majesty. He may, like Herod, have enjoyed good preaching and may have done many religious

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# If Not Worship

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things. (See Matt. 6:20). But he never has worshiped God in the spirit. He may have shouted, run or jumped or rolled on the floor: he may have spoken in gibberish, frothed at the mouth, fallen in an unconscious state or even worked miracles, but a spiritually dead man or woman has not worshiped. Only those who are Biblically “in the Spirit” have the ability to please God in any way whatsoever – including in the matter of worship. Our proof is this: **“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”** (Rom. 8:8-9).

Worshiping in the spirit by means of the Spirit’s life within is one of the two requirements the Lord Jesus set forth as necessary for worshiping God. The second of the two is this: worshiping in truth. That means that even a true child of God cannot worship God in connection with lies. It is necessary to believe and say what the Bible says – no more and no less – if we would worship God. This article is being written in December. The religious world is alive with lies about the Lord Jesus Christ and so we ask this question: If a person cannot worship God in connection with or in the realm of lies, what is it they do? Or what or who is it they actually worship with their lies? Surely the words of the Lord Jesus are appropriate here for He told the Samaritan woman, **“Ye worship ye know not what.”** Anytime and every time a person departs from the Word of God in worship or service they do not

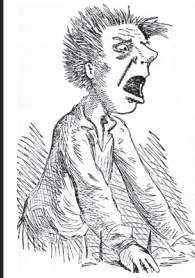
know what they are worshiping!

Every person who has bothered to investigate the facts knows that it is a lie to say that the Lord Jesus was born on December 25. It is a lie to say He was born in the winter. (A little math proves He was born in the Fall). It is a lie that He was born in a manger. It is a lie that the Magi (wise men) came at His birth and found Him lying in a manger. It is a lie to say there were three Magi when we do not know how many there were. These lies that are commonly believed and told in the observance of Christmas mean that if worship takes place in connection with them, it is not the worship of God for He must be worshiped “in truth.” We raise the question, then, if you cannot worship God except in the realm of truth, just who are you worshiping by lies at Christmas time? And if your observance of this religious holiday is not worship, what is it?

And a few final questions: why do you observe something that God never told you to observe? There is neither command nor example in the Bible of anyone observing or celebrating the birth of Christ! May we also ask this: who knows what will please God better than God Himself? Is it not logical to think that if God is pleased with the man-made traditions and so-called worship at Christmas time (and Easter) why did He not indicate this by instructing us in His Word what we should do and how we should do in the matter of holiday worship?

Christmas and similar holidays are innovations – inventions of men – mere traditions handed down from one generation to another. Consider what the Lord Jesus had to say about traditions. **“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This**

**people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”** (Matt. 15:7-9). The Lord said that worshiping according to man-made traditions was “vain” or empty and of no value. Please do not be angry with those who call the truth to your attention. If angry you must be, direct your anger at the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son, for it is with Him whom you have a disagreement and a very real problem.



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

Some folks are always sayin’ live and let live, accept people and their lifestyle without judgin’ them. Well, there’s too much lettin’ and allowin’ going on today. What you condone, you endorse and what you endorse you promote. Remember, the next time you let wickedness prevail without a fuss, you promoted it.

**THE**

## BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

### CRITICS URGE TLC TO CANCEL 19 KIDS AND COUNTING

(WNS)--More than 90,000 people have signed an online petition calling on TLC to pull its popular *19 Kids and Counting* series from the air, accusing the Duggar family of “fear mongering” for their beliefs about homosexuality. The show follows Arkansas Baptists Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar and their 19 children, all of whom are outspoken supporters of traditional marriage. Jim Wissick of San Jose, Calif.—author of the Change.org petition that is quickly gaining steam—claims the Duggars are using the language of hate and ignorance to promote their views. According to the Huffington Post, the tussle began after Michelle

Duggar’s involvement in a robocall against an anti-discrimination housing law affecting the transgender community in Arkansas. Duggar asked the people of Fayetteville, Ark., to oppose a city ordinance forbidding business owners and landlords from evicting and firing people based on their gender identity. In the recording, she warned about the ordinance’s potential consequences.

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### COLORADO HIGH SCHOOL BANS PRAYER MEETING DURING “FREE TIME”

(WNS)--A Colorado high school senior is suing school officials after they told him he could not meet with his Christian friends during a “free period.” The group had

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been peacefully meeting for over three years for encouragement, prayer, and singing when officials suddenly ordered the students to stop. Chase Windebank has been informally leading a prayer meeting with fellow students since he was a freshman at Pine Creek High School, a 4A-school in Colorado Springs. Like many high schools across the state, Pine Creek has a 40-minute, non-teaching period built into the daily schedule, which the school calls "seminar." After teachers take attendance and read school announcements, students are permitted to leave seminar on certain days to meet with counselors, tutors, or teachers if they need extra help or to take make-up tests. Seminar also "provides a forum for students to develop meaningful relationships that enhance academic achievement, encourage positive community involvement, provide character education, and increase connectedness with school," according to the district's parent guide.

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### GAY COUPLE FILES COMPLAINT AGAINST DENOMINATION, WITH PASTOR'S APPROVAL

(WNS)--Two homosexuals who attend a United Methodist Church (UMC) in Winston-Salem, N.C., have lodged a complaint with Methodist officials against their pastor for not marrying them. Although same-sex marriage became legal in North Carolina last month, the UMC, like most Christian denominations, does not permit clergy to perform same-sex weddings or ceremonies. Green Street United Methodist Church announced the complaint against its senior pastor, Kelly Carpenter, during a press conference Nov. 12.

The couple, Kenny Barner and Scott Chappell, say that by refusing to marry them, Carpenter is violating the UMC Book of Discipline's requirement for pastors to "perform the work of the ministry" and refrain from "gender discrimination."

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### SIX JUDGES RESIGN RATHER THAN PERFORM GAY "MARRIAGES"

(TNA)--As reported in *The New American*, a total of six county magistrates have resigned over the past several weeks in North Carolina rather than honor a court order requiring them to perform wedding ceremonies for same-sex couples.

On October 20 Swain County Magistrate Judge Gilbert Breedlove, in office for nearly 25 years, resigned his position following a federal court ruling that struck down North Carolina's voter-passed constitutional amendment defining marriage as only between a man and a woman. Breedlove followed Rockingham County Magistrate John Kallam, Jr., who resigned his position on October 16, saying that being forced to perform same-sex marriage ceremonies "would desecrate a holy institution established by God Himself."

Since Breedlove's and Kallam's resignations, news reports have named four additional county magistrates who have thrown in the towel rather than compromise the authority of their office by "marrying" homosexuals. Christian Headline News identified the four officials as Gaston County magistrate Bill Stevenson, Graham County magistrate Tommy Holland, Union County magistrate Gayle Myrick, and Jackson County magistrate Jeff Powell.

All the judges said that they could not be compelled to violate their moral convictions for the sake of a court ruling. "It was something

I had to do out of conscience," Bill Stevenson said of his resignation. "I felt like to perform same sex unions would be in violation of the Lord's commands, so I could not do that." He added that "I hate to wax so Biblical, but it says 'What good is it for a man to gain the whole world but lose his own soul?' so that's the stakes I put on this."

Myrick told a local reporter that "for me to do what the state said I had to do, under penalty of law, I would have to go against my convictions, and I was not willing to do that. I want to honor what the Word says."

Similarly, Holland said that he knew immediately after the court ruling that he would have to resign. "When the federal judge ruled that gay marriage was legal and North Carolina honors that, and part of a magistrate's job is to perform marriage ceremonies, I knew I couldn't honor that law. It's against my belief. It's against what the Bible says.... I was raised a Southern Baptist. God has always taken care of me."

But former magistrate Bill Stevenson said that the ruling is an indication that the state has "rejected the prime authority of the Scriptures, something our Nation's Founding Fathers, such as John Adams, knew better than to do. In both the Old and New Testaments, homosexuality is something the Lord does not approve of, and since He doesn't, I could not put the sanction of the state on a relationship that runs afoul of Scripture. I think one of the things we've lost as Christians is an understanding of the correct view of the moral commandments of the Lord, and how keeping them — by His grace — is required to demonstrate our love for Him."

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### GAY-RIGHTS CAMPAIGN INVOKES RELIGION IN THE

### SOUTH

(WNS)--The nation's largest gay advocacy group launched a faith-based campaign in Mississippi in mid-November. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) says the initiative, called "All God's Children," plans to use ads, face-to-face conversations, and mailings to bolster gay rights support and same-sex marriage legislation in Mississippi, the most religious state in the U.S., according to Gallup. The messaging targets Christians, references the Bible, and highlights the Golden Rule. "We are all God's children. It is only for God to judge, not us. We need to treat everyone with respect," says the campaign website. The campaign is part of HRC's Project One America, an initiative announced this spring to win support for the LGBT agenda in Alabama, Arkansas, and Mississippi. HRC is spending \$8.5 million on the project and says All God's Children will cost an initial \$310,000. A study commissioned by HRC and cited in their campaign fact sheet concluded "a faith-driven, Christian values-focused message is the most effective way to boost support for LGBT equality in the South."

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### JUDGES OVERTURN MARRIAGE LAWS IN TWO SOUTHERN STATES

(WNS)--Federal judges in Mississippi and Arkansas on Nov. 25 overturned those states' laws defining marriage as between one man and one woman. Both judges put their rulings on hold pending appeal. Referendums held in 2004 in both states approved adding the traditional definition of marriage to the states' constitutions. But Judge Kristine Baker in Arkansas said the law there was discriminatory. "The fact that Amendment 83 was adopted by referendum does not immunize it from federal

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constitutional scrutiny,” Baker wrote in her ruling. In Mississippi, Judge Carlton Reeves compared overturning the state’s marriage law to the desegregation effort in the South, calling marriage a “fundamental right” owed to every citizen.

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### DISPUTED TEXTBOOKS APPROVED FOR TEXAS SCHOOLS

(WNS)--The state where “everything’s bigger” just made a great big splash in the education world. In a landmark vote influencing the future education of scores of Texas students, the Texas State Board of Education approved new social studies textbooks on Feb. 21 after adopting hundreds of pages in last-minute changes and edits. The disputed curriculum sets new standards for U.S. history and other social studies materials—including some 89 textbooks, workbooks, and other study resources—reflecting a more conservative tone than past materials. The 9-5 vote, divided along party lines, came after months of outcry from some critics who disagree with the curriculum’s approach to topics like climate change, Islam, and the influence of Moses on American democracy. All but the five Democrats on the 14-member board voted in favor of the new standards, with the five opponents accusing the Republican majority (primarily social conservatives) of giving too little focus to key minority figures in history and allowing their own religious and political agenda to shape the program.

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### ABORTION RATE AT LOWEST LEVEL SINCE ROE V. WADE

(WNS)--The abortion rate in

the United States has declined to its lowest point since abortion’s legalization in 1973, according to an annual report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Forty-seven states reported 730,322 abortions in 2011 to the CDC (California, Maryland, and New Hampshire didn’t report their data). According to those reports, the abortion rate has fallen by 14 percent since 2002, to 13.9 abortions for every 1,000 women aged 15 to 44. The abortion ratio also declined significantly: In 1980, 359.2 babies were aborted for every 1,000 births. In 2011, the ratio declined to 219 for every 1,000 births. The cause for the decline may come from multiple sources. CDC partly credits contraceptive availability because most abortions stem from unplanned pregnancies. “Because unintended pregnancies are rare among women who use the most effective methods of contraception, increasing access to and use of these methods can help further reduce the number of abortions performed in the United States,” the report states.

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### TRANSGENDER STUDENT WINS \$75K IN LEGAL FIGHT OVER SCHOOL BATHROOM

(WNS)--A Maine county court has ordered a public school district to pay \$75,000 to the family and attorneys of Nicole Maines, a transgender student who was asked to stop using the girls’ restroom. The financial award is the conclusion to a case that has spent several years in state courts. The parents of Nicole, a transgender “girl,” sued the Orono school district after it asked Nicole to use a unisex faculty bathroom—a segregation that amounted to discrimination, they said. Nicole, who was born a boy and used to go by the name Wyatt, wore girls’ clothing as early as age 3. Nicole’s parents, who legally changed his name

from Wyatt to Nicole during grade school, supported the behavior, and by third grade, teachers referred to the student as “she.” The \$75,000 award will be split between the Maines family, their attorneys, and the Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, a Boston legal advocacy group that assisted the family.

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### INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS FINNISH CHURCH EMBRACES GAY MARRIAGE, LOSES 12,000 MEMBERS

(WNS)--Support for same-sex marriage voiced by one of Finland’s top religious leaders prompted about 12,000 Fins to resign their membership in the Finnish Lutheran Church. Finland’s parliament narrowly approved a measure legalizing same-sex marriage by a vote of 105 to 92 in early December. Following the vote, Kari Mäkinen, the Lutheran Archbishop of Finland, praised the outcome in a statement on Facebook. “I know how much this day means for rainbow people, their loved ones and many others. I rejoice with my whole heart for them and with them,” wrote Mäkinen, according to Europe’s Pink News. Mäkinen noted Finland’s position as the last Nordic country to legalize same-sex marriage: “We are in the same situation as our neighboring Nordic Churches: our concept of marriage needs a fundamental examination. Speaking for myself, I think it is time for reconsideration.” In the days following the statement, nearly 12,000 people resigned their membership in the Lutheran Church in Finland, according to Finland’s YLE news. A website making it easy for people to resign online continues to track daily totals. Comments on the website seem to suggest the majority of resignations are in response to Mäkinen’s statements.



## Sinners Taught By the Father

By Curtis Pugh  
of Poteau, Oklahoma

If you are the average church-goer, it is highly probable that you have never heard our subject preached nor our text expounded. Our text is not a difficult one, nor a long one. It consists of only two verses – words spoken by the Lord Jesus Himself. Consider thoughtfully, please, these words: **“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me”** (John 6:44-45). Here the Lord Jesus cites the writings of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah who wrote, **“And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children”** (Isa. 54:13).

Many professing Christians believe that the Holy Spirit teaches, or illumines, the minds of those who have believed in Christ. While we do not deny that, our text quoted above does not have to do with those who have already believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. These verses, to the consternation of many, clearly state that there is a teaching work, or a drawing work, that the Father does in certain people prior to their coming in faith to Christ. Now if my last sentence does not sit well with you, you are not alone. The majority of professing

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# Sinners Taught

(Continued from page 21) ♦

Christians think that they came in a saving way to Christ without any previous work of God in their hearts and lives. Because of this, their confidence is in themselves, or in their obedience, or their praying a prayer, or making a decision, or being baptized, etc. If this is the case, we fear that their faith is not in Christ, but is in their own works. Let me provide an example of the popularity of this self confidence scheme of salvation. In a brief doctrinal conversation with a certain missionary Baptist preacher, both he and I perceived that we were approaching salvation from different viewpoints. I had stayed with Bible terms knowing that certain theological words were actually buzz words that would cause him to think me an heretic of the worst sort. Finally he exclaimed: "Oh! You believe the Spirit has to work first!" He held to the view that men are able to come to Christ apart from Divine intervention. Of course our conversation was abruptly at an end.

But let us look at our text. We will number five things clearly stated in Christ's words here: (1) No man can (has the ability) to come savingly to Christ in himself. The word "can" means to have the ability. (2) The Father must draw him if he is to come. ("Draw" is the same Greek word used in John 18:10 of Peter drawing his sword and in Acts 21:30 of Paul being dragged out of the city. This word means, of course, that a superior power acts upon a thing to move it from one place to another.) (3) This drawing work of the Father is not merely an attempt to draw a sinner to Christ as some would have us think. We know this of a

certainly because those that are drawn by the Father are promised by Christ that He will resurrect them in a blessed resurrection. Christ will not resurrect those whom God only tried to draw to Christ. Besides that, when did you ever read in the Bible about God trying to do anything? God does not try! He does as He pleases! (4) The Lord Jesus cites the Old Testament, quoting from it on this matter. He has clearly stated that there is a teaching or drawing work performed by the Father. It seems that He anticipated the reaction of the average religious person. He anticipated that they would think themselves able to come to Him in a saving way if they wanted to do so. They would argue with His words just as men do today: nevertheless He said, **"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."** Such an idea is repulsive to self confident sinners. Therefore He not only spake Himself, but bolstered His words in the minds of His hearers by showing them that this was written in the Scriptures before He spoke these words. (5) In a grand finale, as it were, the Lord Jesus announced that everyone whom the Father teaches will come in a saving way to Him. This is a glorious fact! Because of the Savior's words in this place we can be confident that all those in whom the Father has chosen to work – to draw or to teach – all those individuals will come to Christ. Salvation is assured not as a result of the preacher's persuasive preaching ability. Nor is salvation sure because of the will of man, but because of the sovereign God who works in the lost sinner to bring him to Christ. The Bible is clear in John 1:13 that those who are born again of the Spirit are **"...born, not of blood, nor of the**

**will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"** (John 1:13). Rejoice! The Almighty Sovereign who is able to do all things well is able to save whom He has purposed to save! Away with all confidence in the flesh and in the will of man. Our confidence is in the will of God! Give glory to God! All in whom He works in drawing and teaching do in fact come to Christ. Apart from this work no man has the ability to come in a saving way to Christ. Rejoice! **"...He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"** (Philippians 1:6). Your salvation is not dependent upon you, but rather upon Him who doeth all things well!



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## A Memorable Day

By James Smith  
(1802 - 1862)

What Christian, in looking back, cannot call to mind some memorable days in his history? I can recall many. I consider the day of my natural birth a memorable day; but of that, of course, I know nothing--but from others. But there is another day, and another birth, of which I have been thinking, more memorable to me by far. What a mercy it is to be **"born of God," "born of the Spirit," "born from above!"** and it is very blessed, when we can look back, and remember how the Lord met with us, renewed us in the Spirit of our minds, and saved us by His grace.

In my case, grace, and grace alone can be seen. Never was one more unlikely to be saved than me. Never did I appear farther from God, than on the day the Lord came near to me to judgment. O my soul, as I call to mind God's mercy, I charge you to praise the Lord! And it was distinguishing grace, too, for one was taken and the other left; and it was the worst, and the most unlikely, that was taken. By the grace of God alone, I am what I am! As grace did the work, effected the change, and made me a new creature in Christ Jesus--let grace have all the glory.

At Old Brentford, Middlesex, on the 28th day of February, 1819, in a large room fitted up as a place of worship, might have been, seen two lads, sitting together on the Lord's day morning; an aged man occupied the little desk, to preach the Word of God. A peculiarity of manner tickled the fancy of the lads, and instead of listening to the Word, with a view to profit by it, they were employed in ridiculing and making sport of this aged servant of Christ. They went from the little sanctuary without remorse, hardened in sin and afar from God.

In the evening of that day, the same lads were in the same place--but the desk was occupied by another, and a younger man. He was evidently from the country--a plain, unlettered man. His manner was solemn, his voice unmusical--but his message was Divine. After reading the Word, he prayed devoutly, and when the second hymn was sung, he arose and gave out for his text, Mark 8:36-37, **"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"** Solemnly did he speak of the value of the soul, of its danger, and the importance of seeking its salvation. The attention of the

♦ (Continued on page 23)



# Gleanings

(Continued from page 22) ♦

writer was arrested, the arrow of conviction pierced his conscience, and penetrated his soul. He sighed deeply--but unconsciously. He went home sorely depressed in mind. He went to bed, hoping to fall asleep and forget all; but sleep fled away, and sad and distressing thoughts were his companions. He was filled with tossings to and fro, until the dawning of the day. When exhausted nature fell asleep, the mind found no rest, and in the morning he arose unrefreshed.

That was a gloomy morning, and a distressing day, for the arrows of the Almighty were within me, and the poison thereof was drinking up my spirits. I tried to pray--but could not. I sunk in deep waters where there was no standing. Conviction was attended with temptation, and temptation almost drove me to despair. No human hand could extract that barbed arrow. No works of the creature could satisfy the enlightened conscience. Ignorant of the way of salvation, by simple faith in Jesus, the soul was groping in the dark, like the blind for the wall, until at last it came to the conclusion, "There is no hope!"

But as in nature, when the darkness is greatest, the light is nearest, so it was in this case; for when all hope that I should be saved was taken away, then Jesus was revealed, faith was wrought in the heart by the Spirit, and salvation by free grace was received and enjoyed. Faith in the atonement removed guilt from the conscience; and the application of the Word chased away darkness from the mind. Instead of bitterness, there was now peace; instead of gloom, there was sweet joy; instead of despondency, there was confidence in God. The trumpet of the jubilee was now sounded, the year of release was

come. The debtor was freed from his obligations, the prisoner from his chains, and the bondsman from his thralldom. The feast of fat things was made, the table was spread, the head was anointed with oil, and the cup ran over. The darkness was past, and the true light now shined. The tempter fled, and the soul escaped like a bird out of the hand of the fowler.

Oh, how precious was the Savior now! There was music in His name, salvation in His blood, and true freedom in His service. Oh, how sweet was grace now! It was grace that arrested the criminal, and grace that brought the pardon. It was grace that wounded, and grace that healed. All was grace--free, sovereign, distinguishing grace. Never was creature further from God, or sinner less likely to be converted, than I was on that day, when the Word came home with power. Never was soul in a more helpless or hopeless condition than I was, when the Lord passed by me, and in His love bade me, Live. At His word, death and darkness fled from me. At His bidding, I stood up a new creature. Truly, I was His workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before appointed, that I should walk in them.

And now, forty years have passed away, since that memorable day. Many have been the changes I have passed through, and many the trials I have endured. Satan has thrust sore at me that I might fall, the world has done its worst to lead me astray--but having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day. The life imparted so long ago was immortal. The change effected was permanent. The transformation was divine. The Lord who called me--has kept me. The grace that renewed me--has employed me. And being kept by the power of God, and used in the service of

God, I wish to give all the glory of all that has been wrought in me, or done by me--to the grace of God alone.

The Lord sought me--when I did not seek Him. The Lord converted me--when I was mocking and insulting Him. If ever a sinner was unlikely to be saved--I was that sinner. If ever creature was unlikely to be employed in the service of God--I was that creature. If, therefore, others can ascribe their change to free will, I cannot; I must ascribe mine to free grace! If any other man can take credit to himself, for anything that is good, I cannot, for I never had a good thought, or felt a good desire, or did a good deed--but as the effect of God working in me, to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Glory be to God the Father, for choosing me to eternal life in His beloved Son. Glory be to God the Son, for redeeming me by His most precious blood. Glory be to God the Holy Spirit, for quickening me by His divine power, and translating me out of darkness into His marvelous light. Glory, glory be to God, Father, Son, and Spirit, as the author of my salvation, the source of all good, and the giver of every gift and grace!

And now, my soul, I charge you--never let this day pass by without raising an Ebenezer to your God; nor let any day pass without some effort to bring glory to His holy name, for His most free, powerful, and sovereign grace!

Oh, what evils have been prevented, what blessings have been conferred, and what good has been effected, in my experience, by God's free grace! All that I am, all that I have, Lord--is given to me by your free grace. From You I have received all--and to You, and Your service, I devote all. Before this--oh, awful thought!--before this--but for grace, I had most probably been in

♦ (Continued on page 24)

## BЕРЕА BAPTIST BROADCAST

### Financial Report

11-1-2014 to 11-30-2014

Beginning Balance .....	\$7,427.82
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY .....	100.00
Calvary Ind. B. C., Everson, WA .....	100.00
.....	425.00
TOTAL .....	7,852.82
<b>EXPENDITURES:</b>	
Radio Time .....	363.98
TOTAL EXPENDITURES .....	363.98
.....	7,488.84
Interest .....	.06
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$7,488.90



## BЕРЕА BAPTIST BANNER

### Financial Report

11-1-2014 to 11-30-2014

Beginning Balance .....	\$1,492.29
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX .....	50.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL .....	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX .....	50.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY .....	150.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV .....	313.45
Carol Willitt, Edgewater, FL .....	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL .....	25.00
Dave Zuhars, Somerset, KY .....	10.00
Eve Knowles, Scarborough, ME .....	100.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR .....	12.50
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC .....	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL .....	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV .....	100.00
Landmark B. C., Moncks Corner, SC .....	100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC .....	50.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH .....	100.00
Philadelphia B. C., Aztec, NM .....	100.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL .....	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR .....	50.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS .....	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL .....	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA .....	25.00
Subscriptions .....	39.00
Anonymous .....	1,210.00
Dividing checks .....	150.00
Sub Total .....	\$3,369.95
TOTAL .....	\$4,862.24
<b>EXPENDITURES:</b>	
Printing .....	490.00
Postage .....	816.93
Wages .....	2,300.00
FICA .....	175.96
Dividing checks .....	150.00
Bank service charge .....	13.00
Total Expenditures .....	\$3,945.89
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$916.35

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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The Glade Creek Baptist Church, Summersville, WV is in need of a pastor. This church believes and preaches the doctrines of grace and church truth. Any interested Elder should call Bro. Rodney Perkins at (304) 742-3050 or Bro. Allen Frame at (304) 742-5775.

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

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

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

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The Twinbrook Hills Baptist Church of Hamilton, OH is prayerfully seeking a pastor. Organized in 1938, the church holds to historic Baptist truths, including the Doctrines of Grace. Please visit the church's website at <http://twinbrook.net> to view the Church Constitution and other items that describe our beliefs and show what the church is doing today. Please contact Bro. Chris Willis at [Elohimfirst@gmail.com](mailto:Elohimfirst@gmail.com) for more information.

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Any church that is without a pastor, please feel free to send your information in regards to the pastoral position for publication in these announcements.



## Gleanings

(Continued from page 23) ♦

Hell! Before this, I had degraded my nature to the lowest, and disgraced my name beyond recovery--but for the grace of God. How can I do otherwise than speak of grace, write of grace, and glory in grace--who am laid under such obligations to grace? It is astonishing that I do not prize it more, praise it more, preach it more, and glory in it more, than I do. But in Heaven, in eternity, when I review all the Lord's dealings with me, and all the way the Lord has led me--I shall no doubt look

back to the little sanctuary where He met with me, and the hallowed day when He called me, and with thrilling pleasure and holy joy--praise, bless, and adore His holy name, for His rich and sovereign grace!

Reader, do you know anything of a change of heart--which always produces a change of life? Have you been arrested, convicted, condemned--and then pardoned, and set to work for God, of His free grace? Can you say, **"I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears"** (Ps. 34:4)! You must be born again--or perish. You must seek the Lord--or die in your sins.

Not everyone is drawn suddenly as I was; many are drawn gradually to the Savior. How we are brought to Christ is of little importance; the question is, Are we truly brought to Him? All are not sought out by grace in the exact manner as I was; but no one ever sought the Lord but as the effect of grace; nor did anyone ever seek the grace of God in vain. If you seek the Lord, He will be found by you, reveal Himself to you, and save you with an everlasting salvation.

And, never forget this, for it is a thought as full of comfort as of truth, that the very desire to seek the Lord comes from the Lord, and is a proof that He has favor toward you. Never would we seek Him--if He did not first seek us; and His seeking us--is evidenced by our seeking Him. Having loved us with an everlasting love, with His loving-kindness He draws us to Himself; and as He draws--we run; nor can we rest, until we find rest in Jesus. Oh that the Lord would draw millions more, as He has drawn us, to the praise of the glory of His grace!



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