

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

Look and Live

By Alfred M. Gormley
(1928 - 2011)

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him



might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath

not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:14-18). These verses come from the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. Jesus had told Nicodemus that a man must be

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David the Great King

By Roy Mason
(1894 - 1978)

I want to try to speak from a passage found in the Old Testament, in Second Samuel, twenty-third chapter, and I will begin reading at verse 13 and continue through verse 17.

"And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim. And David was then in an hold, and the



garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give

me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took

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Take Off the Blinders

By Roger Reed
of Mansfield, Ohio

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

The number one thing Christians should not close their eyes to (putting blinders on) is their responsibility to share the gospel message to the lost—we



have failed in this. Are we ashamed of it? As Paul clearly points out, he was not! He goes on to say why he is not ashamed

in the next verse, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17).

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First Righteousness, Then Peace

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without



father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God;

abideth a priest continually" (Heb 7:1-3).

I think it is very interesting that Melchisedec – who exists in

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Better to serve God in solitude
than sin with the multitude.

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

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Editor: Christopher Cockrell

Staff: Sheron Cockrell, Marsha Kiser, Virginia Cockrell

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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.

Look and Live

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born again before he can see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). In the verses above, Jesus told him how this new birth takes place.

OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATION

Nicodemus was familiar with the Old Testament and its teachings since he was a ruler of the Jews and, therefore, Jesus brought this before him to illustrate the way the new birth takes place.

In Numbers 21:5-9 we have the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness. Jesus said in like manner the Son of man must be lifted up. As we study this passage to which Jesus refers, we see some great spiritual truths come to light which are also present when a person is born again.

ALL ARE SINNERS

In Numbers 21:5, the children of Israel spake against God and Moses. They were complaining about the lack of bread and water. The light bread spoken of here refers to the manna (a type of Christ) which was God's daily provision for them to live by. The people had sinned against God and God will punish sin. Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death, which is more than a physical death, but an eternal death. All men, before they are saved, are in the same condition. Romans 8:7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 3:23), For all men are sinners "... and (have) come short of the glory of God." The complaining, the cursing, and the denial of God's Word to live by is sin. So we today are in the same condition as they were.

GOD'S JUDGEMENT

The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people. The serpent is a figure of Satan, as he used the serpent to deceive Eve in the Garden of Eden. The serpent's bite is a figure of Satan tempting men to sin and break God's laws and rebel against Him. The people's dying because of the serpent bite is a picture of the end result of lusting and sinning against God. James 1:15, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Satan is the tempter who causes us to lust.. So we see that the serpent that bit the people and was causing their death was a figure of Satan, who causes us to sin through temptation and the result of our sin is death. This death is not just the death of a physical body, but is the eternal separation in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).

PEOPLE WERE DYING

As we look at the people who had sinned in the wilderness, we see that many died from the serpent's bite. The Bible says in Numbers 21:6, "...and much people of Israel died." In John 3:16, Jesus said that the people who would believe on Him would not perish. People today are perishing; they are dying in their sins (John 8:24). Every physical death is visible proof that Satan has caused them to sin. Every person who dies physically, unless he has been born again, will die eternally under God's judgment. I John 5:19, "... the whole world lieth in wickedness." Galatians 3:22 says that the Scripture hath concluded all under sin. The serpent's bite was a fiery one, creating a burning in the flesh. But the final judgment of God for sins will be an eternal burning in the fires of Hell. Matthew 10:28, "... fear him (God) which is able

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Berea Baptist Banner
PO Box 39
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Look and Live

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to destroy both soul and body in hell (gehenna or lake of fire)."

PEOPLE CONVICTED OF SIN

The first thing that happened in the hearts of the people that led them to the salvation offered by God in the wilderness was the conviction in their hearts that they had sinned against God (Numbers 21:7). I Timothy 1:15, **"... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."** Matthew 9:12, **"... They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."** Matthew 9:13, **"... I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."** There is absolutely no salvation to those that are self-righteous. There must come a time in your life when you know you are a sinner, that you are dying under God's judgment. You must realize that if left in that condition, you will perish eternally. This conviction comes by the Holy Spirit, and unless you are born again from above, you will continue to live and die in sin.

FALSE IDEAS OF HOW GOD SAVES FROM SIN

The people asked Moses to, Numbers 21:7, **"... pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us."** Now this would help those that had not been bitten, but what about those that had already been bitten? They would die even if the serpents were taken away. The problem must be dealt with in a greater way than man's way. Romans 5:20, **"... where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."** We will find out later that the serpents were not taken away, but that the bite was healed and the snakes had no power to hurt them.

GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION

PROVIDED

Numbers 21:8, **"And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."** Now this verse corresponds to John 3:16, **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."** Both of these verses give us God's way of deliverance from sin. Both tell us how God delivers people from perishing. Both of them teach us that it is God that heals from the snake bite and from sin.

In Numbers 21:8, a serpent like unto the one that had bitten them was made out of brass. Now in what way does this represent Jesus Christ? The answer comes when we see that Jesus Christ bore our sins in His own body (I Peter 2:24). He suffered for sin (I Peter 3:18). He destroyed the works of the devil (I John 3:8). He took part of flesh and blood, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil (Hebrews 2:14). In Revelation 12:9 the devil is called that old serpent. II Corinthians 5:21, **"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."** Jesus then, as our substitute, was willing to go to the cross, to be lifted up and bore our sins (our snake bites) and satisfied the wrath of God and delivered us from death, which was caused by sin. Jesus is God's way of deliverance from the snake bite of sin.

THE WAY SALVATION COMES THE SAME

In Numbers 21:8, God tells Moses to say to the people *Look and Live*. The people must believe

that this was God's way of healing them; that God would cause them to live if they would look to that serpent as it hung on that pole. This salvation God promised was not by any works on their part, but was to be accomplished by the power of God through faith in God. Now the same thing is taught in John 3:15-16 and 18.

(John 3:14), There must be a lifting up of Jesus. This lifting up is plainly explained in John 12:31-33, **"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die."** Jesus said in John 3:15 that whosoever believeth in Him, look and live. In John 3:16, **"... whosoever believeth in him should not perish."** John 3:18 says that, **"He that believeth on him is not condemned."** So the message is the same, Look and Live. This does away with any works on man's part in order to be saved. It was all of God through faith.

SALVATION BY POWER OF GOD

The looking to the brazen serpent did not save. It was the power of God that healed them from the snake bite. As soon as an Israelite looked, he lived. God's power saved them through faith. The Gospel tells us that Christ died for sin, was buried, and was raised again. The Gospel is the good news that His Son was lifted up on the cross of Calvary, that the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). He made His Son an offering for sins. As it was in the wilderness, so it is in our day. When the Gospel is preached, when Jesus Christ is presented on the cross, dying for sinners, the message is the same. Look and Live. You are responsible

to look. God's power will save you through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 3:24, **"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."**

The Apostle Paul says, **"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also the Greek"** (Romans 1:16).

SALVATION COMES IMMEDIATELY

Look and Live, as many as looked lived (Numbers 21:9). He lived immediately. He was cured immediately. So it is when believing in Jesus. The very minute you believe on Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, you live. John 1:12 says, **"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."** John 3:15, **"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."** John 3:36, **"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."** John 5:24, **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."** Romans 3:28, **"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."** Romans 4:5, **"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."** Salvation comes immediately, Galatians 3:26, **"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."** Acts 16:30, **"And brought them out, and**

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Look and Live

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said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Verse 31 says, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

SNAKES LOSE THEIR POWER

The Lord did not take the serpents away. No, this would have left the bitten dying. But He cured the ones bitten when they looked; He gave them the power to walk in the midst of the poisonous snakes which, in turn, had the power to kill any who did not look. Yet the snakes would bite them and not hurt them. Even so it is today. Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His shed blood we are cleansed from all our sins (Romans 5:9). God does not take away the sinful flesh and Satan causes us to sin day by day. I John 1:8 says, **"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."** In Romans 7:17 and 20, Paul says that **"... sin dwelleth in me."** Also in Romans 7:24, he declares what he feels about himself. **"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death."** Romans 4:5 gives us the truth about the snakes losing their power, **"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."** The strength of sin is the law. Break the law and you die. When we are born again, God takes us out from under law and puts us under grace (Romans 6:14). Therefore, sin shall not have dominion over you.

CONCLUSION

What about you? You must be born again. Have you ever realized that you are a sinner? You are guilty of breaking God's

law and God's judgment for sin will come after physical death and you will be cast into an eternal burning. Then I will tell you to look to Jesus Christ the Son of God, who came from Heaven to earth and became a man so that He might live a perfect life and provide for you as a gift a perfect righteousness. Look to Jesus who went to the cross and died for our sins. Yes, it must be a personal look; As many as looked, lived. You will never live unless you, by faith, accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour. I Timothy 1:15, **"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."** *Look and Live* sinner. What must I do to be saved? **"... Believe (look) on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved (live)"** (Acts 16:31).



David the Great

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it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD. And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men."

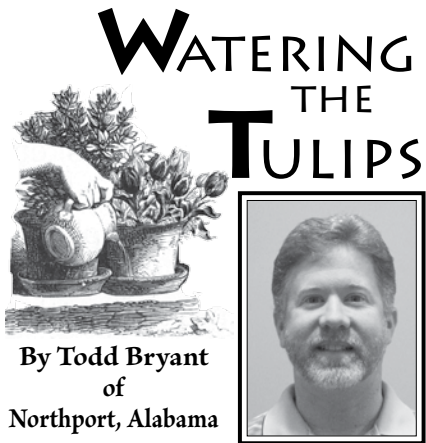
Now in these words that I have just read, we have a thrilling story. The Bible is a book of thrilling stories, and such stories as the one given here are not even known to most people. A great many of the most interesting things in the Bible are things that many people do not even know are in the Bible at all, and many people neglect to read the Bible, the book of life,

and fill their minds on these old yellow-backed magazines that are to be found on the newsstands, and I am told that some of those things are written almost in entirety by one man, that is, one man will write the trashy stories of the whole magazine. This is the day of popular education when schooling is open to the public, and yet it is a time of depraved taste. Read the books that are coming off the press, and most of them are light and trashy, and some of them are filthy. Listen to the music that is being produced today, and it is trash---Simply-pure trash. You can compare the so-called music of this time with anything that has characterized this nation from its beginning, and the stuff they call music at the present time, is the lightest and trashiest of the whole outfit. Well, I could preach a sermon on that, but I am not going to do it right now.

I started to talk about this interesting and heroic story given here in our Scripture lesson. It relates to David, the great King of Israel. David was a great man. He made some great mistakes, but in spite of this, he is called a man after God's own heart. Now that was not because of his mistakes, but in spite of his mistakes. The way to judge a man's life is not by every little thing he does, but by the general trend of his life. What direction is he going? Is his way Godward and Heavenward? Some people have pointed a finger of scorn at David, and they have said, "Look there, just look what David did." Yes, David did some wrong things, and the Lord whipped the life almost out of him for it, too. And David got right. That is the difference between a child of God and the one who is not. The child of God may fall into sin, but he is not going to lie

there in the mud. He will get up and get out and shake the mud off, and start Heavenward. But the unsaved man who gets into the mud of sin just roots down deeper like a hog, and stays in it and wallows in it, and likes it. Now David was born and raised in the little town of Bethlehem, just a few miles from Jerusalem. He lived the life of a shepherd during his early days, and it was out of his shepherd experience that he wrote that marvelous 23rd Psalm, which starts out **"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."** Later, when Saul, because of disobedience, was set aside, David was chosen to be King over Israel. But although the Lord had him anointed for this place, David had a lot of trouble and conflict before he actually reigned over united Israel. And I want to make the observation just here that the thing that the Lord calls us to do is not always given us without a human struggle being necessary by any manner of means. And why is this? Because the Lord knows that in struggle and effort we gain strength. It does us good to run-up against some difficulties sometimes. Jesus said to His disciples, **"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer."** And tribulation is the part of the lot of every Christian who follows Christ closely. We often sing, "Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas? No, I must fight if I would reign, increase my courage, Lord, I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy Word." Well, David had a stormy career, and he comes down to the close of his life, and in this 23rd chapter, we have some of his closing words, and then we have recounted

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Assurance In Salvation

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (I John 5:13).

In such an insecure world, how can we find assurance of salvation? Without doubt, many believers are often plagued by doubts surrounding their salvation. The Bible has much to say concerning this subject. But specifically, there is much right here in this book. John (inspired by the Holy Spirit) tells us that these things are written to give assurance, **"that ye may know that ye have eternal life."**

First of all, this is written to believers in Jesus. The believer alone is proclaimed to be saved by the grace of God (I John 5:1). The promise of eternal life is to the believer (John 3:16). The unbeliever is said to be condemned **"because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"** (John 3:18). Even when we were in an unbelieving state, we are said to have been **"by nature the children of wrath, even as others"** (Eph. 2:3). The unbeliever is without "hope and without God in the world." Assurance of salvation can only be found in the one that is truly saved – that is, the one that is trusting Christ alone for

salvation (I John 5:4-5).

Another way to be sure of your salvation is your attitude toward the people of God. **"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death"** (I John 3:14). If you do not have love for God's people, that is a good indication that you are not part of God's family. If you are saved by the grace of God, you will certainly love the people of God and you will love gathering together with them to worship.

The constant leadership of the Holy Spirit in our lives is an indication that we are saved. **"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit"** (I John 4:13). Believers are constantly feeling the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. **"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God"** (Rom. 8:14). Even the Apostle Paul felt this battle within himself (Rom. 7:21-23). The lost have no such struggle. The unbeliever is at enmity with God (Rom. 8:7) and does not understand the things of God (I Cor. 2:14). The lost live life with a worldview that is humanistic and sinful. Only those who are indwelt by the Spirit of God have the battle within themselves as proof that they know the Lord.

Child of God, the best remedy for your doubts is to develop a closer relationship with God. **"Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you"** (James 4:8). The closer you are to the Lord, the fewer times of doubts and fear you will have. Certainly, if you doubt, a closer walk with Jesus will solve that. Meditate on the things here. But most of all, answer this question, **"What think ye of Christ"** (Matt. 22:42)?



David the Great

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some of the outstanding things that occurred during his life, and among these outstanding things is the incident related in the lesson passage that I read to you a few minutes ago.

This thing occurred at a time when the heathen Philistines were overrunning much of the land, and when they were in possession of the very town in which David was born and raised. David was out in the fields campaigning against these invaders, and he got homesick for Bethlehem. He thought of the well of fresh, cold water there by the gate of Bethlehem, and then in a wave of homesickness, he said, "Oh, I wish I had a drink of water from the old well of Bethlehem." Now David had with him three mighty warriors, men who were not afraid of anything. These three men loved their leader with a mighty devotion. They said to one another, "David wants a drink of water from the old well at Bethlehem. Let us get it for him." And no group of commandoes ever did a more daring thing than those three men did. They simply went out, broke right through the lines of the Philistines, drew a bucket of water from the well of Bethlehem which the Philistines had overrun, put some of the water in a receptacle and fought their way out again. Here they came to David with the water and said, "We heard what you said when you said you would like to have a drink from the old well of Bethlehem. Here it is, help yourself." I can imagine that David looked in astonishment at those men. They had fought like tigers, and had risked their very lives, just in order that a homesick wish of his might be gratified. As

he took the water, he was stirred to the very depths of his soul, and what do you suppose he did? He did not drink a drop of the water, instead he poured the water out as an offering unto the Lord, and he said, "I can not drink this. Why, this water is as precious as the very life blood of these men, and this water is too precious to drink. I will offer it before the Lord." So let me read again verses 16 and 17, **"And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless, he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD. And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men."**

Now there are several things that I want to call your attention to, things that stand out in this story. In the first place, I call your attention to the love and devotion of those three men to their leader. Those men had to love David a great deal to jeopardize their lives just to gratify a mere wish of his. And if they had such devotion for a human leader, I ask you, ought we not to have a far greater devotion to Him who is not a mere human leader, but Divine? Note that these men did this thing without being ordered or commanded to do it. If David had told them that they had to do it, then their deed would have lost most of its value. But they went beyond anything that they were required to do. Oh, how our Lord must be grieved sometimes with us, when we do not even do what we are told to do, let alone

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David the Great

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something that is beyond that. We are told to tithe, and we ought to do that out of obedience, but when we love the Lord enough to go beyond that, and to make Him an offering, that is the thing that reveals the real love of our hearts. Do you know the things that I get most pleasure out of? They are things that I do not have to do, things that are not laid on me as duties. For over thirty years, I published a paper, a religious paper. It cost me a financial loss month after month, but through this medium, I was able to reach a great many people that I could not otherwise have reached. I was able to greatly extend my influence and my ministry. I used to be on fifteen different radio stations at one time, and that was a work for which I never received any pay, but it was something over and above my regular ministry. It is in doing things that none asks or requires you to do---things that you want to do because you love the Lord, that shows Him how you feel. And I like to see people who delight in little things for the Lord. I am frank to say, I do not much believe in a church having a florist to come and arrange flowers and decorations. I believe there ought to be enough people in a church who love the Lord to delight, absolutely delight, to render a service as that. Did you ever take any flowers to the cemetery to place on the grave of someone you love? Why did you not just stay home and have a florist to deliver a bunch of flowers out there to a grave? Because you love the very memory of the departed one, and you wanted to place the flowers there your own self. I ask you, do you see what I am driving at? It is so easy for church people to get so

they do little or nothing in the way of personal service for the Lord. It is so easy to say, "Oh, we have money in the treasury, let us hire somebody to do that." Suppose your wife and children want to go for a drive, and suppose you have plenty of money, so instead of getting the car and taking them out driving, you just call a cab and tell them to get in and go where they want to. Do you see any difference in those two things? My friends, money and hired help will not express the devotion of our own hearts in doing for the Lord ourselves. A friend of mine who was raised in Georgia on a farm, told me of how he and his brother were told by their father what to do before he went off to town on Saturday afternoon. He said, "Boys, I am going to set you a little task, you hoe so many rows of cotton, and when that is done, you will be free for the day, then when I come in home, I will feed the stock and milk the cows and do up the evening work." Well, those two boys did all that their father had set for them to do, and then they said to each other, "When daddy gets back, he will be tired, so let us go ahead and do up all the evening work for him," so they went and fed and milked and did up all the chores. Along about dark, the father came in with the groceries and the things that he had gone to town to purchase, and he found the stock chomping on their food in the barn, found the cows all milked, and everything done up as nicely as he could have done it himself. He came in and said, "I sure have a couple of sweet boys. They did all I asked them to do, and then they went and did up all my work, too. Come here, boys, you take this money and go up yonder to the little store and get a chunk of ice." So those boys trotted off, and by the time they

got back, the father had the ice cream freezer all ready to fill with ice, and he made a big freezer full of ice cream for those boys. Now, ice cream may not be any great treat to some of you, but to those Georgia farm boys, that ice cream was almost like manna from Heaven. It was the love of those boys that prompted them to go beyond, and do beyond, anything they were asked or expected that appealed to that father, and he rewarded them for it. And I believe, my friends, that we shall have the choicest rewards for the things we do for the Lord that we were not required to do at all.

In the second place, I want to call your attention to the fact that what those three men did required courage, and nowhere is courage more needed than among Christian people. Many people will just wilt down as Christians if they have any opposition. Right is right, and it does not matter what anybody else says or does, it is up to us to stick up for the right. I will tell you, we ought to shrink from seeing the disappointed look on the face of our Lord above all things.

Somewhere I heard the story of two comrades during the First World War, and they had gone over the top, and when they came back, one of the men found that his buddy had not come. He asked for the privilege of creeping back out in "No Man's Land" to look for him. The officer told him he could do it, but he said, "You are a fool to take such a risk as that." The young man was gone a long time, but finally he came back with the body of his comrade, and just before he got back down into the trench, a bullet from a sniper hit him and wounded him mortally. The officer said to him as he helped pull him over into the trench, "I told you it was a foolish

thing to go. I knew you would get it---I knew you would get it!" The dying soldier said, "I found my buddy out there just before he died, and he looked up into my face, and said, 'I knew you would come.' And, officer, that look on his face was worth dying for. I did not fail him." My friends, let people criticize and laugh and make fun all they please, if only we do not fail the One we serve, it will be all right.

In the third place, I want to call your attention to the fact that what these men did was sacrificial. That deed was done in self-forgetfulness. If those men had put self first, we should not have this story at all. If there is anything on this earth that partakes of the nature of the sacrificial, it is Christianity. Christianity was born in sacrifice, the sacrifice of the life of the Son of God for our sake. Listen to what it says here in Romans, the fifth chapter, "**For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**" Have you ever stopped to consider the wonder of Christ's death for us? During the first World War, I remember reading of how a hand grenade was thrown into a dug-out where several men were. In a second, it would explode and would kill or injure every man there. One of the soldiers without hesitation threw himself on top of that hand grenade, and it exploded, killing him right there on the spot, but the force of the explosive was spent and none else was injured. Now that was a brave act, but it was done for friends. Christ hurled Himself in the way of death for us when we were

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enemies of His. And that soldier was a mere man, but Christ was the Son of God. That was God the Son leaving the wonders and glories of Heaven itself in order to come and die for ungrateful enemies. I ask you again, have you ever thought of the wonder of that? Have you?

In the fourth place, I want to call your attention to the fact that when David poured out this water, he did it as a sacrifice before the Lord. To David, that water represented the very life blood of those men who risked their lives in order to procure it. He considered that those men virtually died for him, **"Is not this the blood of these men?"** Now listen, the Apostle Peter says of David's great Son, the Lord Jesus, **"Is not this the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, which cleanseth us from all sin?"** David had enough gratitude to appreciate that sacrifice that had been made for him. Do you appreciate the sacrifice that has been made for you, even the sacrifice of the life of the Son of God Himself? Suppose that David had not expressed his appreciation. You would say that he was not worthy to receive such love. But what about you? Have you ever indicated any appreciation for what the Lord has done in providing you with a Savior? The best way to express appreciation is for you to gratefully receive as the Savior of your own soul, and then to confess Him before the world.

I read once of a poor, club-footed boy who was taken to a hospital, where a great surgeon operated on him, and successfully. When the plaster cast was taken off his foot, it was straight like the other foot. They called the

boy's attention at the hospital, and he looked and admired, but he kept saying, "I like my doctor the best." Somebody spoke of the kind nurses, but he replied, "I like my doctor the best." He was taken home way out in the country, and his old mother was there at the train to meet him, and she did not look at his face, or his hands, but she dropped down on her knees and looked at his foot, and sobbing, she said, "It is just like any other boy's foot now." But the boy said, "Mother, you just ought to know the doctor that made me walk." I have thought of that boy's gratitude toward his doctor a good number of times, but there is not one of us but that the Lord Jesus Christ has done a thousand times more than that doctor did for that little boy. That surgeon had the power and the skill to heal, and that little boy trusted him implicitly to do it, and then sung his praises for what he had done. The Great Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ, has the power and the skill to heal any sinner on this earth, if that sinner will just commit himself to Him in implicit trust. If you have been listening and are not a Christian, will you put Him to the test? In all my life, I have never heard of any person turning to Christ with their whole heart, and failing to be saved. And if I live to be a hundred, I never expect to hear of such. I think just lots and lots of people go on for years unsaved because they never quite get up the courage to really trust in Christ.

I am reminded of something that happened one summer. I lived for several years on the Ohio River, and never tried to learn to swim. I lived later on Green River in Kentucky, and never tried to learn to swim. I came to Florida and lived on the

Indian River, and never tried to learn to swim. But one summer when I was on vacation, a friend of mine spent several days with me over near the Gulf of Mexico. He was a good swimmer, and I took a notion that I would like to be able to float on my back in the water as I saw him do, and to swim if I wanted to. He said, "Now you must lie back in the water completely relaxed, put your head back until the water flows around your ears and almost runs into your mouth." I tried, but kept my head bowed up out of the water, and it did not do any good, but finally, I laid back over into the water as if it had been a soft bed---laid my head back in the Gulf like it had been a pillow, and straightened my arms out, and instead of sinking, I floated there on the surface of the water. Never until

I had completely trusted myself to the water did it bear me up. And I thought as I floated around there on the water, "This is a good illustration of the way of salvation. So long as you hold back and depend upon yourself, or are afraid to completely let go, you are never going to be saved. But the moment you let go everything else and simply trust yourself to Christ to save you, that moment you will be saved." Will you do that just now? How simple it is---only trust Him! Only trust Him!

Our Father, help people to see this, we pray. We can talk about it, but we can not make people see it, but Thou canst, by Thy mighty Holy Spirit, and we pray that Thou wilt. In Jesus name. Amen.



"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Rom. 10:9





From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



God Was Manifested in the Flesh

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Tim. 3:16).

The word "incarnation" comes from the Latin, which means literally "enfleshment" of "the assumption of human flesh." The Scriptures expressly teach that God became incarnate in the Person of Jesus Christ. This is the basis of the Christian religion. This truth is universally confessed by the Christian church.

That the eternal Son of God should become man is an amazing and wonderful affair. It is a great mystery to mankind who cannot account for it by natural reason. But it is most surely believed by all who receive the revelation of God's Word. Without belief in this fundamental article of faith, you cannot be a Christian. John wrote: **"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God" Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God** (I John 4:2-3).

THE PRE-INCARNATE CHRIST

God revealed Himself in humanity. The Apostle Paul in the text said: **"God was manifest in the flesh."** This expression presupposes the pre-existence and divinity of Christ. The One

Who became flesh was still the same God He had always been. The higher nature of the eternal Son did not cease when He assumed human flesh.

The New Testament abounds with many phrases which imply Christ's pre-existence. The Gospel of John contains most of these statements. **"John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me"** (John 1:15).

Jesus Christ claimed to have descended out of Heaven. He told Nicodemus: **"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven"** (John 3:13). In John 6:51 our Lord said: **"I am the living bread which came down from heaven."** Concerning the Father the Savior declared: **"But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me"** (John 7:29). At another time He informed the Jews: **"Ye are from beneath; I am from above"** (John 8:23). Some time later, He said: **"I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me"** (John 8:42).

It was none other than the eternal Son Who came down from Heaven and became **"God with me."** The higher nature of Christ existed from eternity. He took on a human nature some two thousand years ago in Bethlehem

of Judah. Jesus Christ was **"the Lord from heaven"** and **"the last Adam"** (I Cor. 15:45-47).

THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH

The Gospel of John begins with these words: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"** (John 1:1). Then John tells us: **"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"** (John 1:14).

The eternal Logos Who made all things was made flesh. This statement is unsurpassed by any in the sacred record. The language does not assert the divine Word was converted into flesh. Rather, it declares that He became One of Whom true humanity could be affirmed.

The word "flesh" is emphatic. It means the divine Logos took on a true human nature consisting of soul and body. The word "flesh" has this meaning often in the Scripture (Rom. 3:20; I Cor. 1:29; I Pet. 1:24). The Word became personally conscious of all that is strictly human. The eternal Son, though God, subjected Himself to the miseries and calamities of a human nature. He put Himself in the place and condition of other men. He Who dwelt among the angels came to dwell among corrupt and depraved human beings.

The word "dwelt" means "tabernacled" or "pitched his tent." This is a clear allusion to the tabernacle where the Shechinah dwells over the mercy seat. The body of Christ was God's final and true Temple (John 2:21). Jesus Christ in His human nature is the true Shechinah. We see **"the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"** (II Cor. 4:6). This is why

John says: **"We beheld his glory."**

In Genesis 9:27 God promised to dwell in the tents of Shem. Other Old Testament Scriptures mentioned God's coming to dwell among Israel (Lev. 26:11; Ps. 68:18; 132:13-14; Ezek. 37:27; Zech. 2:10). These prophecies had a limited fulfillment at Christ's first advent, but they await an ultimate fulfillment at His return to reign as the Son of man over Israel.

THE SEED OF DAVID

In Romans 1:3 it is written: **"Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh."** The Second Person of the Godhead was born of the virgin Mary who was of the royal family of King David. Genesis 3:15 disclosed that the Messiah would be "the seed of the woman." Later it was revealed the Redeemer would spring from Abraham, Judah, and finally King David. Matthew 1:1 informs us: **"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."**

THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH

Romans 8:3 speaks of the incarnation in this fashion: **"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."**

The Father sent Jesus Christ, not in sinful flesh, but in the likeness of sinful flesh. He assumed our nature without any taint of sin or corruption (Heb. 4:15; 7:26). He had a nature like that of sinful man, but He did not have a sinful nature. In putting on our flesh He made it His own; in making it His own, He made it sinless.

It is marvelous indeed that God

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should condescend to become flesh. But it is the wonder of the ages that He Who was holy should appear in the likeness of sinful flesh. Christ was not made in the likeness of man before sin entered the world. Instead, He was in the likeness of fallen flesh and subject to all sinless infirmities of the flesh.

MADE OF A WOMAN

Paul wrote to the Galatians: **“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law”** (Gal. 4:4).

The incarnation took place at **“the time appointed of the Father”** (Gal. 4:2). In the hour of supermost need, Christ became a man at the best possible moment. God does nothing prematurely. Seeing the end from the beginning, He waited until all was ripe for the execution of His purpose. Man’s inability to save Himself by obedience to the law was completely manifested. The social, political, and moral worlds were fully prepared for His enfleshment.

Notice especially the expression, **“sent forth his Son.”** The One born of a woman was pre-existent with the Father. The Son came forth from the glory He had with the Father. The Divine Son was derived from common stock.

THE FORM OF A SERVANT

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became

obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:5-8).

He, Who from all eternity was in the form of God, put on the form of a servant. Though on an equality with God, He emptied Himself of the insignia of majesty. It was not possible for Him to empty Himself of His Divine nature and attributes. I understand that He laid aside the form of His Divine glory. Jesus Christ was made in the likeness of men. He was not only human but also Divine,

Jesus Christ was found in fashion as a man in manners, gestures, and dress. He was subject to the law (Gal. 4:4) and His parents (Luke 2:51). He probably toiled with Joseph as a carpenter (Ex. 21:5-6); Matt. 13:55). He led a life of humiliation and poverty which culminated with His death at Calvary.

MADE LIKE HIS BRETHREN

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. . . he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren. . .” (Heb. 2:14-17).

In order to complete His covenant engagements to redeem those the Father chose to be His brethren, Christ became mortal. Because those to be His brethren were in the flesh, He became flesh and blood. Jesus Christ became our nearest of kin by the assumption of humanity in order to be our Redeemer.

A TRUE BODY

The Messiah was no phantom. the incarnation was not merely another Christophany like in Old Testament days. The Son literally took upon Him a true human body.. Colossians 1:22 speaks of **“the body of his flesh.”** Hebrews

10:10 mentions **“the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.”** Peter wrote of Christ: **“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree”** (I Pet. 2:24).

Jesus Christ was born with this human body. This body grew in statute. The body of Christ was seen and handled by His disciples. His body was buffeted, scourged, bruised, wounded, and crucified. His body was buried and resurrected.

A TRUE SOUL

The Lord of glory assumed a true human soul as well as a body. Christ asserted such of Himself: **“My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death”** (Matt. 26:38). Without a human soul He could not have been tempted in all points as we are (Heb. 4:15).

A human soul was essential to His sufferings. The Redeemer must suffer in soul as well as in body to make atonement for the souls and bodies of His people. The Father made **“his soul an offering for sin”** and **“the travail of his soul”** (Isa. 53:10-11). The Son is said to have **“poured out his soul unto death”** (Isa. 53:12).

This human soul had a will which was in complete harmony with the Divine will. **“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me”** (John 6:38). In Gethsemane Christ prayed: **“Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done”** (Luke 22:42).

The human soul of Christ had affections. He is said to have loved the rich young ruler (Mark 10:21), John the apostle (John 13:23), and Lazarus (John 11:36). He is even said to have become angry (Mark 3:5) and to have experienced joy (Luke 10:21).

A TRUE SPIRIT

The Second Person of the

Godhead assumed a human spirit. If He did not do this, He was not made like unto His brethren in all things. John 11:33 tells us: **“He groaned in the spirit.”** On the cross He cried: **“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit”** (Luke 23:46). It was the human spirit of Christ which grew in knowledge (Luke 2:52) and lacked knowledge in some areas (Mark 13:32).

THE WHY OF THE INCARNATION

What was the moving cause which brought the Divine Son from regions celestial to regions terrestrial? It was the mercy and love of God for His people. **“Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us”** (Luke 1:78). **“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him”** (I John 4:9). The kindness and love of God toward man appeared in the incarnate Word (Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 3:4-5).

Jesus Christ came into the world that we might behold the glory of God. At His birth the angel sang: **“Glory to God in the highest”** (Luke 2:14). John 1:14 indicates the incarnation was done that men might behold the glory of God. Christ’s human birth declared God’s glory in fulfilling His promises. It magnified the glory of God’s power in the production of Christ’s human nature. The entire ministry of Christ was to **“manifest forth his glory”** (John 2:11).

A third reason for Christ coming into the world was to condemn sin in the flesh. Romans 8:3 might be paraphrased in this manner: **“God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a**

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sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh."

The Lord from glory was made in the likeness of sinful flesh and was **"put to death in the flesh"** (I Peter 3:18) to condemn sin in His flesh. Since the death of Christ, the damning and domineering power of sin has been broken. Though sin lives to some degree in the bodies of the saints, by the atonement sin is a condemned criminal. Christ was made sin for us (II Cor. 5:21). Being so made, when He was condemned sin was condemned in His human nature.

Fourth, the fashioning of Christ as a man was necessary to His being made under the law (Gal. 4:4). As God, He was the Lawgiver and above the law. By the Father's appointment and His own free will, He obligated Himself to keep all the ceremonial and moral laws perfectly as the representative of the chosen people. He exhausted the full penalty of the law, and thus redeemed His people from the bondage of the law.

Fifth, Christ must come in human form to die for the sins of His people. God could not die, but Jesus Christ could die. II Corinthians 13:4 reveals that **"he was crucified through weakness."** I Peter 3:18 teaches He was **"Put to death in the flesh."**

To make peace between God and man Jesus Christ must shed His blood. **"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law**

of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:13-16).

Peace has been made between God and man by the blood of Christ. Through faith in that blood the sinner is justified from all his sins, for God justifies the believer (Rom. 3:24-26).



First Righteousness

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history and Scripture as a type of Christ – is described as the **"King of righteousness,"** and the **"King of peace."** This man, as a type of Christ, bears the characteristics of righteousness and peace. Just as Jesus Christ would (and does) symbolize and even fulfill the characteristics of righteousness and peace.

I think it is also interesting that the writer to the Hebrews states that Melchisedec was **"first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace."** It seems that Melchisedec was first understood to be righteous, and the ruler of the righteous; and then understood to be the man of peace, and the ruler of peace.

This is what I want us to consider: in the relationship that exists between men and God, there must be first righteousness, before there can ever be any peace. **"Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness**

quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isa. 32:16-18). Especially as we consider the matter of salvation, and the saved relationship that exists between God and each of His elect, there must be righteousness found in us, before there can ever be peace between us. And, as we carry this thought forward, we will see that righteousness – and a pursuit of righteousness and an affinity for righteousness – must exist in each aspect of our existence and our relationships, in order for there to be any measure of continued peace.

PEACE WITH GOD

Our God is a holy and just God. We, as members of the fallen race of man, are depraved and broken. There can be no peace that can exist between a holy God and a sinful man, unless God would intervene and change the status quo. As we read the Scriptures, we find that God has ordained to save some souls from Adam's race. And yet, as we have already noticed, there can be no peace – there can be no positive and enduring relationship – between men and God, except there would be a change to the enmity that currently exists between men and God.

The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, to bring God unto man, and to bring man unto God. His intention was to bring peace to the earth. **"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). This peace could not have been achieved apart from the person and the work and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. His life, suffering, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven were necessary in order that we would be saved. A part of His necessary work, was to live a holy life on this earth, so that we could be seen as righteous in the sight of God.

I want you to know, that the only peace that can exist between men and God must be based upon the person and the work of Jesus Christ. In other words, men will remain at enmity with God, and in opposition to His holy will and purpose, except that God would intervene, Christ would save us, and His righteousness would be granted unto us. **"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God"** (Rom. 5:1-2). Men may think that they have some peace in this life – but, without Christ, there is no peace in their standing before God. There may be a mirage of peace; there may be some measure of mortal contentment that men

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First Righteousness

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may achieve; but none of this is comparable to – or a substitute for – the peace with God that is found through Jesus Christ. Concerning the peace that we find in Jesus Christ, Matthew Poole said, “The Prince and price of our peace, setting peace within souls, giving it to them without, peace spiritual, temporal, and eternal: his kingdom aboundeth in it.” He gives us peace in our souls, peace externally, and peace eternally.

As we think about the peace we have with God, I want to remind you that the shed blood of Christ is necessary for the salvation of souls. **“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven”** (Col. 1:19-20). There is no peace without His blood. The power to wash away our sins, and to cleanse us from sin, is found only in His blood. Without the blood of Christ we are stained and flawed vessels, of no use to God, and holding no attraction to Him.

Further, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ was necessary for the salvation of souls. **“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”** (I Cor. 15:3-4). There is no peace with God, outside the achievements – the suffering and atoning sacrifice – of Jesus Christ.

And, it is also true that the

imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ is necessary so that we can be in possession of a good and proper standing before our God and Saviour. **“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification”** (Rom. 4:20-25). This Man, Jesus Christ, and His righteousness, is essential in the salvation of our souls. Without the imputation of our sins to Him, and His suffering and death on our behalf because of those sins; and, without the imputation of His righteousness to us, and the righteous standing that we have before God as a result; without these, we could not be saved.

PEACE WITH SELF

The world of men is full of people who are in pursuit of happiness and peace, and yet must acknowledge that they have fallen short of attaining those traits. There are entire schools, philosophies, and psychologies of men which are devoted to developing a degree of internal peace, within the hearts and minds of the people of the world. I do not have the education or the wisdom or the knowledge of most of these leaders in the educational world; and yet, I can give you a key to the process, which is hardly ever referred to in the religious world, and for the most part, ignored entirely in the

secular, educational world. The key is simply this: righteousness. Those who seek after and desire righteousness, will find peace within themselves. Those who pursue God and His Word and the qualities described therein, will find peace in their souls. The Scriptures plainly teach us that the righteous man will have (find) peace. **“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”** (Matt 6:33). Maybe it is because we will no longer have such a desire for the riches and the pleasures of this world. Maybe it is because we will no longer pursue the things of the flesh with such fervor. But, it is certain, whatever the case may be, if we will seek God and His kingdom and his righteousness, we will have all that we need in this life, and will be at peace and content.

The Scriptures teach us that the Christian – the follower and disciple of God – will find peace in a pursuit of the righteousness which is taught in the Word of God, evident in the character of God, upheld by the pattern of Christ, and inspired by the presence of the Holy Spirit. **“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow**

righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (II Tim. 2:19-22). If all we need is God; and if God has come unto us; what more do we need in order to have peace? If we will withdraw from the pleasures of sin, and live in the character and righteousness of God, we will find a peace that the world cannot even imagine.

It is our duty and privilege to follow after God – to follow after goodness and righteousness – and God will keep us and preserve us as we do so. **“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”** (I Pet. 3:13-15). Our hearts ought not be troubled, if only we will follow after righteousness. Our minds should be at peace as we pursue God’s purposes and will. The world may afflict us, but God will give us grace. We will have no reason to question Him or His purposes, if our minds and hearts are in tune with His. And, as a matter of fact, this is the best witness and the best testimony that we can give the world – a people who love God, pursue righteousness, and are at peace with whatever God may bring or allow into our path. **“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and**

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. What are some things we can learn from the life of the prophet Daniel on how to deal with our current hostile climate against Christians?

Roger Reed
20 Ledgewood Dr.
Mansfield, Ohio 44905

Missionary of
West Jefferson
Missionary Baptist
Mission
90 E. Main St.
West Jefferson, Ohio
43162



“And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God” (Dan. 9:20).

Before I comment on the above Scripture, or go any further, let me just say that the only difference in Daniel's day and Israel at that time and America today was that their country was burnt to the ground and they were now in a strange country and in captivity. God is still the same God, sin is still sin, God is being rejected, and America is not listening to the Baptist Preacher. There is more, but this should be a start to see the dilemma we are facing today.

Some people in America seem to not understand (because God has blinded them), **“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them”** (II Cor. 4:4), that we have a set of laws that must be obeyed and it is called the Constitution of the United States! Dear reader, IT IS A LAW. It does not matter if our current President (who is a LIAR and an IDIOT) believes in it or

not, nor if people do not believe in it or believe what the Bible says, the fact still remains they are both to govern our life. And let me add, I will defend America with my life and until the Second Amendment (law) is struck down I will obey and live by it and no paper president will take the right from me.

Let me also point out that if a liberal becomes our next president this year, it is over and the American people are doomed and will cease to exist as a Sovereign Nation. It took many years, and a lot of dedication and prayer, but Israel got her country back (by the grace of God), but will once again be deceived and fall on hard times, 7 years to be exact.

The above Scripture is the greatest lesson that can be learned by the prophet Daniel. First and foremost, Daniel PRAYED—are you dear Christian praying? NO ONE can take that privilege from you! And notice, Daniel did not pray for the sins (plural) that he committed and his people but for their “SIN” (singular) It is all sin (I John 1:8) **“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”** A lesson we should take from the pages of Daniel.

For me, one of the greatest lessons to take from the Book of Daniel is, STAND YOUR GROUND AND STAY FAITHFUL TO GOD NO MATTER WHAT! Let us take a look at just a few and see if you, dear reader, can apply them to your life.

1. Eat the right food. The first thing Daniel and the others did was refuse the king's meat. Millions of dollars are spent yearly for cancer research (as well as other diseases) and the answer is right in front of us: PULSE AND WATER. Oh, I know all too well the arguments, but I have proven this to be a fact and true in my own life, but it is not an easy path to take. And in our fast-pace burger-on-every-corner life style it is sometimes difficult to do, but I believe it to be the fact, take it or leave it, it is not forced upon you. **“Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink”** (Dan. 1:12). **“And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm”** (Dan. 1:19-20). Scoff if you like, but God has given us the answer, it is free for the taking. Just remember that all diseases ARE BECAUSE OF SIN! And we sin because we disobey God. It did not start out that way, but sin is now upon us because of Adam. **“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (I Cor. 15:57).

2. Stay true to God and do not bow down to anyone or anything. Well, you might say, “I do not do that.” **“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. 3:4). Every time God is ignored, every time you do something that has not

God in it, every time you miss church for any reason other than being sick and in bed, you have bowed down to something other than God. **“But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up”** (Dan. 3:18). Please read carefully Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's answer to Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 3.

3. There are more lessons for us which we could glean from the prophet Daniel but I will make this the last one. We have but one Saviour...the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are a Democrat (liberal) and you expect your political party to save you and make more money for you, then you have been deceived. The answer does not lie in the politics of your party, but in God. Daniel had nothing to do with the political agenda of those who hated him and his country, but he only trusted in his God for deliverance. Do you go to a true church, do you tithe what God has prospered you with? Do you trust in Him for deliverance? Do you pray every day (without ceasing)? Are you willing to die for God and Country? If you answered no to any of these questions then you have a major, major problem. Daniel loved his God and his country, and trusted God for his deliverance. This world has nothing to offer me, it is wicked, evil, and full of sin and we need to pray that God would forgive its sin. I am tired and I want to go home but while I live I will continue to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and defend this country and my family with my Bible in one hand and my gun in the other (my God given right), and if any take issue with that then you have the problem, not me! One last thought. Daniel

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. What are some things we can learn from the life of Esther the queen on how to deal with our current hostile climate against Christians?

Matthew Stepp
286 Big Creek Road
Wayne, WV 25570

Pastor
Big Creek
Baptist Church
286 Big Creek Road
Wayne, WV 25570



The book of Esther is really an astonishing revelation of God's providential provision and sovereign intervention for His people. Everything from the natural beauty of Esther and a courageous cousin Mordecai, to giving her favor (Grace!) in the eyes of chamberlain Hegai and King Ahasuerus can be directly attributed to God. And the point of relevance to us, is that we serve the SAME God. Even when we do not understand why we end up forced to enter this beauty contest, or become privy to a plot to assassinate the king, we must be like Esther's parallel Bible character, Joseph. Just keep doing what is right, and be faithful with what the Lord has given us to do today—our Sovereign God will take care of tomorrow. Selah! Think about it!

The faith of Mordecai is striking in several instances. **"And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment? Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he**

hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew" (Esther 3:2-4). Mordecai, like the three Hebrew children of Daniel 3, would bow to none, but his God. There is a lesson for us, here. Even though the KING commanded all to reverence this Haman, Mordecai would NOT. In America, we are to submit ourselves to the powers that be (Romans 13), but never should our worship and adoration go to a mere man. We should join Mordecai in transgressing the commandments of kings and governments when it comes to religious matters of the conscience. Thirdly, audacious Mordecai told them he was a Jew— not ashamed to be a child of God—and neither should we. Hallelujah! Selah! Think about it!

On the other hand, Mordecai took care of his cousin Esther and conversely told her NOT to reveal her Jewish identity even to her arranged husband, **"Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it"** (Esther 2:10). Sometimes in our lives, it will become necessary to go underground with our faith. We will still evangelize like the North Korean Christians, but it will be (of necessity) in obscurity, in hiding and in secret defiance of the persecuting governments and religious institutions.

The time will come when Queen Esther must put her life on the line for God and her people. Mordecai

informs her that it is time to leave the safety of anonymity and join the ranks of open rebels against national uniformity, **"Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish"** (Esther 4:13-16). Mordecai KNEW that God would save His people, but wanted Esther to use the talents and position that God had given her, to the glory of her Saviour. And so must we, when **"such a time as this"** comes our way in America, 2016. If we perish, we perish! Selah! Think about it!

Still yet in our day, God hardens some hearts, and puts the fear of God in others. **"...And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them"** (Esther 8:17). May God save those that we witness unto with our holy lives and gospel testimonies.

But one last instruction we can take from the last chapters of Esther. **"Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to**

cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, ...that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies" (Esther 8:11, 13). God instrumentally gave the Jews the liberty and unction to take up the sword against their enemies on that revolutionary day. In fact, there is an aspect of the story in which "bloodthirsty Esther" asks the king for an EXTRA day of slaughtering the Jewish enemies, **"Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows"** (Esther 9:13).

Certainly there are times coming when we will have to weigh the consequences of the actions of our enemies and the responsibilities we have both to our God and our families. May we take heed to the faith and courage found in this little book and in the life of Queen Esther. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP

Tom Ross
6339 County Rd. 15
South Point, OH
45680

Pastor
Mt. Pleasant
Baptist Church
6939 County Rd. 15
Chesapeake, OH
45619



Many of the principles enumerated in the first question regarding Daniel may be equally applied to this query. With that said, I offer the following regarding the testimony of Esther:

1) Esther was a woman of great character and courage, especially in light of the way women were

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Forum #1

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prayed for their sin. I hear much about what America needs today is revival. There can be no true revival without repentance! And you can not repent if you do not see that you are a sinner before a Holy Sovereign God. God Bless!

ROGER REED



Tom Ross
6339 County Rd. 15
South Point, OH
45680

Pastor
Mt. Pleasant
Baptist Church
6939 County Rd. 15
Chesapeake, OH
45619

The world has changed a lot since Daniel found himself under the totalitarian dictates of Babylonian rule. Generally speaking the kings of ancient times often ruled as iron fisted despots who could have their subjects imprisoned or executed upon a whim. In many socialist and communist countries totalitarian dictators and political operatives wield an enormous amount of power. In many Muslim countries Christians are being rooted out and often executed. The United States of America has been a consistent and shining beacon of freedom and liberty for over three centuries because we are a constitutional republic. We have enjoyed freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and many other liberties for a long time. We have been able to maintain a sense of moral dignity and integrity because our laws were based on a Judaeo-Christian ethic revealed in the Scriptures. Our beloved America, raised up and established by the providence of God, has done more mission work, Gospel preaching, and nation building than any other civilization in human history. However, "the times they are a changin'" as Bob Dylan sang back in the 1960's. The Progressive/Liberal/Socialist movement has incrementally gained power in our government, schools, universities, and even among religious organizations. Little by little the Progressive agenda has sought to diminish our

constitution and denigrate our Judaeo-Christian ethic. As a result, Christians are now facing hostility and hatred from those who have been indoctrinated by atheists and leftists.

What do Christians do in response to hostility and hatred, using Daniel as an example? I offer the following suggestions:

1) Never lose sight of Who is in sovereign control of all things. Daniel believed in the sovereignty of God and the flawless execution of His Divine purpose (2:19-23). In times of great difficulty we can rest in the fact that God does all things well even when we do not fully understand our circumstances (Rom. 8:28).

2) Daniel feared God and desired to serve Him regardless of the consequences. He would rather be thrown into a lion's den than obey the whimsical dictates of politicians who hated him. Daniel was committed to prayer. He had great faith in a great God to deliver him. He was fearless and obedient in the face of tyranny and persecution. He loved not his life unto death and was willing to risk everything to express his loyalty to God. We need men, women, boys, and girls with the same kind of fearless resolve.

3) Daniel understood the importance of separation from the world and its evils as demonstrated in Daniel chapter one. He purposed not to defile himself with the king's dainties (1:8) and led others to do the same. We must not capitulate to the dictates and temptations of the world (II Cor. 6:14-7:1; I John 2:15-17). When God's people adopt the philosophy and behavior of a world system that is opposed to God they lose their spiritual power and influence. Daniel

maintained his devotion to God and never lost his testimony or influence regardless of who was in power (Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius).

4) Daniel always spoke the truth, even in the face of what appeared to be despotic human power and authority. He did not cater to the whims of wicked Nebuchadnezzar, but rather told him the truth as God had revealed it. We need more Christians who fear God more than they do the faces and feelings of men (Acts 5:20, 28-33). We have far too many professing Christians who are afraid to take a stand for God and His truth.

5) Daniel must have had a gracious spirit and a good attitude. He had a way of influencing others by his testimony (4:18; 5:11-14; 6:3). Every heathen king he served under valued his counsel. This tells me that we can earnestly contend for the faith without being contentious, mean-spirited, and hateful like our opponents.

6) Daniel was a man of prayer who believed in seeking God. In his prayers he adored God in worship, confessed his sins, thanked God for His mercies, offered supplication for others, and asked for spiritual strength and guidance (Dan. 9:1-19). I wonder if our prayer lives resemble Daniel's?

7) Daniel believed in the prophetic word and understood that God had a plan for the future. I take great comfort in the prophetic Word of God! It inspires hope and comfort during troublesome times (I Thess. 4:13-18). I am looking for that Blessed Hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13)!

I am sure there are many other

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Mike DeWitt Sr.
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR
97477

Pastor
Parkway Landmark
Baptist Church
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR
97477

Daniel is a great example of a Christian's walk in this world. Those that took Daniel and the rest of Israel captive were very intelligent in trying to reprogram their slaves. They first gave the intellectuals prominent places of service, and gave them books of instruction about the new culture they now were immersed in. The captors used these methods to win the hearts and minds of Israel.

Daniel read books and studied all the while serving his captor king. We must notice all the while Daniel was enslaved, he never complained about the way he was treated, nor did he try to start a revolt. Reading the book of Daniel, we see that his hard work of obedience to the earthly king in all things was he was rewarded, and his obedience to God in conjunction with the earthly king led to the salvation of at least three kings!

We all have a hard time remembering the words of Christ "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

MIKE DEWITT

Forum #1

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things we can learn from the life of Daniel, but this is a good start to help us in our quest and mission to be salt and light in a corrupt world.

TOM ROSS

Matthew Stepp
286 Big Creek Road
Wayne, WV 25570

Pastor
Big Creek
Baptist Church
286 Big Creek Road
Wayne, WV 25570



There are at least three things we can learn about the hatred and hostility of the world toward Jesus Christ and His followers in the life and times of Daniel. They will first be hostile toward the purity of the believer, then progressively, it will get worse, in that the world will become hostile toward our worship and thirdly, they will develop further into being hostile toward our thoughts and prayers. Selah! Think about it!

In chapter one of Daniel, it seems like such a little thing that Daniel is trying to do. Why make such a big deal out of eating the king's meat and drinking his wine? Various speculations have determined the food/drink to be portions that had been sacrificial offerings to the pagan gods of Babylon. They may have been from unclean animals, etc. But whatever the details that were provisional to that day and time, we can take the picture of purity home with us, today, beloved reader. **"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile**

himself" (Dan. 1:8).

How many times, the true hostility of the world will be evidenced when we try to keep from defiling ourselves from the depravity they love so intimately! How quick will be the scorn, the burst of hatred and the antagonism toward our purity, **"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"** (John 15:18-19).

The second stage of hostility toward Christians that we can see evidenced in the book of Daniel is the opposition toward our worship. In Chapter three, the three Hebrew children were condemned and convicted of believing in only one true God. Knowing that God ALONE was deserving of their adoration and submission, they refused to worship any other. Selah! Think about it! **"Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? ... but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. ...be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury..."** (Dan. 3:14-19).

The world is furious with Christians (Baptists) that will admit of no existence of ANY

God, but our own. When civil powers start to turn toward liberal organizations and politically correct government, Christian beware of the hostility and enmity of the world. Particularly, the religious world. **"They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me"** (John 16:2-3).

Lastly, will come to pass the third level of hostility in both Daniel's day, and our own. They will be hostile toward our prayer life. It will become UNACCEPTABLE to object in thought and mind-set to the new mainstream lifestyles. Just look, how not only the liberal left, but from every corner of America came criticism of Kentuckian Kim Davis' choice to live by her Bible and conscience. Daniel, too, felt the envy, malice and trickery of the establishment, **"Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God"** (Dan. 6:5). This trampling of religious freedom continued to where no one was allowed to pray to any god, but king Barack Obama (oops! excuse me, I meant king Darius!). Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton is on the record saying that Christians are gonna have to CHANGE the WAY WE THINK regarding the morality of the New Order. Persecution to the point of throwing Christians into a den of lions? Ask Daniel and Nero's Christian targets about those accommodations. They are coming to an America near you, beloved reader! May God give us the strength and courage to stand like Daniel in the face of a hostile

populace, religious world and secular government. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



First Righteousness

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goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (Jas. 1:22-25). Do the work, and be content. Believe the Word, and be at peace in your heart.

PEACE WITH MEN

As Christians who must sojourn in the world of men, it is true that we will often find strife and opposition in the world. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ has promised us that the love of God that has been bestowed upon us, will be the cause of contention, discord, and even conflict in our relationships with the men and women of the world. **"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law"** (Luke 12:51-53). As Christ has said, many times even our own families will turn against us. This Christianity which is based upon the righteousness and the person

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First Righteousness

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and the work of Jesus Christ, has resulted in much strife and persecution in the world. And yet, there is peace to be found, if only we will continue in the way and the Word of God.

In the beginning of the Age of Christianity, there was often strife between the Jews and the Gentiles. I suppose that strife and enmity has continued in some form, from that day unto the current day. It is even true there was often strife between those that were saved by God's grace from amongst the Jews, and those who were saved by God's grace amongst the Gentile people. But, the grace of God, that brought salvation to men, did also bring peace between the peoples of the covenants. We read what Paul had to say to the Ephesian Christians, **"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh"** (Eph. 2:14-17). The love and grace of God, and the righteousness and the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, has accomplished a miracle, in that the enmity that once existed between Jew and Gentile is now abolished in the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is not any more an enmity that exists because of the law and the Word and the promises of God. Now, both

saved Jew and saved Gentile will acknowledge that our salvation is a result of the grace of God, and is based upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and is in no way a result of any righteousnesses of our own. This admission, this knowledge of God's salvation and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, has brought a peace between us and God, a peace in our own hearts, and even a peace between former enemies after the flesh, as we acknowledge the workings and the purposes of God and Jesus Christ in the accomplishment of our salvation.

Further, we must admit, that the salvation from God and the way of the Christian has fostered much grief and much sorrow and much animosity, even in our day and time. Especially, in these last days, I believe that there will be a renewal, and a surge in the attacks of Satan against the people of God. **"And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows. But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now**

the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Mark 13:7-13). And yet, I know that the Lord will at least grant us a peace and a contentment within our own selves as we labor amongst the people wherever the Lord will lead us. **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you"** (John 16:20-22). The Lord has proven that He can and will give us a measure of peace, even here – though the peace may only be on our own part, and not shared in the hearts of our enemies in the world.

In other words, though the world may hate us, deride us, and even persecute us; we will, ourselves, not feel overmuch distress, anguish, anger, or hatred against the world – at least not as long as we pursue righteousness, and acknowledge that our Holy God is in control. **"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so**

persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:11-12).

The world may not have any peace with us; but we can have a general sense of peace in our relationship with the world, from the perspective that we know that men are sinners, but God still has a people that He will save; and, from the perspective that the world is wicked, but we know that the world will only grow more wicked, as the powers of Satan and his followers will grow in these end times. We find our peace in ourselves, and with the state of affairs in the world, through the understanding that the will and purpose of God cannot be overcome. Nor can His desires and intentions for the redemption of mankind be ever thwarted. We can take confidence in this belief; we can find peace and contentment in this understanding. Sure, the world may persecute and even kill us; but, we, as the people and the churches of God, hold no animosity for the world. We don't know who it is that God might save! Some of these who are currently at war with God and the gospel of Jesus Christ will have their hearts broken, their souls saved, and will be brought into a peaceful relationship with God and His Son, Jesus Christ. We do not know who it is that might be the next effective tool and worthy proclaimer of the gospel of Jesus Christ! Let us, therefore, leave off the bitterness and hatred, and let us, instead, commit ourselves to the pursuit of righteousness, and the hope of peace between God and men. **"And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace"** (Jas. 3:18).



Forum #2

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viewed in ancient times among heathen nations. Her humble and gracious testimony made her attractive (Esther 2:15-17 cf. I Pet. 3:1-6).

2) Esther understood the importance of listening to wise counsel and acting upon it (4:12-14).

3) Esther understood the power of prayer and fasting among God's people in times of great distress (4:16).

4) Esther never lost her composure or testimony no matter how dangerous and difficult things became. God gave her grace to maintain her dignity and moral integrity.

5) Esther was respectful to those who were in authority.

6) Esther was willing to sacrifice her life, if need be, for her Jewish brothers and sisters (John 15:13).


7) Esther presented her body as a living sacrifice to be used for the glory of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

8) Esther understood that her life was in God's hands to be used for His eternal purpose. Humanly speaking, God used the testimony and courage of Esther to preserve the Jewish race, and by extension, the Messianic line. Oh, that God would open our eyes to see the purpose He has for us and how we can make a real difference by serving Him in these last days!

TOM ROSS

this to be pretty lame of me to answer this question this way, but I fear many have looked to the world rather than the Word and have already made a decision to not hear the Word and obey.

MIKE DEWITT

Roger Reed 20 Ledgewood Dr. Mansfield, Ohio 44905 <i>Missionary of</i> West Jefferson Missionary Baptist Mission 90 E. Main St. West Jefferson, Ohio 43162	
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I have to smile a little after reading this question because this is the Bible School lesson I am teaching on right now. Esther is a great book of lessons and much like the Book of Daniel. In both cases they are willing to accept the will of God for their lives.

I have heard all my life that one person can make a difference and then I think of all the Christians that have the attitude that their vote does not count which makes me a little ill. I once did not vote for an issue, or person in a Union election and the results were, that the one vote (mine) would have made the difference, encouraged me to never miss an election again. I realize there may have been others that did not vote but I knowing that had I voted, things would have been different.

We see that God used Esther's beauty, her upbringing by Mordecai, a devout Jew, and her devotion to God to save her people from extinction. Dear Christian reader, God is going to give you a one-time opportunity (in my opinion) to change the course of America. It will be for a short time for those who believe in the rapture, but it will be our golden opportunity to stand fast, not bow down to dictatorship and tyranny to save America from

certain doom. Beloved, we are responsible for what happens in this next election.

God put Esther in a position to save her country. What would have happened if Esther would have said, "I like this palace living, I am pampered in royalty, no one knows I am a Jew, I am well liked and I have it made. Why should I stick my neck out for a bunch of sinful Jews?" But that was not the case, everything I just mentioned she did not do, but stayed faithful to God and her people. God has a reason for everything...thank God for Esther.

Please understand the severity of this situation, the whole Jewish Nation was going to be annihilated off the face of the earth and no matter how sinful they had become, they were God's people and He loved them and loves them still, and will protect them. And God loves all those for whom Jesus died and shed His blood for and will do the same, but we have, as already stated, a responsibility to this great nation. If we do our part I am confident God will do His part as well.

The main lesson I believe here is, be obedient to God in the face of adversity, knowing He is in control. **"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ"** (Eph. 1:11). Do what we are responsible to do as did Esther and Mordecai. American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote this prayer and revised it the year I was born in 1951; "God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, Courage to change the things which should be changed, and the Wisdom to

distinguish the one from the other. Living one day at a time, Enjoying one moment at a time, Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace, Taking, as Jesus did, This sinful world as it is, Not as I would have it, Trusting that You will make all things right, If I surrender to Your will, So that I may be reasonably happy in this life, And supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen."

Even though Esther became queen, she knew her place before the king but did not compromise her faith in God. **"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"** (Rom. 12:2).

The result had a wonderful ending, even though it looked hopeless and the decree that was to happen on a certain day that all Jews would be killed could not be changed. The Jews were given the ability to defend themselves to keep from being annihilated, and won the victory! It never is hopeless with God. They had the courage to change things and they did, praise God! The same will be for us if we **"hold fast"** the Word of God and do His will.

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 1:13).

"But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6).

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (Heb. 4:14).

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;

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Mike DeWitt Sr. PO Box 950 Springfield, OR 97477 <i>Pastor</i> Parkway Landmark Baptist Church PO Box 950 Springfield, OR 97477	
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Read I Corinthians 9:19-23 and Mark 8:35. You all might think

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(for he is faithful that promised)"
(Heb. 10:23).

One last thought; I believe that our current president is a type of Esther and Mordecai's Haman. And unless the Lord sees fit to save him, he will meet his doom, like Haman and his family did. God Bless!

ROGER REED



Take Off the

(Continued from page 1) ♦

In these closing verses of chapter one, Paul explains how the Gentiles got into the awful darkness that engulfed them and how God's wrath was revealed against them. Note the steps downward in Gentile history as we turn our attention to the rest of the chapter, **"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds,**

and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:18-32).

We see that **"They knew God"** (vv. 18-20). God had given them a twofold revelation of Himself **"in them"** (conscience) and **"unto them"** (creation), (v. 19). Man did not begin with ignorance and gradually work his way up

to intelligence; he began with a blazing revelation of the power and wisdom of God and turned his back on it. God had revealed Himself from the very time of creation, so that people who have never heard the Gospel are still without excuse.

It is my belief that America is failing in not calling sin what it is and has pushed that doctrine aside for political correctness. Many of God's elect (many who say they are saved are not) do not want to hear about Hell, the Lake of Fire, or sin. I thank God for the folks He has given me and that I am at liberty to preach the whole counsel of God. About 140 years ago Charles Haddon Spurgeon who preached during the last quarter of the 1800's had this to say, "Everywhere there is apathy (indifference, unconcern). Nobody cares whether that which is preached is true or false. A sermon is a sermon whatever the subject; only, the shorter it is, the better." He also so stated, "If we would have the presence of God, it is necessary that we should be agreed with Him. We must be agreed with God as to the end of our Christian existence. God hath formed us for Himself that we may show forth His praise." A man I worked with asked me one time, "How long do you preach" (I cannot count the number of times I have been asked that question along with how big is your congregation). When I answer 35-45 minutes for a sermon you would think they were going to have a heart attack. The man then replied; the best sermon he had ever heard was 10 minutes long. That, beloved, is the attention span of most church-goers today. I would guess that anything longer would put him to sleep.

I marvel at the lack of fear the saved...and unsaved have toward

a Holy, Sovereign God. **"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man"** (Eccl. 12:13). But men everywhere scoff at this verse. Why, I have even seen men snicker at this verse, supposedly saved men.

This brings me to my next point. **"They glorified Him not as God"** (vv. 21-23). Vain thinking and foolish reasoning turned men from the truth to lies. We see indifference leading to ingratitude, resulting in ignorance. People today bow before the Greek and Roman philosophers and honor their words above the Word of God; but Paul calls all of these philosophies "empty imaginations" and "times of ignorance." **"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead"** (Acts 17:30-31). The next step was idolatry, honoring the creature (including man) rather than the Creator. They put blinders on and did not want to adhere to the truth.

"They changed the truth of God" (vv. 24-25). This word **"changed"** the thought also of "exchanged." People replaced God's truth with Satan's lie! What is Satan's lie? 1) Worshiping the creature and not the Creator. 2) Worshiping man instead of God. 3) Worshiping things instead of Christ. Satan tempted Christ to do this (Matt. 4:8-11). Note that in Romans 1:18, the Gentiles "held down the truth," and now

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Take Off the

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they “exchange the truth” for a lie! The truth believed and obeyed sets us free, **“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”** (John 8:31-32). The truth rejected and disobeyed makes us slaves.

They rejected the knowledge of God (vv. 26-32). These people had begun with a clear knowledge of God (vv. 19, 21) and His judgment against sin (v. 32); but now they reached the lowest level of their downward fall: they did not even want to have knowledge of God! **“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good”** (Ps. 14:1). It is sad to see the tragic results of this decline. Evolutionists want us to believe that humans have “evolved” from primitive, ignorant, beast-like forms into the marvelous creature they are today. This is what the Evolutionists want you to believe: “I was a tadpole when I began to begin, then I was a frog with my tail tucked in, then I was a monkey in a coconut tree, and now I’m a man with a Ph.D.” And many have put blinders on and said: “Why can there not be both?”

Paul says just the opposite: man began the highest of God’s creatures, but he made himself into a beast! Note the three judgments of God: God gave them up to uncleanness and idolatry (vv. 24-25). 1) God gave them over to vile passions (vv. 26-27). 2) God gave them over to a reprobate mind (v. 28ff). 3) God gave them up! This is the revelation of the

wrath of God (v. 18). The sins listed here are too vile to define or discuss, yet they are practiced today around the world with the approval of society. People know that sin will be judged, yet they take pleasure in it anyway.

This is the point I would like to make. Christians have put on blinders and say if they are not hurting me, or if I do not have to see it, that I do not care what they do. We are being pressured to be political correct and need to change what we believe...NEVER. I will die preaching the truth and NO paper president or Clinton will force me to do differently. Where is your allegiance fellow Christian? What are you afraid of? We had better fear what God can do, and not man.

These things that Paul mentions here are sin, just plain flat out sin, and God is not pleased, yet we have allowed them to infiltrate our world, our life, our schools, our homes, and the work place and even churches. If you embrace any of these that Paul condemns with the mentality that if Jesus were here He would take them in and forgive them, then you are living in a dream world. Yes, Jesus will save them if they are the elect of God. **“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”** (John 6:37). But there must be a change in that person’s life if they are truly saved. We do not embrace sin and think it is all right to co-exist with the unrighteous. They have to stop their filthy life style and repent from their evil ways or they are not truly saved, they can not have it both ways. Were it not for the Gospel of Christ, we would be in this slavery to sin ourselves. **“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift”** (II Cor. 9:15).

Beloved, remember the wretch

you were before you were saved? Are you still living that life today as a child of God? Someone might answer, “Yes, nothing has changed.” Then you have a very serious problem, and according to the Bible you are not saved. **“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others”** (Eph. 2:1-3).

To embrace the lifestyle of these wicked and unrighteous people would be like me saying I liked my old life before I was saved and I miss those days as a teenager and early 20’s when I would get so drunk I puked my guts up. Oh yes, I really miss those days. See how silly that all sounds? But that is exactly what they want us to do. Not this preacher, beloved! As C.H.

Spurgeon wrote “turn, or burn!”

Back in the mid 70’s my first pastor stated that the world was so messed up that our young people will grow up and spell “relief” R-O-L-A-I-D-S! He was not being funny, though at the time I thought it to be quite humorous, but not anymore. At that time there was a commercial that asked “how do you spell relief?” (talking about heartburn) and they would spell relief “R-O-L-A-I-D-S!” I always wonder what he would think if he could see the world today.

So throw off the blinders that are covering your eyes and call their vile and awful sin what it is, do not back down! Preachers, preach it like it is your last sermon and tell the world of the Holy One of God who can save sinners from total destruction. The world hates this, but love the sinner and hate their sin **“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”** (Phil. 4:7). God Bless!



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.

EVANGELICALS SHOW MORE OPENNESS IN DEATH PENALTY DEBATE

(WNS)--Evangelicals and political conservatives are increasingly shifting to more neutral positions on the death penalty. In early Oct., the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) revised its 1973 statement that favored the death penalty as a punishment for heinous murders.

The NAE noted many evangelical leaders “have made a Biblical and theological case either against the death penalty or against its continued use in a society where Biblical standards of justice are difficult to reach.” Rather than turning about-face and opposing the death penalty, the NAE statement said the group affirms “both streams of Christian

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ethical thought.” In other words, there’s room for debate. The NAE serves as a resource and advocacy group for more than 45,000 churches in the United States. Its policy shift on the death penalty comes at a time when all aspects of capital punishment in the United States are under scrutiny.

“And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death” (Lev. 24:17).

SHOULD PARENTS OF DISABLED CHILDREN BE ALLOWED TO STUNT THEIR GROWTH?

(WNS)--Many parents have lamented their children growing up, with a joking wish they would stay “little” forever. But when Mark and Jenn Hooper asked pediatric endocrinologist Paul Hofman to stunt their disabled 6-year-old daughter’s growth, they were quite serious. The Hoopers’ case is getting attention now as parents in the United States and elsewhere are looking to growth attenuation therapy as a way to make it easier to care for their disabled children. Charley Hooper, now 10, will remain just 4-foot-3-inches tall for the rest of her life. While disability advocates say stunting Charley’s growth is a violation of her human rights, her parents insist the treatment improved her quality of life.

ABORTIONISTS ADMIT EMOTIONAL TOLL OF GRISLY WORK

(WNS)--In a recently released Center for Medical Progress (CMP) video, a Michigan Planned Parenthood executive encourages her colleagues to stop “denying the reality” of pro-life images of aborted babies and start acknowledging abortion does involve violence and

the killing of persons. In the video, leading abortion providers and educators confide to each other that their ability to remain on the job depends on finding ways to deal with their workplace horrors. The surprising confessions came during an April 7, 2013, Planned Parenthood of Mid and South Michigan (PPMSM) workshop and an April 7, 2014, National Abortion Federation (NAF) conference in San Francisco. CMP undercover investigators documented the two events in more than two hours of clandestine recordings.

CHICAGO SCHOOL DISTRICT AGREES TO ALLOW BOY IN GIRLS’ LOCKER ROOM

(WNS)--A suburban Chicago school district will allow a transgender student access to the girl’s locker room, under a contentious agreement reached Dec. 7 during an emergency school board meeting. The decision to comply with government demands for inclusivity comes after months of back and forth between school officials and the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR). The OCR found the district violated federal sexual anti-discrimination laws with its policy restricting a biologically male transgender student’s access to female locker rooms. Last month, the OCR told the district it had 30 days to change its policies or face potential litigation and the loss of up to \$6 million in federal funds.

HIGH COURT TO CONSIDER STATE ABORTION LAW CASE

(WNS)--The U.S. Supreme Court agreed Nov. 13 to hear a challenge to Texas’ abortion center regulations, the first major abortion case since the court upheld a ban on partial-birth abortion in 2007. The court’s decision in this case could affect not just Texas, but a number of other states with similar regulations. Lawyers

had expected the court to finally hear an abortion case this term, but that doesn’t diminish the significance of the decision. Over the last five years, states with new Republican majorities have tightened regulations on the abortion industry, and the number of abortions nationwide has declined. Some states with these kinds of laws have seen the number of abortions drop at least 15 percent since 2010, according to data the Associated Press compiled.

PRO-LIFERS DEBUNK TEXAS STUDY CLAIMING INCREASE IN AT-HOME ABORTIONS

(WNS)--The University of Texas published a study in November linking the state’s abortion facility regulations to the number of women self-inducing abortions. But according to pro-lifers, the study was motivated by a pro-abortion agenda and is based on “egregious” errors. Released by the Texas Policy Evaluation Project, the study came out just four days after the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear a challenge to Texas abortion facility regulations enacted in 2013. The law requires abortionists to obtain admitting privileges at hospitals within 30 miles of their facilities. It also holds abortion facilities to the same building standards as outpatient surgical centers. Since 2012, abortion facilities in Texas have decreased from 41 to 17. According to the study, between 1.7 percent and 4.1 percent of Texas women, mostly Latinas, have self-induced abortions. The statistics are based on survey responses from 779 women ages 18 to 49. The researchers used those numbers to claim that if the Supreme Court doesn’t overturn the new regulations, self-induced abortions will increase because more facilities will close.

DEFENSE SECRETARY ORDERS ALL COMBAT

POSITIONS OPEN TO WOMEN

(WNS)--Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter on Dec. 3 ordered the military to open all direct combat positions to women, giving the services 30 days to submit their plans for the historic change. “There will be no exemptions,” Carter said during a press briefing. “To succeed in our mission of national defense, we cannot afford to cut ourselves off from half the country’s talents and skills. We have to take full advantage of every individual who can meet our standards.” Carter’s decision effectively opens up the final 10 percent of military positions (about 220,000) to women, allowing them to serve in any and all direct combat jobs, from infantry rifleman to special operations forces such as the Army Delta Force and the Navy SEALs.

KROGER SET TO BECOME LARGEST RETAILER TO OFFER TRANSGENDER HEALTH BENEFITS

(WNS)--In 2002, no major U.S. corporation covered transgender procedures, such as gender-reassignment surgery and drug therapy, under its employee medical benefit plan. Today more than 400 do, including Ford, Apple, and Coke. The Kroger Co., the largest grocery chain in the nation with 2,500 stores, is set to join the list next month. Beginning Jan. 1, Kroger’s 400,000 workers will be eligible for up to \$100,000 for gender-reassignment surgery, drug therapy, and other procedures. Kroger will become the largest American retailer to offer such coverage.

BOY SCOUTS ASKED TO RECONSIDER NO-GIRLS-ALLOWED POLICY

(WNS)--Less than a year after The Boy Scouts of America (BSA)

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gave the green light for gay troop leaders as well as gay boys to join its ranks, five pre-teen girls are challenging the organization's no-girls-allowed policy. The California girls participated in a series of competitions with scout groups over the past year. They started the BSA's Learning for Life program and are following many of the Boy Scouts' procedures in their small female troop. But BSA leaders denied the band of girls membership, allegedly after discovering they couldn't join campouts due to insurance liability. The girls are now challenging the BSA to rethink its no-girls-allowed policy, especially after the organization redefined its stance on gender two years ago.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS CHILE ISSUES FIRST CIVIL MARRIAGE LICENSES TO SAME-SEX COUPLES

(WNS)--Chile's Civil Registry made an exception in Oct. to its ongoing strike to perform the country's first civil union ceremonies for same-sex couples. After 12 years of debate in the Chilean Parliament, President Michelle Bachelet signed the Civil Union Agreement into law in April, granting cohabitation rights to homosexual and heterosexual couples. The agreement also gives partners parental rights and health care and pension benefits but does not permit adoption. In a country with a historically Catholic majority and socially conservative culture, many Chileans have protested the government's increasingly liberal social agenda. Evangelical leaders warn the civil unions eventually will lead to recognition for same-sex marriage, although not all the country's religious leaders oppose the move.

SWEDISH COURT RULES MIDWIVES MUST PERFORM

ABORTIONS

(WNS)--A district court in Sweden recently ruled against midwife Ellinor Grimmark, who was denied employment at four hospitals because she refuses to participate in abortions. In November 2013, Höglandssjukhuset Women's Clinic in Jönköping County rescinded its job offer to Grimmark after she said she could not perform abortions because of her conscientious objection and her Christian faith. The head of the maternity ward left a voicemail saying "she was no longer welcome to work with them" and questioned "whether a person with such views actually can become a midwife," according to Scandinavian Human Rights Lawyers (SHRL), an NGO representing Grimmark. Swedish midwives are similar to nurses in other countries. Grimmark filed a religious discrimination complaint with Sweden's Equality Ombudsman. While waiting for a ruling, two other employers also refused to hire her because of her pro-life stance. A fourth potential employer, Värnamo Hospital, offered to hire Grimmark as a temporary employee, but withdrew the offer after her complaint went public. The head of the hospital told Grimmark no employee was allowed to publicly take a stand against abortion, according to SHRL.



The Short Pews



Brief
Articles
by Curtis
Pugh

THE GOD OF THE BIBLE

The authentic Christian says with Paul, **"For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there**

be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (I Cor. 8:5-6). God is in absolute control as Creator and Sustainer of all things. The Psalmist wrote of Him, **"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain"** (Ps. 76:10). God is able even to use the wrath (and other sins) of men to glorify Himself!

There is one problem with the God of the Bible. Men do not like Him. They either deny His existence or change Him into someone more to their taste. God said, **"...thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself..."** (Ps. 50:21). Men still do this. Their god has limitations like men. In their thinking He has to be allowed to do what He wants to do. Sinners are told that they must "let God" save them. They think that if they do not "let God" do what He wants to do, He is powerless to accomplish His will.

But the Bible presents a God who is able to do and who does do all He wants to do. That includes saving whom He wants to save when He wants to save them. God says: **"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure"** (Isa. 46:9-10). There is only one God and nothing else approaches to being like Him! He has planned all things that shall occur from the beginning! He can and does say that His plan shall stand. He will do what He has determined to be done! You and I must either

believe this verse or throw out the Bible!

And so mankind stands in rebellion against such a God. Sinners do not like this God. The Bible says that **"...the carnal mind [the minds of those yet unregenerate] is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"** (Rom. 8:7). That is the true condition of those who have not been born from above. It is contrary to human nature to love God. If natural men loved God they would not be rebels against God, but they are rebels. All are rebels until and unless God changes them inwardly. Jesus said, **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again"** (John 3:6-7).

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

The world is impressed with bigness. The biggest theme park, the largest shopping mall – these kinds of things attract the attention of the world. Sometimes this attitude creeps over into religion. The biggest church building with the biggest crowds and the largest so-called ministry – these things impress many people

The Bible contains the phrase **"...who hath despised the day of small things..."** (Zec. 4:10)? Is God not to be found in "small things?" After hearing the Lord Jesus teach, one of His disciples asked, **"...Lord, are there few that be saved"** (Luke 13:23)? In answer to his question the Lord Jesus taught them about the strait (tight fitting) gate and the narrow way that leads to life everlasting. That way is narrow because few go that way. It is not a busy highway.

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The Short Pews

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A small number travel that way.

Many are religious. But few enter the strait gate and travel the narrow way. In Matthew 22:14 the Lord Himself said, **“For many are called, but few are chosen.”** Peter reminds his readers that Noah built an ark **“... wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved...”** (I Peter 3:20). The Lord Jesus, in His message to the church at Sardis said, **“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy”** (Rev. 3:4). In speaking of those Jews who were saved in Paul’s day, he wrote, **“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace”** (Rom. 11:5). A remnant is just a small piece as in a remnant of cloth. In Romans 9:27 the apostle quotes Isaiah saying, **“Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved”** (Rom. 9:27). In that same passage Paul again quotes the prophet saying, **“And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha”** (Rom. 9:29).

These words: “few,” “remnant” and “seed” all refer to a small number or small amount. In the middle of a religious world filled with shenanigans and stunts, gimmicks and religious showmanship and all sorts of enticing religious entertainment aimed at filling church houses with people, God is still found to be doing **“small things.”** The crowd of religionists that aims at “success at any cost” think God

is in the noise and in the gang. But the Bible indicates otherwise as we have shown by the above quotations.

In Luke 8:10 the Lord Jesus stated one of the reasons He spoke in parables: **“...that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.”** Proverbs 20:12 says: **“The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.”** Can you see that God is in the **“small things?”**

CURSING, MINCED OATHS AND PROFANITY

Each child of God wrestles with sin. James makes it clear that the tongue is a source of great evil – one that no man can tame. He wrote: **“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell”** (James 3:5-6). So it is that by use of this little member of our bodies we sin, stir up trouble, hurt those whom we love, etc. By our tongues we harm our testimony and even more importantly, we dishonor and even blaspheme God. But the words of James are not to be taken as an excuse for unholy language as other Scriptures demonstrate. No man has the ability to tame his tongue, true, but God’s enabling by grace can make the tongue an instrument for Him!

Among professing Christians there are those who think nothing of speaking God’s name in vain. “O my God” seems to be a currently acceptable phrase in the speech of many – even among some who claim to know the Lord. Popular Media often

portrays it as “OMG.” Among some professing Christians few seem to be concerned about their language. Others who would not take the Lord’s name in vain do, however, resort to minced oaths. A minced oath is defined thus: “A minced oath is a euphemistic expression formed by misspelling, mispronouncing, or replacing a part of a profane, blasphemous, or taboo term to reduce the original term’s objectionable characteristics. Some examples include *gosh*, *darn*, *dang*, and *heck*. Many languages have such expressions. In the English language, nearly all profanities have minced variants.”

The problem with minced oaths is this: they are not any less serious offences because they come from the same source and betray the same motives as do full-fledged oaths. Not only that, they mean the same thing. A euphemism is just another way of saying the same thing, often in a supposedly less offensive way. And their meaning is the same as full-blown cursing whether one realizes it or not. The Lord Himself said, **“But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil”** (Matt. 5:37). The English language contains a myriad of such minced oaths which the children of God should avoid using.

Then there is the matter of profanity or vulgar speech. Someone said “profanity is a weak mind seeking to express itself forcefully.” It may be, but to resort to blasphemy or even profanity dishonors God. Surely no one will argue that such language is not sinful. “Profanity, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is... ‘offensive language.’” The word profane comes from two Latin words – “pro” and “fanum” – literally before the temple, that is outside

the temple. Profanity, then, can be understood as words a person would not use in a temple or church. Vulgar terms include gross words – words not suitable for polite or mixed company. Often these may be common terms used for bodily functions, sexual acts and the like. Sadly, while in years past those who resorted to such vulgarisms would refrain from using them in the presence of women and children – and sometimes preachers – today even women resort to such terms and think nothing of hearing them. We question whether or not this is advancement in our society!

We who understand that we are always before our God ought not to think that words are less sinful if spoken outside the gathering of God’s people. There are words that are inappropriate regardless of what society thinks! God says His children are to **“... have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret”** (Eph. 5:11-12). Some things are base, dishonorable and disgraceful even to be spoken about as the word “shame” means. The Holy Spirit through Paul instructed the congregation at Colosse in these words: **“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man”** (Col. 4:5-6). **“Speech alway with grace:”** here it seems that our speech is tied directly to our witness to **“them that are without”** – i.e. the lost. How can we issue forth the sweet water of the message of salvation by grace if our tongues are a fountain of bitter water? **“Doth a**

♦ (Continued on page 23)

The Short Pews

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fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter" (James 3:11)?

Let us refrain from "cussing," from profanity, and from common or vulgar language. God says, **"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers"** (Eph. 4:29). Those words are not directed to preachers only, but to the whole congregation in Ephesus. And they are certainly applicable to us today! Oh that our words would always **"minister grace unto the hearers."** Oh that our speech was always **"good to the use of edifying"** - that we might strengthen our Brethren and they us by our words before one another. Rather than our tongues being **"... a fire, a world of iniquity,"** so **"...that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell"** (James 3:6), may God give us grace and by it a consistent personal determination that every word we speak **"may minister grace unto the hearers."** Selah!



Injustice In A

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us aim, and the result will be a thorough devotedness to God, the enjoyment of our election and calling, and growing usefulness in the world and the church. And if this should be the case in any one instance, as the result of reading these few lines, I shall not regret my ramble in the village churchyard, or the labour of penning the thoughts suggested by the inscriptions on the tombs and head-stones.

*Come Holy Spirit, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire;
Thou the Anointing Spirit art
Who dost thy sev'n-fold gifts impart:
Thy holy unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.*

*Remove with thy perpetual light
The dullness of our blinded sight;
Anoint our heart, and cheer our face
With the abundance of thy grace;
Thy holy unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.*
(Sunny Subjects For All Seasons, 1858)



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Science Hill, KY has called Brother Monte Wells as pastor.

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) 728-9966 or Email windsorbaptist.grace@gmail.com.

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.

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.

The Berea Baptist Church of Mantachie, MS is seeking a pastor. Any interested brother may call at (662) 282-7794 or Email:bbchurch@nexband.com for a pastoral questionnaire.

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 10-1-2015 to 10-31-2015

Beginning Balance	\$526.57
RECEIPTS:	
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
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	313.45
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	150.00
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Emmanuel B. C., Oldtown, KY	100.00
Faith B. C. Lynn, AR	12.50
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace Bible B. C., Denham Springs, LA	10.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	200.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
John Massie, Wayne, WV	25.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	30.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Parkway Landmark B. C., Springfield, OR	300.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumersville, AR	50.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	38.00
Anonymous	1,210.00
Dividing checks	150.00
Sub Total	\$3,793.95
TOTAL	\$4,320.52
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	736.59
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.96
Dividing checks	150.00
Bank Charge	13.00
Supplies	81.50
Total Expenditures	\$3,947.05
ENDING BALANCE	\$373.47

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 11-1-2015 to 11-30-2015

Beginning Balance	\$373.47
RECEIPTS:	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX	50.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	50.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	313.45
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Emmanuel B. C., Oldtown, KY	100.00
Faith B. C. Lynn, AR	12.50
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
Landmark B. C., Moncks Corner, SC	100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	30.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	400.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Parkway Landmark B. C., Springfield, OR	100.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumersville, AR	50.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Wayne Huffman, McNeil, AR	51.00
Subscriptions	175.00
Anonymous	1,310.00
Sub Total	\$3,861.95
TOTAL	\$4,235.42
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	737.45
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.96
Bank Charge	13.00
Supplies	81.50
Total Expenditures	\$3,797.91
Mistake on check#1804	+06
ENDING BALANCE	\$437.57

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 10-1-2015 to 10-31-2015

Beginning Balance	\$7,508.72
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
Calvary B. C., Everson, WA	200.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	200.00
TOTAL	8,233.72
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	363.98
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	363.98
Interest	+06
ENDING BALANCE	\$7,869.80

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 11-1-2015 to 11-30-2015

Beginning Balance	\$7,869.80
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Calvary B. C., Everson, WA	100.00
TOTAL	325.00
TOTAL	8,194.80
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	363.98
Program Production	195.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	558.98
Interest	+06
ENDING BALANCE	\$7,635.88



Injustice In A Graveyard

By James Smith
(1802 - 1862)

The other day, as I was wandering over a village church-yard, and reading the inscriptions on the tombs and head-stones, I could not but think that there was something like injustice. In every direction death was spoken against, and called cruel, insatiate, and many other names, but not one word was said against sin. And yet death is but the offspring of sin. But for sin, there had been no grave-yards, no death. Was there not a little selfishness here, a little of the old attempt to shift off the blame from ourselves? Death is a divine infliction, originally a punishment for man's sin; it is from God's hand, and therefore man is more ready to speak harshly of it, than he is of sin, which is his own act and deed. We blame death for robbing us of our parents, children, and friends; but we ought to blame sin, which gave death the power; and thus we should blame ourselves by whom death came into the world, and has been perpetuated there. Sin is the parent of disease, pain, grief, sorrow, disappointment, vexation, anxiety, woe, death; yea, of every evil: and man is the parent of sin. Sin sprung from us, and all misery from sin. God, in nature and providence, only gives to man his due. God in grace, gives to man what never was his due, what never could have been. How prone are we to fix the eye on effects, and never think of the cause; or if the cause is sin, to look upon it, and talk of it, as if it was a

calamity instead of a crime.

When I tread the soil of the grave-yard, and see the proofs that multitudes have been buried there, let me ask with Jehu, "**Who slew all these?**" (II Kings 10:9) and the only answer that can be justly returned, will be, sin. Some may be ready to say, "Oh, it was small-pox, and fever, and consumption, and cholera, etc.!" True, true, but what introduced all these diseases into our world, for they were not here originally? Ah, that was sin, our sin. We can therefore only trace suffering and death to disease, disease to sin, and sin to man. Man therefore is the cause of all his own misery. Man has no one but himself to blame. Nor is it any use trying to throw the blame on another. But as sin has introduced disease, misery, and death into our world, is there any possibility of getting rid of sin? Because, if we can get rid of sin, we may then get rid of all the

consequences of sin. Well, blessed by God, sin may be gotten rid of. How this is to be done, the Bible, and the Bible alone, can inform us. No one could devise a plan to get rid of sin, but the infinitely wise God. No one could furnish the means, but the Possessor of Heaven and earth. It requires a most costly sacrifice, and the Son of God furnishes that. It requires a wondrous change in us, nothing less than a new creation, and the Spirit of God produces that. If we want to get rid of sin, we, being fully convinced that we are guilty, and deserve to be punished for it, must fix the eye of the mind on the Son of God as our sacrifice, we must then confess our sins, and plead with God to pardon them, on the ground of the sacrifice of Jesus, and so we shall obtain a pardon. The Holy Spirit must renew and sanctify our nature, and so we shall be delivered from the power and pollution of sin. We must live, believing in the efficacy of the blood of Jesus to remove our guilt, and in the power and grace of the Spirit to make us new creatures, and then take the precepts of the gospel as our guide, and the example of Jesus as our model. In this way, we shall be delivered from condemnation for sin, from the power and love

of sin, and also from the practice of sin, and thus living, and thus dying, we shall ultimately be delivered from the in-being, and all the consequences of sin. Then, being delivered from sin, we are really delivered from death, the very nature of which is changed so that we only fall asleep in Jesus, depart to be with Jesus, and wake up in the exact likeness of Jesus, both in body and soul.

Let us then, when we think of death or look on suffering, trace it up to sin, and then make it our first great business to get rid of sin. No remedy will do for us, that does not go to the root of the disease and eradicate it. We must get rid of sin, both in its guilt and power, or we shall never be safe, we can never be happy. And there is no getting rid of sin, but by faith in Christ, and the possession of the Holy Spirit. No sacrifice will ever atone for our sins, but the death of Christ; and no power will ever deliver us from the authority and enslaving influence of sin, but the power of the Holy Spirit. As, therefore, it is of the greatest moment to be delivered from sin, as otherwise we cannot be delivered from death, or saved from Hell, let us apply to Christ at once, if we have not, and apply to Him afresh daily if we have; let us ask of our heavenly Father, the gift of the Holy Spirit, nor rest satisfied until we prove His presence with us, by an abiding hatred to sin, and a constant thirst for perfect holiness; nor let us be satisfied, even if we have the Spirit, without a deep and thorough work of sanctification. And, as there are degrees of holiness, and the more holiness the more happiness for us, and the more glory for God, let us set our hearts upon the possession of perfect holiness. For this let us pray, at this let

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