

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

What the Blind Man Needs Most How Shall We Begin the Year?

By Joseph Sidders
of Guntown, Mississippi

"And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that



he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away

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By James Smith
(1802 - 1862)

Beloved friends, as the Lord has graciously spared us to enter upon another portion of time, it becomes us to ask, How shall we begin it? much often depends on the beginning. It is important to begin well. Let us reflect. Let us inquire. Let us decide. Shall we not begin it in...

Faith? This is the stay, the staff, the stimulus of the soul. Let us exercise faith in God as our Father, in Jesus as our Saviour, in the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. Let



us believe the love which God hath to us, that "God is love" (I John 4:16). Let us take up the promises as the pledges and proofs of his love. He made them to inform us, to cheer us, to draw out our love to Him, and our confidence in Him. He will fulfill them. He never violated a promise yet. He never will. It is impossible for God to lie, or to prove unfaithful. His

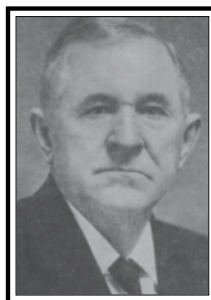
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Individual Evangelism

By J. W. Porter
(1863 - 1937)

"He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (John 1:41).

For several decades past, emphasis has been laid upon salvation by the wholesale. Fortunately, the trend is now to individual evangelism. And while there is a place, and a great place, for the professional evangelist



with sound doctrine and sane methods, much of professional evangelism has been rightly discredited. As this type of evangelism has grown in disfavor, in like proportion has personal evangelism increased in favor, apparently, with God, and certainly with man. To the shame

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Stephen, and the Rock of His Salvation

By Friedrich W. Krummacher
(1796 - 1868)

"But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord. And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen,



calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:55-60).

Stephen is the name of the man around whom we this day assemble. When his parents called their beloved infant thus, and said - doubtless with joyful and

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The purpose of the Berea Baptist Banner is as follows:

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

How Shall We

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throne is not more stable than His promise. Let us therefore believe the Word, seek the blessings, and expect the favors. He has promised us wisdom, to understand our way; strength, to prosecute our journey; grace, to subdue our iniquities; pardon, to pacify our consciences; righteousness, to justify our persons; an answer to all our prayers; and a supply of every want. Let us therefore enter upon the new year taking up the promises afresh, and exercising faith in the almighty and never changing promises. And in the prospect of the arduous duties, painful trials, determined foes, and bright prospects which are before us, say, **"I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only"** (Ps. 71:16.) Shall we not begin this year also in...

Penitence? How many sins we have committed! How many duties we have neglected! How many opportunities for usefulness we have lost! What evil tempers we have displayed! What fearful corruptions still work in our hearts! Let us look to the crucified One, who has borne the punishment of our sins in His own body on the tree, and let us mourn as one mourneth for his only son, and be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. Sorrow, deep and pungent sorrow, for sin, becomes us. Our sins have not been of an ordinary character; they have been sins against clear light, against tender love, against solemn professions, and against repeated warnings and expostulations. We have sinned against God, and against man. We have sinned amidst the uncertainties of time, and

in prospect of the solemnities of eternity. Let us bow before the throne of grace, and make a frank confession. Let us go to Gethsemane and Golgotha, and have fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings. Let us earnestly entreat the Holy Spirit to produce deep compunction, and to give us the grace of repentance, that we may sorrow after a godly manner (II Cor. 7:9). Nothing will become us more at the beginning of this new year, than deep and profound repentance for sin. But shall we not begin this year also in...

Prayer? In special, fervent, and importunate prayer? We need grace, special grace; therefore we should make use of special prayer. Our prayers have been too formal. They have been offered up too much as a matter of course. There has not been that life, that earnestness, or that importunity in them, that there should have been. God is willing to give what we want. He waits to be gracious unto us. He has promised that He will not turn a deaf ear to our prayers. But we "must" feel our need. We "must" realize our dependence. We "must" pray in earnest. We "must" ask as if we meant it. Cold prayers will not do. Formal devotion cannot be acceptable. We must "stir up ourselves" to call upon God. Let us fix times for special prayer, and keep them. Let us select subjects for prayer, and stick to them. Let us feel our dependence upon the Holy Spirit as the author of prayer, and seek His direct and powerful operations. Our heavenly Father is saying, "Call upon me, and I will show thee great and mighty things." Our exalted Redeemer is saying, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, **I will do it**" (John 14:14). The Holy Spirit is saying, "The fervent, effectual

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PONDERING THE TIME



Look at your mailing label on the front page of this month's paper. If you see above your name "Expires 1/2021" then this will be your last issue. So renew now, otherwise you will have to sit and ponder what you could have been reading in the next issue of the *Banner*.

Small Drops

By Joseph M. Sidders of
Guntown, Mississippi

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



MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

When my little brother and I were younger we used to love to spend the night at my grandfather's house. So much so in fact that he purchased bunk beds for us to share during our evenings over. My grandpa was the best. We would have sock-fights and build forts out of couch cushions and then after supper we would play dominoes until it was bedtime.

Grandpa's house always had some of the more old-fashioned items in it that we just did not have at home. We had Lincoln Logs to play with, he always cooked with grease, the sinks always had an old school bar of soap that felt like it might just rip the dirt right out of the pores of your skin and the beds had wool blankets to keep us extra warm at night. One night after brushing our teeth as we were climbing into bed before grandpa came to tuck us in Jon revealed to me that he really disliked those old wool blankets. He said that it would rub against his neck at night and make him itchy. Grandpa came in and we climbed into our respective bunks and before he left he asked if we needed anything. To this I responded, "yeah grandpa, Jon is cold." So grandpa reached into the closet and grabbed Jon a second wool blanket. Jon still grumbles at me when I bring this up today.

Brothers can really reveal the depravity of our nature. The first two, Cain and Abel, really set a low bar to be fair. In Genesis 4 we find Cain, the oldest and tiller of the ground, and his little brother

Abel who was a keeper of sheep. In Genesis 4:3-8 we read **"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him."**

We see the boys were both brought up to have reverence to the Lord as they both brought an offering, but as Cain's was not fit for the King, it was not accepted. Cain became angry and God addressed the reason in which his offering was not acceptable. It was not Abel's fault the offering was unacceptable, it was Cain's. God confirms that had Cain brought forth an offering meet for the Lord, it would have been accepted. Cain, instead of recognizing his error, took to his brother and killed him in the field. It is fitting that he responds to the Lord's question in the following verse, **"... Am I my brother's keeper?"** (Gen. 4:9).

Beloved, we must understand that murder is sin, and each of us from the writer to the reader is capable of great sin. We are not fit to be our brother's keeper. In anger and wrath or even in jest we take advantage of one another for a cheap laugh or vicious revenge. We can not smite God so we smite one another. Who could trust us to be keepers of anything?

This is why in God's omnipotence He sent His own Son to bear our sins upon the cross. We could not have performed a work earnest enough to earn God's forgiveness for our sins, not a single one of us. We could not have shed enough of our own blood to wash away our guilt and there is not a drop that is worthy to be considered by the absolute holiness of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Through the blood of Jesus we are made the victors! **"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"** (I Cor. 15:55-57). Jesus is my keeper!

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



How Shall We

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prayer of a righteous man **'availeth much'**" (James 5:16). Let us believe in the efficiency of prayer. Let us try and prove the power of prayer. Let us mix faith and hope with every prayer we present. Let us, begin the year by renewing our...

Consecration. Let us, with deep devotion, listen to the apostle, **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living**

sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:1-2.) Let us imitate those spoken of by the prophet, **"One shall say, I am the LORD's"** (Isa. 44:5). Let us retire, let us place ourselves before the cross, immediately under the eye of God; and there let us anew solemnly "surrender" our persons, property, talents, and all we can command, to God and His service: there let us "consecrate" the whole to God, to be His, for His use, and for His glory. And let us endeavour this year to go about our business as consecrated persons, let us consider that we are set apart for God, devoted to God, and that every power is to be held sacred to the glory of God. This would be consistent. This would only be honest, for we are not our own, we are **"bought with a price:"** and should therefore glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are God's (I Cor. 6:19-20). We are not hired servants, but the absolute property of the Lord Jesus, ransomed by His blood, redeemed by His power, and placed and kept in this world for His glory. Let us enter upon this new period of our existence in a spirit of.

Watchfulness. The times are dangerous, We are surrounded by snares. We have traitors within us. We have hosts of enemies all around us. We are in an enemy's country, and are every moment exposed to danger. Let us watch against our foes. Let us watch the intimations of our Lord's will. Let us be sincere, devotional, active, diligent, peaceable, and upright before God and man. If we believe, faith will keep us steady; if we repent, penitence will make us humble; if we pray, prayer will

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How Shall We

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assure us supplies; if we consecrate afresh all our energies to the Lord, consecration will preserve us from a worldly spirit; and if we are watchful, we shall escape many temptations and snares which overtake and overcome the heedless and unwary.

Beloved, may this year bring you much grace from God; may you live and walk in close and holy fellowship with God; may you be entirely devoted, and bring great glory, to God; and if death should overtake you, may an abundant entrance be administered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost (Rom. 15:13).



Stephen, and the

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hopeful hearts—"The boy shall be called Stephen"—they knew not what they did; and that which they predicted in the name of the boy was hidden from their eyes. But God, in whose book all his days were written, from the first to the last, knew well what would at length become of him, and it was he who secretly suggested this name to them; for it was a significant name: Stephen means a crown. The boy was to be the first witness in the new kingdom, about whose temples the martyr's blood-stained wreath should be wound. What the name predicted, we see this day fulfilled. A great and sacred scene presents itself to our view. Let us approach nearer, and contemplate, to the praise of Almighty grace, and, with the

help of God, to the strengthening of our faith, the end of the first evangelical martyr.

We direct our attention to,

I. The cause for which he dies;

II. The Divine aid which he experiences; and,

III. The state of mind in which he leaves this world.

I. THE CAUSE FOR WHICH HE DIES

We are in the city of Jerusalem. We meet in the streets a number of learned Jews in animated and hot discussion—a select company—all of them men of note from the most celebrated schools of the Libertines, Cyremians, and Alexandrians,—men who unite a classical education with their Judaism, and are well versed in the wisdom of Greece and Rome. And in the midst of them stands a young man, of a lively and cheerful aspect, and a firm and calm deportment, against whom they all seem to have conspired. It is Stephen, one of the seven deacons, who after solemn prayer, had been chosen a short time before to that office by the little church of Jesus, for the daily distribution of alms, and who, probably from being a fisher man himself, had been taken in the Gospel net. Unlearned, untaught, and without worldly accomplishments, but a man of good report, as the Scriptures testify; full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, faith, and power—and the latter is of greater importance than the former;—a man who had already unfurled a bold banner, valiantly contended for the honour of his crucified King in many a combat, and was known far and wide in the land by miracles and mighty deeds;—such is the individual who is assailed by these learned men, well equipped with every weapon with which wit, learning,

and eloquence can furnish them, in order to overthrow Jesus, the Man of his heart, in his esteem, and eject Him from the fortress of his faith. But, however heated the logicians become, the simple messenger of the cross is not afraid of these armed men; the weapons of his warfare are not carnal. His dignified opponents can obtain no advantage over the spirit from which he speaks. The power of truth evinced in his words, condemns their lying arts, and confounds their devices. The cobwebs of their fallacious arguments and subtleties fall in tatters at their feet. And oh, the mortifying circumstance! they are compelled, whilst red with shame and confusion, to strike their sails before the plain and artless wisdom of this Nazarene.

But even as the enemies of truth are wont to act in such defeats—who must always have the last word whatever happens, and, when wisdom is at an end, give vent to their evil passions; and, if arguments are wanting, uproariously demonstrate the point by the fist and the pummel of the sword—so it is like wise in the present case. These learned men and doctors of the law, furious at seeing themselves so shamefully and unwontedly driven from the field, hastily separate with looks of rage; stir up the people, together with the elders and the scribes; then return triumphing with an armed mob, attack the sectarian, and drag him by violence and with rage before the Sanhedrin.

There, before the assembled council, a couple of hired villains are suborned to appear against Stephen with a number of false accusations. **"And all that sat in the council, looked stedfastly on him..."** (Acts 6:15). But what did they see? **"Beloved,"** writes

the Apostle John, **"if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God"** (I John 3:21). The holy calm of his righteous soul reflected itself like solar radiance in his features; and his countenance was like that of an angel, bright, venerable, and heavenly. **"Are these things so?"** (Acts 7:1) inquired the high priest in a furious tone, completely enraged at the equanimity of the accused. Stephen then opened his mouth; and with a collectedness, as though he were unconscious of being in such a den of lions, he begins to narrate something to the venerable assembly.

At the rather lengthy discourse which now follows, many a reader has shaken his head: nor can I deny having done so likewise. One would have thought that, in the last moments of his life, the messenger of God would have been able to say something more powerful and energetic than this. A woe upon the generation of vipers, and a thunder from Mount Ebal against the wicked and adulterous race; and then a joyful and valiant confession that Jesus was Lord to the glory of the Father:—something of this kind would have appeared more heroic and more in its place on such an occasion. But instead of that, we have a sober statement of facts which are known to every one, the intention or use of which is not apparent—a dry and uninteresting harangue! Such it appears; and it is difficult to recognize in it the man "full of wisdom, spirit, and power." But only look a little deeper. What, this a dull and insipid address! There are nothing but drawn daggers beneath it! It is the most striking, pungent, and irresistible call to repentance that perhaps ever issued from the mouth of

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Narrow Paths

By Doug Newell IV of
Clendenin, West Virginia

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

EXAMPLES OF GRACE

"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7).

The Lord has greatly blessed me. He saved my unworthy soul when I deserved to go to Hell. Jesus rescued me, certainly not because I deserved it, but because He showed this wretched sinner mercy. I am thankful for what Christ did for me and what He is doing for me now, and what He has promised to do in the future. Our text is not talking about the here and now, but in ages and generations to come. Do you ever think about life after death? Does this world have such a hold on you that you are captive to its every whim? God showed mercy to sinners to make the redeemed displays of His grace. He brought us from under wrath to the trophies of His mercy.

In the ages to come, in the New Earth, God's people, washed in the blood of the Lamb, will be the demonstrations of God's awesome kindness. The Lord saved sinners so He might show through all eternity, how gracious and kind He is to us through Jesus. God, to glorify His kindness, has planned to use His people as the means on which to show that kindness. The Almighty will show how good He is in eternity by continually showing kindness to His children. God has already shown more mercy and kindness to a sinner like me than I can

calculate, but the storehouse of goodness will never empty. I will never get to the bottom of the treasure house of grace. In the ages to come, God will STILL be showing me how good He is through Christ Jesus

I know this life is hard and it may seem like one battle after the other and can easily get discouraged and downcast. But if you are in Christ, you have this eternal joy waiting for you. You have the unending, multiplied blessings waiting. Look to His promises and live by faith. Do not become a slave to what the world tells you to think and how the world tells you to feel. I have liberty in Christ, and I am His freeman. I need not live in the bondage of fear any longer, that is not the spirit of God within. Do you know Christ? Then consider the end of His great sacrifice that redeems, justifies, and glorifies. You have a living hope in a living Saviour, who wills that His people, His purchased possessions will be where He is and see Him as He is. It was Christ that loved me, sought me, saved me, died for me in my place, redeemed me, gave me life, granted me repentance, and unites Himself to me, so that I am one with Him and it is Christ in whom I have hope in for the future. He has never done me wrong or failed to do what He promised.

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



Stephen, and the

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man. Certainly an excellent archer! Arrow fast follows arrow; and how he hits the mark, both to the right and left!

Stephen is accused of a fourfold blasphemy. They accuse him of blaspheming God and Moses, the law and the holy place. Stephen, instead of justifying himself, throws back the entire accusation on the head of his accusers, and shows that they are worthy of death. Admirable is the manner in which he puts them to shame. The Holy Spirit is a powerful combatant. Stephen relates their history to them. To this they willingly listen, and at first suspect nothing evil. But before they are aware, they have swallowed goads and mails by so doing; and the little book which was sweet in the mouth proves bitter in the belly. Stephen begins with Abraham, and shows them from the commencement, how the existence of the whole Israelitish nation is rooted in the free mercy of God, who, from mere grace, was gracious to the Patriarch; snatched him from the midst of heathen darkness; bore him on eagle's wings to the promised land; gave him the covenant of circumcision; and, at a time when Abraham possessed neither a child nor an inheritance in the land, promised him, according to the good pleasure of his free grace, the whole country, together with a numerous and blessed posterity.

Stephen then notices the sons of Jacob, the patriarchs of the people. But wherewith does he begin the history of these patriarchs: With a piece of wickedness. They envied their brother Joseph, and sold him into Egypt; **"but God was with him"** (Acts 7:9). A famine arose in the land, and great affliction.

The patriarchs had deserved, on account of their impious deed, to have died of hunger. But the unsearchable mercy of God had otherwise determined. They were received by Joseph their brother; thus experiencing grace instead of justice. **"Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, three score and fifteen souls"** (Acts 7:14).

Under the gracious protection of the Most High, Who was not forgetful of the promise which He had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and increased in Egypt. Another king arose, who knew not Joseph. He dealt harshly with the people, and ruled Israel with a rod of iron; and they deserved it. But Jehovah did not regard their unworthiness; they experienced grace instead of justice. Moses was born, exposed, wonderfully preserved, and chosen to be the ruler, judge, and deliverer of his people. But how did the latter act? Even as they had always resisted the Lord, in spite of all the manifestations of His grace, so now they resist His ambassador. "They refused Him," relates Stephen, and said, **"Who made thee a ruler and a judge?"** (Acts 7:35). Moses was obliged to flee; but eternal compassion did not forsake the people. The angel of the Lord appeared to His servant in the burning bush: **"I have seen the affliction of my people... and am come down to deliver them"** (Acts 7:34). This Moses, adds Stephen, whom they refused, saying, **"Who made thee a ruler and a judge?"** (Acts 7:35), the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer. This Moses, continues he, who brought them out with signs and wonders; this Moses, who said to the children of Israel, **"...A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto**

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Stephen, and the

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you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear" (Acts 7:37), this Moses, who was **"with the angel which spake to him in mount Sinai... who received the lively oracles to give unto us"** (Acts 7:38-39); this Moses—oh! shameful and insane behavior!—**"our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt"** (Acts 7:39), made a golden calf, and sacrificed to the idol. The tabernacle of witness was in the wilderness, and God was in the tabernacle. But did they give heed to it? **"Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made, to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon"** (Acts 7:43).

Nevertheless, God continued gracious. Israel entered the promised land. The Lord cast out the heathen before the face of the fathers. The tabernacle was continued in Judah until the times of David. David found favor with God, and entreated it as a favor—for as to right, that was out of the question—that he might find a habitation for the God of Jacob. Wonderful and unwearied mercy! The Lord heard, and Solomon built Him a house. . . .

Thus far had Stephen related the history; but he was now at liberty to close. It was enough; the proof was irrefutably adduced, that they—they themselves—were the blasphemers; and that they, from ancient times, had been the despisers of God, of Moses, of the law, and the holy place. The conclusion was easily drawn: if from time immemorial ye have resisted the visitation of grace, and trodden under foot God and His

messengers, where is the wonder that ye have now rejected and murdered the Son of eternal love Himself? Ye are the people, from whom nothing better is expected, and in whom such abominations are not regarded as strange.

The assembly is in great perplexity. They feel that what is said applies to them; they are convicted and vanquished. They are forced to condemn themselves against their will. They are enraged to the highest degree; but what does it avail? They must yield. Truth is too strong for them. Their own history testifies against them. Who can refute it? Stephen perceives what is passing in his honorable auditory. He reads the result of his sermon in their faces. The deer is hit. The tree is tottering. The axe must now be laid at its root. The young hero draws his sword, rushes in upon them, hews about him with all its edge, in order to cause the total overthrow of their self-righteousness: and hence he exclaims, in a manner enough to make their ears to tingle: **"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcized in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it"** (Acts 7:51-53).

Thus spake the man of God, undaunted, and full of holy zeal, in the midst of the noble and the mighty in Israel, its rulers and representatives. Dreadful is the accusation brought against the chosen people! Terrible the testimony against the children of the family! Such an alarm had

never yet been sounded in the synogogue; such a storm had never before assailed them. It was unexampled and unheard of. Even the Master of Nazareth had stood more reverentially before the high Sanhedrin, than this His scholar, and had refrained from pronouncing any judgment upon them. But the Master was the Lamb, which was, of necessity, dumb before its shearers; for He bare our iniquities. Hence He refrained from using the sword; but placed it in the hands of His disciple, and selected Stephen to be the herald, who, in his stead, should proclaim to Israel their guilt from the house-tops; tear away the covering from their mountains of sins; condemn the whole nation and its rulers; and thus justify the inflictions of the Divine indignation, which were, in a short time, to crush the peculiar people, and whirl them asunder, that the promise of Abraham might come upon the heathen.

We know what the discourse of the valiant witness effected. It necessarily brought the minds of his audience to a decision, either one way or other. A call to repentance of such an especial kind—a sentence upon the sinner from the tribunal of His own history—never fails of its effect. Let me only come out against thee, my friend, armed with thy own history, and prove to thee, step by step, and irrefutably, how God called to thee on one occasion, and thou turnedst thy back upon Him; how grace was near thee on another, and thou choosedst the curse; how thou at one time didst hear a knocking at thy door, but turnedst a deaf ear to it; how at another a light from God flashed through thy soul, but thou clavest firmly to thy darkness; how thou wast in one place allured by the goodness of God to repentance,

but didst harden thine heart; and how, in another, that appalling word "Eternity," awoke thee, and yet thou wouldst continue to sleep, and willfully remain in thy carnal security. Let me have the power thus to assault thee on every side with thine own history, as with a battering-ram, and to support my address by the blood-red chart of thy life, and thou wilt most assuredly succumb. I have the iron upon the anvil: it will be formed into one shape or other; it will either bend or break. Either thou wilt condemn thyself, and become spiritually bankrupt, and weep; or thou wilt harden thyself, and overcome the power of truth with thy evil will. Either thou wilt cast down thine eyes, and wring thy hands; or, with an embittered spirit, and gnashing of teeth, thou wilt resort to hell for weapons, and with Satanic powers repulse the attack upon thine heart; and thus thou wilt be approaching one step nearer to maturity in wickedness and to judicial hardness.

It was in this latter manner that the words of Stephen wrought upon the minds of the Sanhedrin. Rage ensued instead of repentance; foaming at the mouth instead of tears; hardness instead of humiliation. The labor had not been in vain. Vessels were formed by it—but vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction. **"When they heard these things,"** it is said, **"they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth."** And God only knows what would be the consequence, even amongst us, my friends, were I now to begin and unfold before your eyes the registers of your life; or even to place before one or other of you the catalog of guilt, which he has added during the last ecclesiastical year, with impious hands, to those

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Light Contemplations

By Luke Austin
of Cadillac, Michigan

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

SAVED FROM SIN

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

Call me a masochist but often I explore the corners of YouTube with this in the search bar, "Testimonies of salvation." I very occasionally stumble on one that may be genuine but as you can imagine this brings up all sorts of strange religious ghost stories.

I listened to one in particular yesterday that just had me shaking my head, not in annoyance but in compassion. This poor man gave his testimony of how he "got saved" (a term which I despise). So this man proceeded to tell an adult ghost story where he and his wife had a name of a single woman who they were going to purchase gifts for her child. They bought a bunch of gifts and fast forward to the end, they lost the piece of paper with the woman's address. They searched and searched and finally went to the burn pile that the locals dumped their garbage at assuming they threw it away by accident. The pile had been recently burned but his wife cried out, "God if you are real, help me find this paper." She flung herself in the ashes and came out holding the piece of paper. Then this man said that is when I "got saved." He meant it with all sincerity.

This is an extremely troubling and all too frequently propagated falsehood. This man said nothing of his sin or the burden he was

under. I heard nothing of his condemnation before God. I never heard when Jesus washed him from his sin. He never mentioned knowing his burden was gone and having peace with God. I never even heard the name Jesus. This lie of the devil is so pushed today. People can tell ghost stories about some strange experience but they know nothing of the salvation of God.

Why did Jesus lay down His life? To give His life a ransom for many. To save us from our sins. He did not come to help us recover some misplaced piece of paper out of the trash heap. What an irreverent thought! If you have a testimony that knows nothing of a burden of sin and Jesus taking away that burden, you do not have a testimony of salvation. You have a ghost story. Here is a good test: if the testimony you have would be enhanced by turning the lights off and placing a flashlight under your chin, that is just a story, not salvation.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15).

Are you a sinner? Then there is a Savior for you. Are you a religious person who likes to tell stories? He did not come to help you find misplaced items. Repent and believe the gospel.

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



Stephen, and the

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decisions which lie ready, like so many sentences of death, to be pronounced against him, and are preserved in the archives of the eternal Judge. I could do so, my friends, and am less a stranger to your history than you suppose. I know the path of one and another, and have cast a look into their most secret deportment. I know of the powerful admonitions to return which have at various times reached their hearts, and of the flashes of Divine light which have fallen brightly into the sinful darkness of their lives. I know of the sounds of the trumpet which have once and again thundered into their fatal repose—a "Wake up, O man, from thy sleep of sin!" and of the hooks which on various occasions have been cast into the soul. But I also know how they convulsively clung to the devil's neck on account of them, and forcibly held sin fast to them; how they intentionally fortified themselves in death, and with a false spirit kicked against the pricks, which they were well aware were of God. I know how they armed themselves with mockery and falsehood against the approach of truth, and resisted, with infernal vehemence, the Holy Spirit; how that, against conscience and their better knowledge, they gave their hands anew to the devil, and with the audacity of a Pharaoh, hardened the iron sinew of their necks, and said in their hearts, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey him?" God knows what would be the result were I now to disclose it, individually and particularly, and to lift the veil. A day such as this demands such an occupation, and it is only fitting that we give an account of our stewardship, and

strike the balance.

But there is one thing that restrains me; one thing binds my tongue; it is the fear lest my feet should this day become dreadful on the mountains, and my discourse a savor of death unto death. It is the apprehension lest I might awaken fury instead of humiliation, and beat the iron hard instead of rendering it malleable; and, O horrible thought! be compelled perhaps to become to my beloved congregation such a messenger as Isaiah once was to Israel, when it was said to him—Go and **"make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."** May the Lord mercifully spare me from such commissions to my dear brethren!

II. THE DIVINE AID WHICH HE EXPERIENCES

Stephen's fate is decided. His discourse has ruined every thing, and produced a dreadful sensation. How the heathen rage, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed! The whole assembly is in an uproar. How should it be otherwise? The Sanhedrin has been insulted, and with it the whole nation. Such a disgrace and mortification inflicted upon the sacred council of the elders cannot be expiated otherwise than by the blood of the criminal. Ha! what a hissing amongst the viper brood. What a glow of infernal rage and revenge in their minds! How they roll their fiery eyes, the irritated tigers, and horribly and satanically deform their visages! Every feature is a murderous threat—every look a dagger—every word a biting

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Stephen, and the

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adder. They murmur, gnash with their teeth, clench their fists, and stamp with their feet upon the ground. The pit opens itself, darkness has thrown aside its mask, and the black flag of hell waves openly in the breeze.

Stephen perceives what is approaching; but in the measure in which the powers of hell predominate among his enemies, the power of the Holy Spirit increases in him. God does not forsake His servants, nor suffer them to be confounded before their adversaries. As often as Satan arms his host, it is also the time for equipment in the kingdom of God; and when the weapons of darkness spring forth from their scabbards, those of light glitter whetted against them. Through the clouds of oppression and persecution, the Lord imperceptibly pours down His dew and His sacred fire upon His people, so that they flourish like blossoming trees in a thunder-shower; and the more furiously the battle rages, the brighter does He polish their armor and their helmets, that they may glitter and shine, and all the world see that the Lord is in the battle. The Lord is then wont occasionally to uncover the star of nobility, which His elect wear concealed under their vesture. He then places them in the midst of the cloud, "fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners," and sets His servants as it were in array for His honor's sake, glorious and resplendent like the angels of God, to the confusion of Satan and in defiance of His foes.

Look at Stephen; like an osprey, which is at home on the watery element and in the storm; or the albatross, which, when all is calm,

solitarily sinks his plumage, but flies to meet the storm with a cry of joy, and never more cheerfully claps his wings than when beneath him the breakers foam, and the howling hurricanes rush fiercely through each other: so Stephen stands, upheld and sustained by the Lord. The world has cast him out, and rages around him like an ocean to swallow him up. The prospect is horrible beneath and all round him, and there is no way of escape. But upwards the path is clear. Blissful privilege of the children of God, to be able to escape from the pressure of the present state, even through the clouds! His spirit soars on high, under the powerful impetus of faith, away from the tumult. He lays hold on the hope held out to him in Christ Jesus, "**Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast**" (Heb. 6:19); and he throws out his anchor above him, within the veil. Thus the dear disciple lies at a good anchorage, however the depths may roar around his little bark. He is like a pilgrim on the lofty Alps, standing above the storm, whilst thunder and lightning rage beneath his feet.

And now, whilst looking up on high, through the windows of the council-chamber, after the world and its most venerable tribunal have condemned him, in order to deposit his cause entirely in the hands of his heavenly Advocate, oh what a wonder occurs! Dare he trust his own eyes? He, the meanest among the servants of his King, and yet favored with such a manifestation? The clouds divide, heaven opens, and he beholds the glory of God—God himself in that radiant glory, in which he appears in the third heaven to the just made perfect and the holy angels. He sees the Ancient of Days, as Daniel saw

him, on His fiery throne, and as afterwards the eagle-eyed John beheld Him in the midst of the four-and-twenty elders and the seven spirits of God. And on the right hand of the Most Excellent Glory—O ravishing sight!—he perceives the Man of his heart—Him in whose cause his blood is now to be spilt, after He had first shed His for him. And it is no dreaming vision which he sees—no phantom of the brain—no lying illusion. Stephen is awake; he is sober; he knows where he is; and the circumstances in which he is placed are not exactly adapted to afford room for the play of fantastic reveries. What he beholds is real and substantial. It is Jesus in bodily form; it is the figure of Him who is the chief among ten thousand; it is His glorified body, the most glorious and beautiful of all created things; it is His incomparable and lovely countenance.

And in what position does the ravished disciple behold Him? Not sitting at the right hand of Majesty. He is standing, as if on the point of hastening towards him with His aid. He is standing, as if thereby He meant to say to him—"Be of good cheer, my son! Here is thy shield and the sword of thy victory." He is standing, as if calling out to him—"Tremble not, neither despond; I am waiting for thee with open arms." How happy is the highly-favoured disciple! The bliss is almost too great—how shall he support it! Everything within him exclaims—"**My Lord and my God!**" "Hail, Saviour, in thy glorious exaltation—a thousand times, hail!" And tears of joy probably streamed from his glistening eyes. Had his triumphal wreath and crown of glory been shown him in the clouds above; had the prospect been unfolded to him of the golden streets in the

eternal city, and the palm-groves of paradise; had he been given to hear from afar the high praises of angels on their golden harps, and the hallelujahs of the just made perfect—oh, this would also have been lovely and an encouragement in the conflict. But what would it have been, compared with such a sight compared with the manifestation of the fairest upon earth, or in heaven itself? It is not that which we possess through Jesus, but Jesus Himself, which constitutes the heaven of His children. He is the banner under which we fight, and the prize for which we strive. He is the magnet whose attraction draws us, and the fountain after whose waters we thirst. He is our glory and our crown; He is our home and our couch of repose; the end and aim of all our longing and desire, our joy and perfect satisfaction; He, the Saviour Himself, is our all. What the house is to the sparrow, the nest to the swallow, water to the fish, light and warmth to the flower, Jesus is to us—our element and our life; the possession of Him is the summit of our happiness—the beholding Him, the supreme delight of our eyes and resting on His bosom, the heaven of heavens.

O how sweet and strong is the union of affection between Jesus and His sheep; how incomparable, and above all comprehension and expression. One of His little ones is in danger; a reason sufficient for the Divine Friend immediately to rend the heavens, and personally to appear to him in the clouds. And nothing more is necessary than the mere manifestation of himself to his oppressed follower, and the last remains of fear vanish from his breast, and he treads on the necks of his enemies. Like the lark, which intoxicated with the odors of spring, and melted into

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Brief Truths

By Randy Johnson of
Texarkana, Texas

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



REVERENCE GOD

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (Ps. 89:7).

God is the creator of everything that exists, from the 3rd heavens to the heavens to the earth and all that exists in them God created. God is the Potter, and we are the clay, and the Potter has made us as it pleased Him. None of us has a right to ask God why Thou has created me thus. **"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory" (Rom. 9:21,23).** God's entire creation should reverence Him in everything, be thankful in everything, and bring glory to His holy name without failure. The psalmist wrote these words, **"His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed" (Ps. 72:17).** One day all people, even the lost and haters of God will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, they will bow and praise His holy name with reverence.

When you study God's word in truth you discover just how much God is involved in our life. God is involved in our life from eternity past to eternity future and all in between. Paul wrote these words, **"For none of us liveth to himself,**

and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:7-8). We find that our life was ordained and predetermined by God, therefore I am what God thus made me. Paul also wrote, **"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).** If you are a Christian or a lost soul God is still the Potter and hath made you what you are. When Paul wrote in Romans 9:23, **"... which he had afore prepared unto glory,"** this means that God has "fit up in advance us unto glory." He elected before the foundation of the world in eternity past to be glorified creatures or **"... vessels of mercy."** Therefore, as Christians we are all what God hath made us, and understanding this mercy we have reason to praise God in reverence as the triune God of our salvation and spiritual life, Father, Son, and Spirit. Paul wrote in, Ephesians 2:10, **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"** The words **"God hath before ordained"** is the very same Greek word (proetoimazō) as verse Romans 9:23, **"he had afore prepared"** meaning God in eternity past afore prepared us for His glory and ordained

our spiritual walk in this life. God is to be revered every moment of our existence for this mercy, He is the Potter, and we are the clay made into a vessel of His mercy and grace. Again, the more Christians understand the workings of God in their life, the more reverence we will have for our Master. Understanding this, the psalmist could never stop praising God, David realized and knew these truths.

The lost should reverence God, not for their lost state, not because that when they die they will spend eternity in hell's fires, not even because they were fitted by God as vessels for destruction, but because God has not already consumed them into everlasting destruction. God said, **"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not" (Lam. 3:22).** This refers to both the lost and saved, the saved in salvation and the lost that they are not already in hell's fires. Every second that God leaves these lost souls **"fitted for destruction"** on this earth is time they can live and sin on this earth. Because once their sinful eyes close on this earth they will awake in the eternal flames of hell, feeling the pains like the rich man. **"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:23-24).**

While the lost will not reverence God on this earth, they will one day bow and reverence God thru Jesus Christ at the Great White Throne. Isaiah 45:23, **"I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in**

righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." And Romans 14:11-12, **"For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."** After these lost souls stand before our Saviour as the Great Judge, they will bow and reverence our God as King and Lord. Then they will be cast into hell's fires for eternity, oh yes, we Christians should reverence our triune God with every breath we take on this earth. Christians, remember these words, **"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (I Thess. 5:8-11).**

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



Stephen, and the

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love and joy, exultingly soars aloft into the calm, pure air; so Stephen's soul hovers above in the light of the countenance of his Jesus: and that which otherwise distressed him—affliction, shame, death, and the terrors of the grave—all is now overcome, abundantly, suddenly, in a moment, in a look.

Yes, in one look! Oh that you all were acquainted with this mystery! Believe it, my dear friends, as often as you see us

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Stephen, and the

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sorrowful and oppressed, and if we are so occasionally, it is only a sign that we are not in our element; our station is no longer beneath the cross, and a mist hangs before the eyes of our faith. Let the fog only sub side, and the sun again break through the clouds, that the image of my Divine friend may again portray and transfigure itself in me, and let me again lay hold of and embrace Him—I am then a hero, and ascend on wings as an eagle; then death no more affrights me, nor sin any longer troubles me; I then laugh Satan to scorn, and clap my hands at the hosts of hell, and even when in difficulties ye shall see my countenance shine as on a nuptial festival. The sight of Jesus is my triumph and my strength; the sight of Jesus is health to the sick, and victory to the dying; the sight of Jesus is my source of sanctification and my armor for the fight; yea, that which causes me to run in the way of His commandments, and smile in the furnace of affliction, is the clear view, by faith, of the sun of my life, of my Jesus!

Stephen cannot contain himself. He must make known what he sees. There the holy hero stands, with nothing but the expression of serenity and victorious joy in His countenance; and in the midst of the disturbance of his raging foes, he extends his arm towards heaven, and loudly and exultingly exclaims, **“Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.”**

On hearing this, their rage rose to its height; and the last barriers, which had restrained the complete breaking forth of their fury, completely gave way at these

words. They began to cry out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, ran upon him with one accord, and dragged him tumultuously out of the city, in order to stone him.

Oh, he who knows the human heart—that unfathomable, deceitful, and desperate thing—will not be surprised at this result! He perceives how it is, that the bold testimony of the blessed disciple caused such an impression; how the sacred collectedness of the accused man, and his sublime and Divine serenity, only excited the rage of his adversaries to the utmost. Alas! it was natural, very natural, that this decided, calm, yet mighty triumph of the Nazarene, should vex and excite them most deeply; and this unexampled heroism, which he derived from the hated Jesus, be to them a thorn in the flesh, an abomination, a savor of death unto death. The exhibition of this confounded their accusations much too decisively; his angelic countenance, in the midst of their curses, condemned them more powerfully than even his words; and from the discourse and deportment of the man an odor of truth reached them, against which their deceit was scarcely able to stand; and it contained an argument in favor of Christianity, which really threatened to convince them, in the center of their hearts, that they were in arms against the cause of the living God, and laying murderous hands upon a messenger of Jehovah. The voice of truth spoke strongly at that moment—very strongly. The wretches were not far from the kingdom of God. Had they only now given ear to the secret voice, which testified so powerfully in their hearts for Stephen, and against them; for the truth and against their devilishness

and lies; but, alas! alas! they would not have the truth, but lies; and the more mightily and victoriously truth assailed them, the more powerfully did they harden their hearts, and the more impetuously do they present their breast against it. They stifle the reproving voice in their souls; they stop their ears to the accusations of conscience; and, instead of humiliation, the most horrible exasperation ensues, and a fury which proceeds from the lowest hell. O dangerous state! to be not far from the kingdom of God, and yet to be equally as near to judicial hardness and hell!

III. THE STATE OF MIND IN WHICH HE LEAVES THIS WORLD

We have left the council chamber, and are outside the city walls. What a tumult! What rage and fury! The execution takes place. O, dreadful! dreadful! The witnesses who, according to the law, were to cast the first stones, lay down their garments, as the sacred historian informs us, at the feet of a young man named Saul, and he took pleasure in his death! And yet this Saul became a Paul! O free, unfathomable, omnipotent grace! The witnesses take up stones; Stephen sees it; but his countenance continues firm and cheerful. He knows in whom he believes, and whither he is going. Do not expect, my friends, that the Almighty will now stretch forth His strong arm from the clouds, and dash the tools of Satan to pieces with His thunders. No; Stephen must fall. The Lord requires people for the martyrs' crowns which angels weave above, and the blood of the martyrs enriches the soil of the church. Stephen is also well satisfied with it; he longs to be at home. The storm breaks upon him; the stones fly; his head

already bleeds. He then joyfully opens his mouth, as if he were pelted with roses, and exultingly exclaims, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” Lord Jesus! Lord Jesus! Thou precious war-cry of God's children—the watchword by which we recognize each other—the trumpet's blast at which the walls of Jericho fall down That which the ringing of the alarm-bell is to the inhabitants, when fire is in the city—the signal-gun in the field at the approach of the enemy—all this and much more are the words “Lord Jesus!” to the church of God—they are never silent in it. It is the cry with which the babe is born in the Lord, and with which the aged pilgrim leaves the world—in which all their sighs are clothed, and all their longing vents itself. Lord Jesus! Thou precious watchword! O, if we had not thee, we should be the most miserable of all creatures! Wherewith should we adjure the storm? Wherewith should we tranquillize the poor disturbed heart? Wherewith should we face the devil and sin, and soar aloft above the storms of the present state We have our sword, our staff, and everything together, in the words “Lord Jesus!”

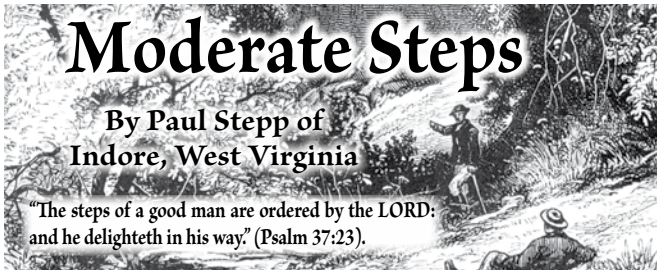
“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” With these words he commits his soul into the hands of his King. O, refuge in every age: O, secure resort. O, sweet resting-place! It is not dreadful to fall into these priestly hands, and happy is he who offers up himself upon this altar! Many a one becomes conscious, only in the last moments of his life, that he has a soul which cannot go the same way with the flesh. Whither shall he go with it—back into the world? The gates to it are closed. Into the hands of the Devil? That would be dreadful.

♦ (Continued on page 11)

Moderate Steps

By Paul Stepp of
Indore, West Virginia

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD:
and he delighteth in his way." (Psalm 37:23).



THE DANGER OF REBELLION

"But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations. And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and unto this house? And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them" (II Chron. 7:19-22). Christians like to lay claim to the 14th verse in this Chapter, **"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land"** (II Chron. 7:14). But, when it comes to the succeeding verses the Christian tends to relegate the meaning to the background, and ascribe application only to the Children of Israel.

I submit to you, that if the good God of Israel can be looked to

for rescue and redemption today, in our place and time; then, the angry God of Israel, who allowed them to be carried away captive on multiple occasions, is also our God in our place and time today. This God Who saves, will also punish the sinners! We can apply this in a personal way, so that we can warn folks that God will judge them for their sins, and men must repent and believe in Jesus Christ, else their own sins will one day plunge them into Hell and the fire that never ceases. We can also apply this to the people amongst whom we live which, I think, is needful for us today. God has been good to us as a nation, here in the USA. We have benefited for centuries, because of His nearness unto us, and the blessings and protections from Heaven. And yet, if this people amongst whom we live, will continue in the almost universal rejection of God, the very God Who has saved us; then we can expect that the angry God of Israel will pour out judgment upon us.

As our text passage says, as a people we have **"set before"** us **"other gods."** We have rejected the one true God, and, as a nation, we have rebelled against God. As a result, we stand in danger today. It is an awful thing to be **"cast out"** of the **"sight"** of God! Without His protection, we stand in danger of destruction. In fact, without Him, and without a respect for Him and His ways, our national destruction is inevitable and imminent. Perhaps we see the beginning of that destruction being played out before us, in the hatred, the

animosity, the violence, the willful sinfulness, the murder, and the wickedness that is everywhere indulged in the USA today. I pray to God on behalf of this nation. I hope that you, too, will pray for this nation. I hope that there will still yet be humility, repentance, a calling upon God and then, that we would receive from Heaven forgiveness, and a little reprieve for our people, here at the end of the world as we know it.

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



Stephen, and the

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Into the Almighty's hands? He is a consuming fire. To the Lord Jesus? He does not believe in Him. Horrible dilemma! But Stephen is at no loss. He has way and space enough. He sinks upon the bosom of his Mediator, exclaiming, **"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."** We hear nothing of a **"Be not dreadful to me!"**—**"Impute not my sins unto me!"**—**"Be my advocate in judgment!"** All this had preceded. There is no longer any mountain in the way; no whirlpool causes him trouble, no rock obstructs his passage home. Every thing is removed out of the way; he is able to steer a direct course, as upon a smooth and level mirror, into his desired haven, and cast his soul into the hands of God without further ceremony. Stephen dies by no means like one who at the last moment is plucked like a brand from the burning, and at his last breath, environed by his sins, surrenders at discretion, and then with his eyes bound, not knowing what land his vessel will make, passes over, half hoping, half despairing, into eternity, as into an unknown country. Stephen dies like one who has

already felt the hands into which he commits himself rest with blessing on his head, and who has long before received from them the wedding garment in which he is able to stand before God, and confidently feels whither he is going. Such is indeed a happy death. And, after embracing the horns of the altar, and casting his soul into the pierced hands of his King, he sinks down into the dust, streaming with blood and with broken limbs; and upon his knees, and with folded hands, he once more opens his mouth, the dear hero, for the last time in this world, and exclaims with a loud voice **You already know, my brethren, what was his exclamation: if you did not, who would have guessed it? If Stephen had broken out into accusations and execrations against the infernal brood; had he thundered upon them an amathema-maranatha; who would have been particularly surprised? We should have found it pardonable, and perhaps in order; for it would have been human and natural. But here is something more than human; here is a ray of that nature which is not of the blood of man, but of God. Stephen presses in spirit his murderers to his breaking heart, and lifting them up in the arms of love before the throne of grace, he exclaims with a fervor as if it were for his own soul—**"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."** Even as his Lord and God on the cross, when in one breath He spoiled one of Satan's fairest triumphs, and, with a **"Father forgive them,"** victoriously and instantaneously deprived Him of the whole troop of His most devoted slaves; so here the disciple, in whom we behold the glory of the Lord reflecting itself, as the sun in the dew drop of the morning. It was**

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Could you please comment on Proverbs 19:9?

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Proverbs 19:9 states: **“A false witness shall not be unpunished, and that that speaketh lies shall perish.”**

God hates the sin of bearing false witness so much that He inspired the wise man to utter a warning against this sin earlier in the chapter (19:5), and repeats it here for emphasis. A false witness, through his lying, breaks the two greatest commandments at once. He dishonors God and his neighbor when he bears false witness. It is never right to lie about someone else. It is sinful to gossip and spread rumors in an attempt to cast doubt upon a person's reputation.

Lying is one of the most grievous sins known to man. The habit of speaking lies leads a person into a myriad of sins. Once a person tells one lie it becomes much easier to tell another one, until he is able to tell lies with great skill and little or no conviction. Lying will ruin your character before men and ruin your soul before God. Lying is such a grave and solemn affront to the holiness of God, it is a sin that He hates with a perfect hatred. God has promised that all liars shall have their part in the Lake of Fire to suffer an eternity of woe. The man who uses his tongue to bear false witness, lie, and spread vicious rumors about others will

be tormented in the flames of eternal fire. God will not allow the sin of lying to go unpunished. You may be able to get away with lying to men, but the Great God of Heaven is able to hear every word you speak. God will justly punish every liar without fail. There will be myriads of liars burning in the Lake of Fire. Popes, priests, imams, false preachers, politicians, perverts, adulterers, fornicators, and drunkards will all face God Almighty at the Great White Throne with the lies they have told.

As we ponder this verse our hearts and minds should be fixed on truth, no matter what the cost. We must learn that it is never right to do wrong. It is never right to lie in order to lessen the temporal consequences from a human standpoint. Let us then labor to banish this infernal iniquity from our lives no matter what it may cost us!

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Proverbs 19:9, **“A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.”**

Nobody is getting away with nothing! That is what this verse is saying. This world is not a very just world, and many times it seems as though nobody is getting real justice. The truth is, many times, they are not. The bad guys

are caught and punished many times, but lately (in America—Adam Schiff and Hilary Clinton, anyone?) it seems that just as often as not, they are getting away with their destructive lies and fabrications.

But this verse in Proverbs tells us that inevitably and inexorably, the wheels of God's justice will not be swayed, nor deterred. At the appointed time of judgment will be the proper punishment of sin and the holy perishing of those miserable sinners. At the end of the Book of God, one will find predestined justice: and none will enter the glorious gates of God's Celestial City with guilty hearts and hands. **“..without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie”** (Rev. 22:15).

But it is a valid question to ask “why?” and even “why, God?” when we observe these rascals get away with seeming impunity. What should be our response and attitude? It might be easy to get frustrated or even faithless in trusting in a God of justice, if we get carried away with the usual hastiness of our people. The studied Christian should not be such an one, though. The Bible is full of the acts and proclamations of God. As we read and study it, a prominent theme throughout is the longsuffering of God. The power of God consumes us sometimes, and we expect God to thoroughly chastise peoples and nations for their rebellious actions. Certainly He does have the power. But the purposes of God will many times use the evil machinations of the lost to work out His holy will and as stated before, it inevitably will be to the glory and honor of God. As I studied this verse, I realized

that the power of God and the strength of God is seen in His self-control. Selah! Think about it! As frustrated as we unholy creatures get over our neighbor's sins, how much more angry can we only imagine is our great and terribly holy God? And yet He never loses His temper or His steady coolness toward these audacious humans, yes, even you and me.

Because that is indeed what the longsuffering of God ultimately is. God is allowing and working out His own sovereign purposes, including grace. Sovereign grace is not something that happened overnight, eh? From Adam's fall, through the great deluge, the Babel fiasco, Gentile rejections, and dispersions, followed by the Israeli rejection and the diaspora, into our church age of so many lukewarm churches and folks that deny the basic tenets of the Lord's New Testament Baptist churches—how many times Matt Stepp would have pulled the plug if it were up to me. But the longsuffering of God is pregnant with mercy and grace toward His precious elect. **“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. ...account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation...”** (II Peter 3:9, 15). Our salvation!

But as our text intimates so clearly, “ain't nobody getting away with nothing.” The Lord is daily recording our every word and deed. **“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment”** (Matt. 12:36). Good or bad, they are being chronicled. **“Then they**

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Could you please comment on Proverbs 19:11?

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The “**discretion**” mentioned in (Proverbs 19:11) of a man deferreth his anger: and it is his glory to pass over a transgression. According to James Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Concordance “**discretion**” means: intelligence; by implication, success: discretion, knowledge, policy, prudence, sense, understanding, wisdom, wise. It simply means that a man should be wise, and be slow to anger.

I have struggled with being slow to anger over the years, I have a bad temper. And if you ask my wife, or anyone that really knows me, I am doing much better than I used to. If you ask anyone that deals with people on a daily basis, it is one of the hardest jobs there is! When you deal with the public, for some reason they think you have stupid written on your forehead and church members sometimes are no better.

I have had men tell me they do not know how I do what I do; (as far as pastoring). I tell them, the school of hard knocks and much prayer. I am a human being, I am a sinner (Saved by Grace), and I am not perfect, so being a Christian takes time and hard work; it does not matter who you are. The secret is to learn to be slow to anger; I believe this is what (Proverbs 19:11) teaches.

The flip side of this is found in Proverbs 14:17, “**He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.**” This is a man that is quick-tempered, with wicked intentions. The contrast is between the hasty anger that is labeled as folly and the deliberate malice which produces hatred, there is NO place in a preacher’s life and ministry for such foolishness. “**Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass**” (Ps. 37:7).

Remember the word’s to Timothy from Paul, “**Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine**” (II Tim. 4:2). “**All longsuffering**”, it is hard to do, but it can be done. God Bless!

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Proverbs 19:11 states: “**The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.**”

Uncontrolled anger is temporary madness. It is important that we learn to control our emotions when provoked by others or by our circumstances. Anger rarely accomplishes anything. We often say things

when angry that we may live to regret. A wise and temperate man behaves with dignity and calmness when provoked.

The man who is able to control his anger is also more apt to have a forgiving spirit. It is a sign of true nobility when we are able to quench the flames of uncontrolled anger burning within. It is a sign of true godliness when we are able to forgive those who have wronged us and maintain a spirit of reconciliation. When we are exhibiting this kind of attitude we are following in the footsteps of our blessed Lord who said while on the cross: “**Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.**” Stephen maintained the same attitude toward those who were actively stoning him to death. Remarkable indeed!

I got convicted as I read the comment of George Lawson on this verse:

“It is the discretion of a man to be slow to anger and ready to forgive, for as it is not the water that surrounds a ship but the water which soaks into it, that sinks it, so it is not the injury done by another man that endangers us so much as the impression it makes upon ourselves. Our fretful and revengeful thoughts are the torment of our hearts. They deprive us of the government of our own souls, and it is folly, when our neighbor injures us, to do a much greater injury to ourselves when we mean to be revenged on him.

It is a greater glory for a man to govern himself than to take strong cities and rule over mighty nations. It is the wisdom and honor of sinning creatures to behave to offenders as men who need pardon for themselves. It is the glory of Christians to learn meekness and lowliness from Christ. It is the glory of pardoned

sinner to show forth the virtues of Him who called them, to which they owe so much, not only in their praises but in all their conversation” (Commentary on Proverbs, p. 303).

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Proverbs 19:11, “**The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.**”

What is “discretion?” Two prominent words are usually associated with a “discreet” man. The first is wisdom. What would be “wise/discreet” about deferring our anger at one that might offend us and the moral order of God’s Word? Number 1, we would do well to recognize that we are no different, and we do stupid things, too, and often do anger provoking deeds to our loved ones, much less the rest of humanity. When someone angers us, perhaps the first thing we ought to do, is remind ourselves that, but for the grace of God, there go I... Eh...? Selah! Think about it!

Secondly, we might recognize our relationship with the offender. God is their judge, not us, and though we may see clearly enough that what they have done is a sin, it would be “discreet” to recognize that there may be much more to God’s plans and purposes than what we can see. Along with Samuel, we might know that for Israel to ask for a King (I Samuel 8) is totally wrong and grievously blasphemous, but

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Stephen, and the

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no mere showy imitation of his great Master, no ostentatious or theatrical deception; it was truth—the man's profoundest feeling—his inmost intention and sentiment—a consequence of thorough self-condemnation, and of the blissful humiliating consciousness of the unmerited mercy which he had obtained. Whilst regarding himself, in a lively feeling, as the unworthiest of sinners, revenge no longer found a place in his contrite mind, and he was compelled to give way to compassionating love and pity. The blood of the Lamb, which had washed him from his sins, flowed now through his veins as the sap of the vine. Divested of his own burden, he had time and heartfelt compassion enough to bear the burden of his enemies' sins before God, as if it had been his own, and to entreat for them his eternal mercy: **"Lord,"** cries he, **"lay not this sin to their charge"** or, according to the original, "Do not establish it against them—let it not remain—" O what a dreadful judgment did he avert by this intercession for his murderers. When God establishes a man's sins against him, there is nothing more horrible than the individual can experience. No washing nor purifying then any longer avails; sin remains firm and indelible, like a mark that is branded. No anxious perspiration erases it, nor any flood of tears washes it away. It maintains its seat like some cancer which no herb can cure; and for it there is no more sacrifice, but a fearful looking-for of judgment and of fiery indignation, that shall devour the adversaries. Horrifying woe Stephen had reason to fear that such a judgment would fall upon

his murderers. He knew to what an extent God loved the sheep of His Son, and how He was wont to recompense them that dared to touch those whom He calls the apple of His eye. But his whole soul trembled at the thought that his enemies, whom he really could not regard as worse than he had found himself to be in his own nature, should incur any thing of the kind on his account, and because of the wrong they were doing him. He opposes himself to it with all his might; stands, as it were, in the breach for them; and restrains the lifted rod of the Almighty Avenger. **"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."** He prayed thus from the Holy Spirit, who is a Spirit of love and compassion; and God, who is one with the Spirit, and knows the mind of the Spirit, did not close His ear to such a request. The prayer at least produced one fruit, which refreshes us even to the present day. If Stephen had not prayed, we say, with Augustine, the church would have had no Paul.

It was almost with his last breath that the beloved martyr, opposing his bosom to the judgments of God, offered up this prayer of interceding love; for, when he had thus spoken, the sacred narrative informs us, **"he fell asleep"**—as it were with an olive leaf in his mouth. How wonderful is the language of the Bible! Only think—the death Stephen died, is called falling asleep! A death of the most dreadful kind that can be imagined; a death in the bloom of his years; a death whilst in perfect bodily health; a death in convulsions and nameless pangs, amidst a shower of stones from infuriated foes, and, as it were, on the scaffold and gallows of shame; and this is called "a falling asleep!" How little truth does there seem

to be in such an expression. But though this seems to be the case, it is in reality otherwise. The language of this world is dipped in falsehood; that of the Bible is true and purified like gold. The former, as the mirror of the thoughts of fallen man, speaks only according to appearances; but the language of Scripture is the language of the Spirit, who searches into the essence of things. This Spirit saw, in the death of Stephen, some thing more than the horrifying exterior. His look penetrated into the interior of the departing spirit. He saw the wondrous light from God, which irradiated this soul; and the boldness of the conscience purified in the blood of the Lamb; and the sacred sabbatism of the mind in the enjoyment of the fruits of the cross; and the blissful home ache of the breaking heart; and the peaceful willingness with which the soul, longing after the liberty of the just made perfect, suffered the dissolution of the bands of the body, and clapped its wings to meet the morning of an eternal day. He saw it; and to call it dying was then out of the question. It was a going home—a falling asleep in the arms of Eternal Love.

There his body now lies crushed, bathed in its blood, and covered with stones upon the field—himself a polished stone and well chiseled piece of workmanship in the foundation-wall of the Apostolic church - a grain of wheat that was to fall into the . . . ground and die, that it might not abide alone, but bring forth much fruit. But this bleeding corpse is not Stephen, it is only his traveling dress—Stephen has shaken off the dust of this earth from his feet. The moment of his falling asleep was that of his eternal awaking. Lift up your heads and look upwards. There

the young hero stands, elevated above all night, shone upon by the same light, in which, with longing ecstasy, he had seen the glorified form of his King from the hall of the Sanhedrin. The beatified disciple now stands before Him, and sees Him eye to eye, and sees nothing but Him, and desires to see nothing but Him alone, and is satisfied in this one look. The angels of peace approach with cordial salutations, and bring with them the white robe and the triumphal palm, and the conqueror's wreath wherewith to adorn him. And Stephen, with downcast look, receives the wreath and casts it at the feet of his bride groom, exclaiming, "Thou art worthy!" and embraces his knees, and is silent, and adores, and knows not how he feels, nor where he shall find words, until a Seraph reaches him the golden harp. The first hallelujah of his blissful and ravished heart then resounds with its notes, and mingles with the songs of the thousand times ten thousand, "Honour, and praise, and glory, and immortality unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13).

This now is the narrative, my brethren, which brings before our view the fairest of what may be found under heaven, at least in some of its radiations. It unveils to us the hidden glory of a regenerate soul, the new creature born of water and the Spirit, than which there is nothing on earth more beautiful. This sacred deposit generally continues more or less hidden during the present life, like the tabernacle in its mean covering. In the case of Stephen it was, for once, partially developed before the world, that admiring it might behold what grace can

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Stephen, and the

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effect, and be conscious of the gulf which is fixed between the work of nature and that of the Eternal Spirit. And this gulf is boundless! All the glitter and ostentation of national virtue—what is it, compared with the vivid brightness of the new life, which, like liquid silver in the smelting house, shines towards us from the whole appearance of this man of God. He leaves father and mother, in order, thence forward, to devote himself with body and soul to the service of the truth, with which he has become acquainted in Christ. Resigning property and life in the confession of this truth, is a trifle to him. Impelled by the love of Christ, he esteems everything the world calls precious as loss, that he may make the brethren partakers of the salvation he has obtained. With a dauntlessness which does not tremble even at torture and death, he erects the standard of the cross in the midst of a hostile people. With a faith which has overcome the world, he carries it into the assembly of the Sanhedrin; is reviled, and reviles not again; is cursed, and blesses; is furiously assaulted, his soul takes refuge above the clouds; hell rages, he sees heaven open; he is fallen upon with murderous intentions, his countenance shines like that of an angel; they overpower him, he raises his arm towards heaven from the midst of the hostile swarm, and exclaims, like one of the blest, “I behold my King!” he is dragged forth to the slaughter, and is quiet as a Lamb; a shower of stones hurls him to the ground, but he conquers in succumbing, cheerfully commends his spirit into the hands of Jesus, bends his knee in the dust, prays, whilst swimming in his blood, fervently

and with a full heart, for his murderers, and then passes over, triumphantly, into eternal light.

O say, what becomes of the most sublime of that which nature ever produced in its own strength, in the light of such a brilliant life of grace? However, it is not the man who is glorified here, nor is it human art or education which here celebrates its triumph. It is grace-omnipotent, wondrous grace. To it be the glory ascribed!

Even as the Bible is a book of Divine sketches and ground-plans, indicating the line of conduct which the Lord has resolved to observe, even to the end, both in His kingdom in general, and towards individuals in particular—so the narrative in which we have been expatiating is more than a mere historical event, and a terminated fact. It is, at the same time, like all the narratives of the gospel, typical—an actual promise for the whole church; an event full of the most sublime and universal meaning; a Divine seal, which, expressed in definite features, portrays to our view the glorious protection of grace; which is, in its essence, in reserve for every believer in seasons of distress, and particularly for confessors and warriors under the banner of the cross. The Church has had more than one Stephen, and more than once have the words, “**I see the heavens opened,**” been uttered under the axe of the executioner, and amid the flames of the scaffold; and as soon as His church shall be again oppressed upon earth—and it will be the case in due time—our narrative will be reiterated a thousand different ways, and manifest itself in living instances. Certainly I know not whether any of us will be favored in the same manner, here below, with the sight of the throne of his King and the man of his heart,

as Stephen beheld Him with his bodily eyes. But what need is there of it? Blessed be God, Who, besides bodily eyes, has also given us other eyes! If these be clear and bright, the outward heaven may remain closed against us, yet these eyes penetrate through the thickest clouds, and with this sight, we daily and hourly see into the reality of that which Stephen was favored with beholding with his bodily eyes. O how happy we may esteem ourselves on account of the blessed spectacle which presents itself to the view of our faith beneath the fogs of this vale of tears! Let the storms blow and the waves roar; let the thunder-clouds discharge themselves, and Satan, death, and hell, march against us; we behold other things than these; we lift up our heads on high, and boldly stretch out our hands out of the midst of the tumult; and our watchword, which elevates us above the darkness and causes us to triumph in the midst of conflict, is, “**I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.**” Amen.



Forum Question #1

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that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. ...Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (Malachi 3:16, 18). At the last judgments, there will be no loopholes, no editing, no more mercy. “**And I saw a great white throne, and him that**

sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Rev. 20:11-13). Selah! Think about it!

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“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Prov. 6:16-19).

You will notice that one of these things mentioned is “**a false witness that speaketh lies**” that the Lord hates, not only does he hate them, but they are an “**abomination unto him.**”

“He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit” (Prov. 12:17).

There are a few other Scriptures in Proverbs concerning this question that we are commenting

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Forum Question #1

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on. **"A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish"** (Pro. 19:9). I am sure that we can agree that God hates **"a false witness"** and a liar! And wow, do we have many a liar in our government and in the world today. Also read, Deuteronomy 19:18-21 because it echoes what Paul told the Corinthian church in I Corinthians 5, about dealing with one that has sinned and to get that sin (leaven) out of the church. **"A false witness"** is mentioned eight times in the Old Testament, and even though it is not mentioned in the New Testament, the word liar is found thirteen times in Holy Writ.

So, what does it really mean to be **"a false witness"** and a **"liar?"** It simply means in the full context, (in my opinion) and what I have learned, that it is one who has committed the sin of perjury and that person needs to be dealt with and not to let them go **"unpunished"** (Proverbs 19:9) or disciplined would be the less harsh description.

Perjury: the willful giving of false testimony under oath or affirmation, before a competent tribunal, upon a point material to a legal inquiry.

Here are some synonyms for perjury: deception, falsehood, deceitfulness, false swearing, dishonesty, falsification, untruth, false oath, and last but not least false testimony. So, you can see why God hates a liar and **"A false witness."** According to our text (Proverbs 19:9), that person will not go unpunished. **"...yea, let God be true, but every man a liar..."** (Rom. 3:4). God Bless!

ROGER REED

Forum Question #2

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because we (Samuel and us) know that God is in control and has things figured out, we "defer our anger" wisely and comply with God's command for us to anoint King Saul, or whoever it is in our lives. And sure enough. God knew what He was doing. That throne, asked for in impudence and imprudence, God had ordained to be the throne that David and even eventually, the Lord Jesus Christ would sit upon. Wow! Hallelujah! I am glad I deferred my anger and did not wipe out the whole nation.

Thirdly, I have learned that we can not expect "good" from "lost folk," can we? Discretion defers my judgment, because they probably need pity more than anger. Sure, repeat offenders will eventually have to be dealt with in holy indignation and righteous judgment, but discretion will allow for much prayer and intercession, before those irremediable actions of wrath and exclusion.

The other word that I associate with discretion is prudence. Similar to wisdom, prudence is a long-suffering word that reflects on the godliness in ourselves, before interacting with the motes and beams in our brother's eyes. Prudence and experience dictate that anger is rarely a good thing for us to dwell upon or to attempt to live with. As anger becomes a way of life for a child of God, it embitters her and denies the love and forgiveness that is exemplified in Jesus Christ. As I hope we have all learned, calm instruction is more necessary to the wayward child, than furious anger. As we interact with folk round about us, whether family, friends or complete strangers,

should not our desire be for their abiding good, rather than their abiding destruction?

The perfect picture of the last half of the verse is Jesus Christ, yet again. It was His glory to pass over my transgressions and sin-debt for all of my fleshly years, because He has made satisfaction for those iniquities and failings on the cross of Calvary. Glory! Every knee shall bow! Every tongue will confess that Christ Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father! Why? Because He deferred His anger and counted it His glory to extend mercy, and execute the grace of substitution to placate the holy wrath of almighty God. Who but Jesus??!

That is why I have often told my congregation that the most divine attribute of a Christian is the glory of forgiveness. To love in spite of. To pass over transgressions against us, with the intent of forgiving, is more Christ-like than any other action in my entire life. It is the antithesis of fallen man, and a sure sign of the touch of the heavenly Father, who enfolds the prodigal son with rejoicing and honor.

The joy of magnanimity is unparalleled in the range of human emotions on either side of the equation. To receive unexpected pity and mercy, when all we have deserved is anger and judgment, is to feel peace, joy and love flowing like a river of holiness over us, washing away the stigmatism of helplessness, hopelessness, bitterness and despair. To be loved thusly can only come because of God's grace.

But as saved Christians, when the opportunity comes to magnanimously restore a fellow felon into intimate restoration, Oh, once again, what a wonder. To restore the sweet fellowship.

To welcome them with open arms of love and joy. There is nothing in the world as sweet as being the recipient of the shining wonder in the eyes of our beloved, "You would do that, for me?" —reconciled to bind our hearts together once again in the service of the Master.

How inglorious to instead remain in bitterness at their transgressions against us. Even if they never come to us seeking restoration, it is still incumbent upon us to offer them forgiveness, else we will continue to walk in that horrible path of resentment and like a black cloud hanging over us, it will never really free us to rejoice in the sunshine of God's glorious communion of love. Every time the conversation goes to that person, or they show up in person, there is the dark cloud again. But if we take the matter to the Lord and open up our hearts toward deferring our anger and "pass over" (yeah, like that night in Egypt) that person's refusal to make things right, God will give us peace that will shutter those black clouds, and when that person comes up in conversation, instead of hatred or frustration, there will be pity, mercy, and prayer, because we have forgiven them in our hearts. The joy of forgiveness and her sister virtue of magnanimity is entirely predicated upon us, not anyone else. Just as sovereign as God is, so, too, is the gift of sovereign mercy that He gives us to utilize and cherish. May we forgive sovereignly, not because of any reciprocating gift or debt, but solely because we desire to grow closer to our perfect heavenly Father. Amen! Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



Evangelism

(Continued from page 1) ♦

of many modern evangelists, it must be said, they have made religion a joke and cheapened Christ in the eyes of the world. These men and their methods are being more and more discounted and discredited. Christendom can congratulate itself that there is promised a speedy return to the means and methods of New Testament evangelism.

The individual plan was used exclusively by the Lord Jesus. Christ, so far as the inspired record goes, never held a revival. It is true, He preached to five thousand, but far more frequently to one. The woman at the well, Zaccheus, Nicodemus, and the dying thief, are characteristic examples of His methods and ministry. Christ might be correctly termed a Conversational Evangelist. Think what it would mean to mankind should every Christian make Christ the chief topic of conversation. There is no record of any sermon ever preached by Andrew, but he led Peter to the Lord, and he spoke through Peter at Pentecost. The Pentecostal preacher is essential to Pentecost, and usually the result of individual effort. The **"upper room"** and the personal word is far more needed than the great auditorium and mechanical methods. Mr. Moody once said that he had never known a man to come to Christ who had not been personally spoken to concerning Christ. Certainly a great majority of those who been led to the Lord, have been led to Him by individual effort.

As a rule, the results of the personal plan are more satisfactory. Hand-picked fruit will keep longer. Such a plan is free from sensationalism and mass-psychology, and minus

the high-pressure methods so characteristic of the modern revival. With the personal plan there is time for prayer and instruction. Many questions that may arise in the inquirer's mind concerning the plan of salvation may receive proper attention. The chances of a mistake concerning conversion are greatly lessened.

One of the many advantages of the individual plan, is the fact that those who are thus led to Christ are also usually led to the church. It is a well known fact that only a small percent of the professions reported in great religious campaigns ever connect themselves with any church. Unless the reports of these meetings are purposely exaggerated, the proportion of additions to the number of reported professions is truly lamentable. One explanation may be found in the fact that many evangelists give much of their time to belittling and berating the churches. If the churches are so worthless and vile as frequently painted, it is not surprising that honest men and women, to say nothing of Christians, should care to cast their lot with them. There can be little doubt that the most effective opposition to the churches has been caused consciously, or otherwise, by off-color evangelists. Surely they have their reward.

Individual evangelism multiplies the number of evangelists. The work of evangelism should by no means be restricted to the preacher. In some real sense, every member of the church can do the work of an evangelist. A church with one hundred members should have one hundred evangelists laboring for the lost. The pastor and the evangelists are hopelessly inadequate to the demands of a

dying world. Their ministry at best is circumscribed. If during the present year, every Christian would lead one soul to Christ it would mean a greater number of converts to Christianity than has been won by all the pastors and evangelists in the past fifty years. There are unnumbered chariots along the highway of life awaiting our coming. There are millions awaiting the word that only one can speak. Shall this word remain unspoken? It may be that in the day for which all days were made, we may realize for the first time the tragedy of the unuttered word. Though walking daily with Christians, many are saying, **"No man careth for my soul."** Seemingly, at least, they are justified in making the declaration. The fields are white unto harvest, but those who are doing the work of an evangelist are few. In political, social, and business life there are numberless opportunities for evangelistic achievements. A mother realizing that her daughter must soon die, said: "I hope you will give your life to Christ." The poor lost and dying girl replied: "Mother, I have been in your home for nineteen years, and this is the first time you have ever spoken to me about my soul. It is too late now." Picture, if possible, the feelings of the mother when she meets her daughter in judgment! All mothers should be evangelists of whom the world is not worthy.

The qualifications for individual evangelism are few, but absolutely indispensable. First of all, one who would persuade others to commit their lives to the truth of the Bible must himself implicitly believe the Bible. Not that the Bible is inspired, here and there, and no one can certainly tell where. Not that the Bible "contains" the Word of God, but is, from Genesis to

Revelation, the very Word of God. It is hardly possible that one could be influenced to accept as a Bible a book that is filled with truth and falsehood, strangely commingled. The best evidence of the truth of this statement is the fact that no destructive critic has ever been known as a soul winner. It seems that the author of the Bible has uniformly refused to bless the labours of those who deny the truth of any part of the Bible.

He must also have an adequate conception of the tragedy of a lost soul. With all his mind and soul he must believe that everyone dying without Christ, will rest in hell with the nations that forget God. The individual who does not believe the soul is lost, will, of course, deem it unnecessary to work for its salvation. Christ came to seek and save that which was lost, and only those who believe with Christ as to their lost condition will seek their salvation. The loss of conviction among Christians concerning the reality of eternal punishment, has gone far to quench the evangelistic spirit. A wife yearning for the soul of her lost husband, said: "Husband, I fear we will be separated." The husband, astonished, replied: "How can you entertain such a thought?" "Well," said the wife, "I am a Christian and expect to make my home in Heaven, and unless you repent and believe the Gospel, you will not be with me."

There must also be proper preparation. Chiefest of all, we need to talk to God about every lost soul that we approach. We must go in the power of God. It is necessary that we tarry till we are endued with power from on high. Before we go to the lost, we must go to the Saviour of the lost.

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Evangelism

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The proper approach can only be had as we are directed by the Holy Spirit. The lost will hear us after God has heard us in their behalf. We can only obtain power with lost sinners, when the power has been given, by the Saviour of sinners.

Having talked to God about them, we must go and talk with them. We may thus be used of God in answering our prayers. When Ananias had been instructed by God he was ready to go and speak to Paul. God had revealed Paul in a different light, and now Ananias could put his hand on him, say, **"Brother Saul."** Paul was awaiting the word that only Ananias could speak. Many are today waiting the message that we only can bring. Saul felt that there was a least one who cherished for him a brotherly affection. Deep in the heart of a wrecked world there comes the question, "Do Christians really care if we are lost?" We can only convince them of our concern for them by efforts in their behalf. Were they in danger of temporal death, friend or foe would be ready to warn them of approaching danger, and yet they are in danger of eternal destruction, and we pass them by with deadly indifference. Let us snatch them as brands from the eternal burning!

Having done all, let us leave the matter with God. We should not, as sometimes claimed, "force a decision." We should not attempt to force anyone to profess Christ. Such methods have already filled our churches with unregenerate members. It is not by might, nor power, but by **"my Spirit saith the LORD"** (Zech. 4:6). It is our business to carry Christ to the world, and God's business

to bring the world to Himself. Unless God shall make them willing in the day of His power, better a thousand times leave them in the world where they properly belong. Unfortunately many of our churches have what is known as "Decision Day." Such a day makes religion a mere matter of mental decision, and eliminates the necessity of the Holy Spirit in the redemption of the sinner. Our religion is not our work, but His work, Who wrought out for us the "finished" work of redemption.

"I am with you alway," (Matt. 28:20) is the promise of Him Who made us colabourers with Him.



What the Blind Man

(Continued from page 1) ♦

his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way" (Mark 10:46-52).

Nothing COULD keep him from getting to Jesus.

First let us ruminate over Bartimaeus' faith and action. I love doing word studies and understanding the meaning of the names we find in the Bible. Bartimaeus literally means "son of Timaeus" (Not one of my most exciting finds I will admit). Timaeus however means "highly prized." Bartimaeus in turn was the son of the highly prized. Beloved if you are born-again this is your moment of personal application in this writing. Jesus is the most highly prized of all...

and I AM HIS!

This son of the highly prized first appears in our narrative begging along the highway for whatever he could get. The highways, of course, were and still are where a beggar would find the most people to beg from. How many exit ramps have you taken recently in which you have found a man or a woman along the side of the road holding a piece of cardboard and asking for what you might spare? It is interesting that a beggar knows where to find people; yet when Christians today look to witness, they just can not seem to find anyone to give the Gospel to.

We should note again that he was blind. He was not selective in who he asked for mercy from, but rather he would hold out his hand and call for help from whomever he heard approaching. As he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth approaching this day, the blind beggar began begging for that which he needed most. No longer was he seeking spare change or crumbs from the rich man's table but rather **"he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me."** What a powerful cry!

I want you to put yourself into the context of this story for a moment. Not as one of the multitude traveling with Jesus, certainly not as Jesus Himself, but really where our depravity has left us; blind, hungry and begging along the side of the road. You are not above this, dear reader. Jesus is the vine and without him **"ye can do nothing"** (John 15:5). What should your cry be this day as you can see nothing and you can do nothing of yourself to increase your stature or improve your station? Should you not

also cry out, **"Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me?"**

We need food and water to live, yes? But a man could have more than what is necessary to survive and still die. We hear every day where doctors tell a man he should cut back and lose some weight, that it would be good for the heart and so on. We also know that folks do not typically drown in air but rather water. So you can have too much of what your flesh will convince you that you need most. Yes we need these things to live, but not to live eternally. To live eternally we must have Jesus.

There was something for Bartimaeus that became a greater need that day, and his action was to ignore the charges of his fellow man and to cry out for it. Nothing could keep him from getting to Jesus. My prayer for you this day is that the Lord might grant you a true assessment for what you need most and that nothing could keep you from crying out for it.

Secondly, let us notice Jesus' standing and calling in verse 49. Jesus was walking or passing through Jericho with His disciples and **"a great number of people"** according to verse 46. He was on His way to Jerusalem for that final Passover and the cries for mercy stopped Him in His tracks.

Do we cry out for mercy? Do we in faith expect that we will be heard? Notice the determination again of blind Bartimaeus as the crowd, perhaps those who had been traveling with Jesus and seen the many wonderful things He had done, urge him to stay silent. Yet, **"he cried the more a great deal."** What "oppresses" you today? Does it cause for

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Little Hills

By Nathaniel Hille of
Plant City, Florida



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON - BIBLE SURVEY #18 THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

TEXT: Joshua 1:1-9

DEVOTIONAL READING: Deut. 1:38; 3:21, 28; Hebrews 11:30

AIM: An over-view of the book of Joshua

SUGGESTED HYMN: Joshua Fit the Battle 'Round Jericho

INTRODUCTION: We now look at the first book of the historical section, Joshua. The books of Moses would be imperfect without Joshua.¹ Joshua fulfills the promise to the Patriarch's in Genesis (Gen. 12:1-8); of which Exodus-Deuteronomy prepared them for the conquests set forth in Joshua.

“Joshua not only exhibits the sovereign grace of God, His covenant faithfulness, His mighty power put forth on behalf of His people, but it also reveals what was required from them in the discharge of their responsibility: formidable obstacles had to be surmounted, a protracted warfare had to be engaged in, fierce foes overcome, before they entered into the actual enjoyment of the land.”² Compare with Eph. 6:10-18; Rom. 13:12-14; II Cor. 10:4; I Thess. 5:8; I Cor. 15:58

I. AUTHOR—We believe that the human author is Joshua himself (Josh. 24:26). However, we must remember that the Holy Spirit is the Author of God's Word (II Peter 1:20-21).

II. KEY VERSE(S)—

1. Josh. 1:1-2—**“Moses my servant is dead”**--Moses represented the law. The law can never lead us into rest. But Joshua (whose name means Savior) can and does. Please take note that Joshua did not assume command, but was appointed by the LORD

2. Josh. 1:9—**“...Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”** Joshua was going to lead the people into the land of promise. Just as we are headed into spiritual battles, so we must find courage and trust in the Lord.

3. Josh. 24:15—a well known verse. After having conquered in the promise land according to God's promise he charges the people not to go back to their old sinful ways, but to cling unto the Lord. There was not another generation like unto this generation (Judges 2:6-11).

III. DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA—There are four main divisions.

1. The Conquest of the Land—Joshua 1:1-12:24

A. The Charge to Joshua, the spies sent in, the faith of Rahab, the two memorials, the conquest of Jericho, the sin of Achan, the conquest of Ai, league with the Gibeonites, The victory at Gibeon are all contained in these chapters. Remember—these were “greater and mightier” than Israel, yet they overcame by faith. So, too, shall we overcome our enemies by faith in the power of God.

B. Division & Allotment of Land: Joshua 13:1-21:45—It was

the Lord who divided the land between the nation of Israel. In this we should observe that it is our Sovereign Lord who metes out gifts, possessions, and lots in life to each and everyone of His children. May we always remember that we are not **“worthy of the least of all the mercies”** (Gen. 32:10). The children of God should pay particular attention to the cities of refuge, which typify the Lord Jesus

C. Discord: Joshua 22:1-34—It should come as no surprise to God's people that there is discord. Satan loves to sow it, our flesh through jealousy and envy loves to stir it up. Here, as often is, discord comes from misunderstanding (Vv. 21-29).

D. Joshua's Charge to Israel—Joshua 23:1-24:33—Notice, how that although Joshua had done much, he exalts and gives all glory unto the Lord (I Cor. 15:10). Observe, what commandment does he lay upon the people (23:6-8)? what promise does he assure them (23:10)? what warning does he give them (23:12-13)? what does he set before them (24:15)? what obligation do the people lay upon themselves (24:16-18, 21,24)?

IV. NAMES/TYPES OF THE LORD: In Joshua we have types of the Lord Jesus Christ--

1. Joshua:³ Josh.1:1—name = Jehovah Savior, is a type of Christ, the Captain of our salvation” (Heb. 2:10-11). He comes after Moses (representative of the law) (John 1:17; Rom. 8:3-4; 10:4-5); He leads to victory (Rom. 8:37; II Cor. 1:10; 2:14); He is our Advocate when we have suffered defeat (Joshua 7:5-9; I John 2:1); He allots our portions (Eph. 1:11-14; 4:8-11). He finished the work given Him to do (John 19:30; John 17:4).

2. Cities of Refuge: Joshua 20:1-9; Numbers 35:6—“types of Christ sheltering the sinner from judgment.”⁴

3. Rahab's Scarlet Line: Joshua 2:18-21—Here we find that same cord which was used to preserve the Israelite spies, was to be used to preserve the life of all who were behind it. There is a proper allusion to the color scarlet as the color of blood when it is shed. So, too, are those who are behind the blood of Christ safe from the destruction that the Lord shall bring in the coming day.

4. The Old Corn of the Land: Joshua 5:11—as the manna was typical of Christ in His humiliation, giving His flesh that the believer might have life (John 6:49-51); the “old corn” is Christ apprehended as risen, glorified, and seated in the heavenlies (John 12:24).

NOTES

1. Pink, A.W.: *Gleanings in Joshua*; 1964; pg. 11

2. Ibid.; pg. 12

3. Scofield, C.I., *Schofield Reference Bible*; Joshua 1:1

4. Ibid; Numbers 35:6

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



What the Blind Man

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you to remain silent before the Lord? Does it prevent you from crying out for His mercy? The writer in Hebrews 12:1-2 says, **“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”** Nothing SHOULD keep us from getting to Jesus!

Beloved, Jesus knew where He was headed and He knew the importance of His making that appointment, yet the cry of one of His elect sheep, a son of the Highly Prized, stopped His journey. Oh how we should rejoice over the words **“Jesus stood...and...called.”** That is how it was for Stephen when he was being murdered by the angry mob, and Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father He saw Him standing there and even spoke to Him. **“Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God”** (Acts 7:56). And again in verse 59, **“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”** And again in verse 60, **“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”** Stephen cried out for mercy and the Lord Jesus was seen standing and calling as we find that Saul was later converted as a result of this testimony. Note, the deliverance of the Lord is not always such that removes us

from our trials, but it is always what is best according to His will.

Which brings us to our third and final point, the use of Bartimaeus' found condition. So many are convinced that they have done too much evil to come to the church house. I served secularly with a man who was a veteran and a prisoner of war earlier in his life. He told me of the vile conditions of the cell he called home for nearly nine months of his life. He described for me the stench of moldy bread and soup with hard bits of bone that was served to him once a day. My skin crawled as he told me of the scurrying sound of rats as they squeaked past the bars. Perhaps what was worst of all was the idea of utter darkness that he lived in during his time there. He said they did not open the doors to feed him nor to allow him a chance to walk about the grounds, nor to even use the restroom. This cell was his home. Once the navy found him and sprung him from his cell my friend entered a 20 year period of his life where he was angry at mankind and bitter for the time he had lost. He hurt people to prevent them from hurting him. He began to drink and cuss like the sailor he once was to prevent others from trying to get to close to him. When I would invite him to come to church with me he would tell me of the horrible things he had been a part of and say that “the walls of the church house would cave in upon him should he try to walk through those doors.”

Maybe reading this, you feel the same way. What could you possibly have to offer to a church family? To Jesus perhaps? Dear friend, read the title of this article

again, for it is not about what you have to offer, it is all about what Jesus came and did for His elect. Praise the Lord there is a difference in being crippled in body and being crippled in spirit, for regeneration is not for those able to meet certain qualifications, but for those greatly in need of mercy.

Sometimes we have such things to work with as blindness, deafness, disease and so on so that it might bring us to Jesus; a great cause for us to be looking for mercy. I know of one woman's testimony from a hospital bed as she died of cancer that led a multitude of others to salvation in Christ Jesus. It was not some great work that she could do, but rather her merely giving the glory to God for what He did.

Blind Bartimaeus did not have a need for parlor tricks or altar invitations. He needed mercy. Through the condition Bartimaeus was found in, he desired to receive his sight and he believed the stories of miraculous healings that followed our Lord Jesus Christ. He believed Jesus could heal him. He cried out that the Lord might show him mercy. And Jesus responded, **“Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.”** AMEN!

We do not find a lot of the healed in the Bible going back to begging, do we? We might say that Bartimaeus was made blind that he might desire this healing. We might also say that he was made to beg that he might be found sitting along the highway that day. But upon being healed Jesus did not tell him to “sit along the highway for his faith had made him whole.” He told him to go! Matthew Henry wrote: “Thy faith has made thee whole: faith in Christ as the Son of

David, and in his pity and power; not thy repeated words, but thy faith; Christ setting thy faith to work. Let sinners be exhorted to imitate blind Bartimaeus. Where the gospel is preached, or the written words of truth circulated, Jesus is passing by, and this is the opportunity.”

How does this find you today? Have you been born-again, and if so, have you gone to work for the Lord or do you still beg along the side of the highway? Following the healing was a commission to go. Following our salvation, was the same commission. “Go and find my church” which is the means Jesus built and left for us to accomplish the remaining work of going: going to the community, going to the country and going to all nations.

Does this article find you lost and blind along the highway begging every day for just enough to get by? Cry out today for His mercy beloved—for His healing! Cry out and do not let up for His strengthening and His peace and for His will to be done in your life!

It has been an incredible past year as we have watched the hand of the Lord navigate through the mess of man. He is still the same man who walked by that day and granted salvation to a poor lost beggar. Sight was given and kept by the power of the Lord Jesus. The ability to go and give sight to the world is also given and kept by the power of Christ who commanded for us to do so and promised to be with us always **“even unto the end of the world”** (Matt. 28:20). Let us not give in to the charge to remain silent and let us not give up on calling out to the Lord Jesus!



Little Valleys

By Timothy J. Hille of
Ashland, Illinois



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

HE WAS SENT ON FOOT INTO THE VALLEY

Judges 5:15

"And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley."

The ancient hero of faith, Barak, was called upon to stand in the gap, to venture and risk himself for Israel, God's people's sake. He was called, and chosen, and faithful. **"These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful"** (Rev. 17:14). Like in the times of our text, there is a warfare today. **"Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof"** (Judges 3:1-2). The warfare of their day was both physical and spiritual. Ours is not a warfare against flesh and blood, and we had better not think to use the carnal weapons of this world, but instead put on the spiritual armor or light that God has supplied, and have gripped firmly in our hands both the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, which is the infallible, holy, and eternally abiding Word of God. We cannot tell by the way that many are living if they are aware that there is a warfare raging, a warfare of utmost consequence. Not all stood and fought in the

time of Deborah and Barak. Yet, there was on the side of God and righteousness, a champion, who went down into the valley against the many and mighty forces of the enemy, and prevailed.

I want you to notice that, first of all, Barak was sent. The Bible is very explicit and emphatic that none can serve God except they be sent. **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things"** (Rom. 10:13-15)! Beloved, I thank God today that there is One who was sent, who was sent down to fight the enemy, and who was victorious, and led captivity captive. I thank God that He sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners. **"He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me"** (Matt. 10:40). In the days of Deborah and Barak, God sent a deliverer, a captain, to lead the people to victory and deliverance from the oppression of their enemies. God has sent a Savior – and let me emphasize that God has sent one and only one Savior into the world – to save His people from their sins, the Lord Jesus Christ. **"Neither is there salvation in any other:**

for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Jesus sent His church into the world, to bear witness unto the world of Him. **"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you"** (John 20:21). The Lord's church is authorized, commissioned, and has official duties to perform, namely to preach the gospel to every creature, and to baptize and indoctrinate those who believe. **"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen"** (Matt. 28:18-20).

I want you to notice that Barak was sent on foot. His enemies had nine hundred chariots of iron. Barak and his men were mere infantry. They marched into battle on foot. They were at a disadvantage, as far as human military weaponry and tactics were concerned. Many today think that if we do not have the things of the false churches and religious organizations of the world, and if we do not employ the things that are wise and profitable in the eyes of the flesh, that we are at a disadvantage. Going afoot is not as fun, fancy, or fashionable as riding in a chariot. Riding in a chariot does not require as much exhausting and tedious labor as marching on foot. To the world, there is a better way to accomplish things than the way Jesus has commanded and

instructed, a better way than **"the foolishness of preaching"** (I Cor. 1:21) the pure and unadulterated gospel of the dear Son of God, and like Christ and His apostles, being **"made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day"** (I Cor. 4:13).

Beloved, our Savior was sent on foot into the valley. He humbled Himself to take on Him the likeness of sinful flesh, to be made a partaker of flesh and blood. He took upon Himself the form of a servant. Being on foot speaks also of weary treading. Being on foot exposes us to greater difficulty, danger, and weariness. When tempted with hunger, did Christ command the stones to be made bread? No. He never used His divine power for His own convenience or comfort. He was meek and lowly. He did not come in the radiant and majestic glory which He had as the second Person of the Godhead, and of which He was mindful when He prayed to His heavenly Father, **"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was"** (John 17:5). He did not even come as a prince or a person of high station, but came as the servant of the living God to do all God's will, and made Himself the servant of others to accomplish their salvation.

We, like our Savior, are sent afoot. We ride no gallant steeds, brave warhorses, or armored chariots. We follow in His steps. We walk by faith. We walk through the valley of the shadow of death. We are, it would seem, at a great disadvantage. But we are sent to be victorious, and the battle is the Lord's. We must not expect anything but that which our Savior experienced.

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Little Valleys

(Continued from page 21) ♦

The servant is not greater than his Lord. It is enough that the disciple be as his Master.

We long to be on the mountain top of glory. But at this present time we are sent into the valley. The warfare is in the valley. Is our God not **"God of the valleys"** (I Kings 20:28)? What was in this particular valley into which Barak marched on foot to fight the Lord's battles? The river Kishon. Who created the rivers that are in the valleys? Who appointed the streams which feed those rivers, and the winter snows and rains in the mountains that feed those streams? Who turns the rivers of waters, as well as the hearts of men, withersoever He will? Our God! God had appointed that this river would wash away the slain of the enemy. **"The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength"** (Judges 5:21).

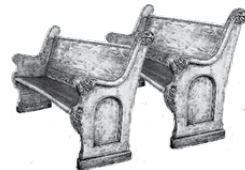
Our Savior drank of the brook in the way. **"The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head"** (Ps. 110:4-7). He was exalted because of He suffered according to the will of God. He was victorious in His sufferings and death, drinking the awful cup of woe that the Father had appointed Him, that He might save us from a destiny far worse than mere physical death, and bring us to God. Does He not call

us to drink of the cup which He drinks, to partake of that which He partakes? **"If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together"** (Rom. 8:17). Our victory is in Him. Our victory is the way of the cross of our blessed Lord and Savior. Our path is to go afoot into the valley. He has sent us, let us go.

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



The Short Pews



Brief Articles
by Curtis Pugh
(1944 - 2018)

DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS OR DIFFERENT GOSPELS: WHICH?

Every man preaches from his viewpoint. Whether he holds to God's sovereignty, local church only, universal church, spontaneous-combustion church origins, successionism, post-millennialism, pre-millennialism, covenant theology, baptismal regeneration, pre-trib rapture, mid-trib rapture, post-trib rapture, tongues talking, etc., etc. he will preach from that standpoint. It cannot be otherwise – whether he deals with these aspects of his theology or not. It must be the case that his thinking and his words spring from his viewpoint: his belief.

A preacher's orthodoxy affects even the gospel he preaches and how he presents it. One writer (I have forgotten who) said that for the Gospel to be preached rightly certain things must be presented in "Gospel order." God must be in His rightful place in the preacher's presentation:

absolutely sovereign. Christ must be in His rightful place: God's sufficient sacrifice for sin. The Holy Spirit must be in His rightful place: the Regenerator of dead spirits. Man must be in his rightful place: totally dead spiritually and possessed of a carnal mind and therefore unable to do anything to please God. And so on with godly sorrow, repentance, faith, baptism, etc., etc. all presented as fruits of the Spirit's work as a consequence of regeneration.

The Arminian presents a god who is not sovereign, but who is trying to save everyone but cannot because most will not let Him. Such a preacher says that Christ died trying to save everyone, but their salvation depends on what they do. He presents the Holy Spirit as a reactionary who can only regenerate a dead sinner after that sinner as done something of a religious nature that pleases God. He presents man as only sick rather than dead: in need of a bit of medicine or a bandage instead of being spiritually dead in need of a resurrection and so he presents man as possessing the ability to please God by this or that religious deed. He makes the fruits of the Spirit out to be the fruits of a man who has been persuaded that it is in his best eternal interests to "get saved" so as to escape Hell and go to Heaven.

Is there not a vast difference between the two viewpoints of such men – and not only in their viewpoints, but in the gospel which they preach? Do these two preach the same gospel? Do these two prescribe the same remedy for man's need? What agreement is there between them? It seems the bare facts of one may agree with the other, but the meaning of the facts and the results of God's actions presented in these facts are far different. **"Can two**

walk together, except they be agreed" (Amos 3:3)? Will anyone even suggest that these two are in agreement?

The true Gospel rightly preached glorifies the Triune God as being successful in accomplishing everything He designs to do. The gospel of the other sort presents the Triune God as a failure more often than not because while He is trying to save everyone, most everyone successfully resists Him so that He cannot do what He wants to do. Such a "gospel" does not glorify anyone other than man.

GOD'S ORDER IN SALVATION

The Bible is clear as to the order in which salvation is provided for the sinner. Jude 1:1 says, **"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called."** After identifying himself to his readers, Jude next addresses those to whom he wrote telling them three things about their salvation. First, they were set apart ("sanctified") by God the Father. Second, they were kept safe ("preserved") in Jesus Christ. Third, they were effectively "called." These three steps may come as a surprise to those who have become accustomed to looking at salvation as something that man does.

From beginning to end, **"Salvation is of the LORD"** (Jonah 2:9). Hebrews 10:14 tells us what the Lord Jesus accomplished by His sacrificial death: **"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."** Think about that! Those sanctified or set apart for the purpose of being conformed to the image of Jesus

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The Short Pews

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Christ are complete, lacking nothing in righteousness because of the work of Christ on their behalf. That is the sense of Christ's having **"perfected for ever"** those chosen by God for salvation. Through God-given faith Christ's perfect righteousness is imputed (assigned) to them: i.e. literally "put down on their account." Thus the Lord Jesus said, **"It is finished"** (nothing more to be done) when speaking of His death-work (John 19:30).

This being **"sanctified"** or set apart for holy use was accomplished back when God chose those whom He would save. The Bible says God **"...hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame..."** (Ephesians 1:4). The chosen ones were kept safe by being "chosen in him:" i.e. in Christ. Just as the Lord Jesus could not be killed until God's foreordained time should come so those whom God chose to salvation are kept safe (examples: see John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20). Then in God's appointed time those set apart for salvation (sanctified), are called with such a powerful call that the elect sinner cannot refuse. After all, God cannot be successfully resisted by mere humans. As Paul wrote, **"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"** (Phil. 2:13).

The Lord Himself said, **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live"** (John 5:25). The question is, have you been called with a call from the Son of God? Just as dead Lazarus was called forth from his tomb with a call

that brought him to life so those chosen and kept safe are called with a call that brings eternal life to them: a call from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Or are you yet in your sins? So it is that God initiates and completes the salvation of His elect.

IN ADAM ALL DIE

Six times in the first chapter of Genesis God said that the various things that He created were good. The seventh time we read, **"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good"** (Gen. 1:31). This included humankind. Man was as originally created **"good."** His goodness or holiness was untested, however, and God in His perfect wisdom determined to test our first parents. Adam along with Eve, as we all know, failed in obedience to the simple prohibition regarding only one thing.

God had said to Adam: **"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"** (Gen. 2:16-17). But Adam lived many years after he sinned. Was God wrong? Did God's prediction about Adam fail?

While it is true that Adam lived in his body upon the earth many years after our first parents sinned, both Adam and Eve did really die that day. They died spiritually. And upon all their posterity death reigned down to our own time. The Bible clearly states, **"For if by one man's [Adam's] offence death reigned by one...:"** (Rom. 5:17). One of the effects of Adam's sin is that all human beings who live naturally are actually dead spiritually until born from above by the Holy Spirit. This is stated by Paul in

these words to the saints in the city of Ephesus as follows: **"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"** (Eph. 2:5). And again he wrote: **"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"** (I Cor. 15:22).

Every person that ever has or ever shall live was seminally **"in Adam"** our common ancestor, the first man. The Bible speaks of a man before he was born as being **"...yet in the loins of his father..."** (Heb. 7:10). And so each successive descendant of our father Adam is born dead spiritually: in need of a spiritual rebirth or regeneration. That is why Jesus said, **"Ye must be born again"** (John 3:7).

While all of humanity die according to I Corinthians 15:22 because they are **"in Adam"** only those **"in Christ"** shall be made alive. The Bible teaches that those who are born again were chosen by God. **"According as he hath chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world..."** says Ephesians 1:4 and so those **"in Christ"** are chosen ones. Their lives testify to all that God has done for them and to them for we also read, **"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"** (II Cor. 5:17). Being made a new creation: being born from above: being quickened in the spirit: being **"in Christ:"** this is the all important thing needed by every individual.

THE RIGHT GOAL

What is the right goal for a congregation professing to have Christ as her head? What is the right goal for each of her members? What should be the

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BEREA BAPTIST BANNER

Financial Report

11-1-2020 to 11-30-2020

Beginning Balance	\$152.60
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	200.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	150.00
Carol Willett, Cottonwood Shores, TX	75.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Emmanuel B. C., Oldtown, KY	200.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Gladwin, MI	50.00
Grace B. C., Rural Hall, NC	50.00
Grace Missionary B. C. Tulsa, OK	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
The Lord's B. C., Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	35.00
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., Plumerville, AR	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Wellington, KS	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	24.00
Anonymous	3,700.00
Dividing checks	150.00
Sub Total	\$6,224.00
TOTAL	\$6,376.60
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	728.33
Supplies	0.00
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.96
Dividing checks	100.00
Bank charge	13.00
Total Expenditures	\$3,807.29
ENDING BALANCE	\$2,569.31



BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST

Financial Report

11-1-2020 to 11-30-2020

Beginning Balance	\$3,400.43
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Calvary I. B. C., Sumas, WA	200.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
.....	625.00
TOTAL	4,025.43
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	312.98
Reel recorder repair	905.90
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1,218.88
.....	2,806.55
Interest	+0.03
ENDING BALANCE	\$2,806.58

The Short Pews

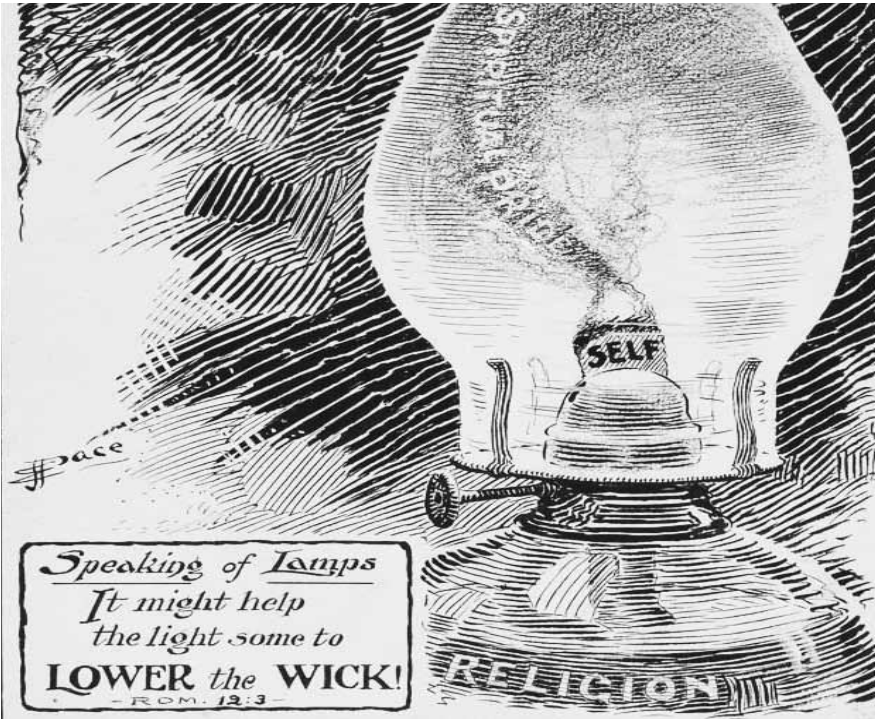
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aim of all the things done in the meetings of such a congregation?

Paul expressed his goal for the congregation of baptized believers whom he had organized in the city of Corinth. He wrote: **“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”** (II Cor. 11:2). In the verse just quoted Paul says that he had married the church in Corinth to Christ: espoused means to give one in marriage. His goal was this: that he could one day present the congregation there in Corinth **“as a chaste virgin to Christ.”** No doubt this was his goal for the other churches scattered over the Roman Empire as well.

Paul’s goal should be the goal of every church and each member individually. Neither individual members nor congregations corporately can be perfect, but each can be chaste: faithfully awaiting the coming of Christ. The Bible likens each congregation to a bride. A bride cannot be perfect, but she can be chaste. She can keep herself pure for her future husband and for the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything done by a church and in her meetings ought to be with the goal of being and remaining a chaste virgin ready to meet the Lord Jesus.

Chastity, purity, holiness as well as truth, zeal for the Lord, love of the truth, love to the Brethren and indeed doing good to all are all a part of the Christian life. But this thing of each church being a chaste (pure) virgin faithfully waiting for Christ the Bridegroom is absolutely necessary. In Hebrews 12:14 it is written: **“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see**



the Lord.” A holy life is the mark of a true child of God and ought to be also of the Lord’s churches. That is why the Bible teaches that each congregation is to exercise discipline over her members and why members must be of sufficient mature age as to be able to be disciplined by his church.

Paul wrote: **“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one**

no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? [outside the church] do not ye judge them that are within? [in the church] But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (I Cor. 5:11-13). Take note of that last sentence! Churches ought not to entertain spiritual goats for the sake of numbers. The goal is for each of the Lord’s churches to be as a chaste virgin!



ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

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

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

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

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