

The Berea Baptist Banner

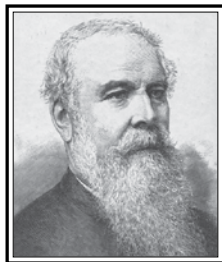
"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" Ps. 60:4

Wheat or Chaff?

By John Charles Ryle
(1816 - 1900)

(Continued from June issue).

III. Let me show you in the third place, the portion which Christ's people shall receive, when He comes to purge His floor.



The text at the beginning of this tract tells us this in good and comfortable words. It tells us that Christ shall "gather his wheat into his garner."

When the Lord Jesus comes the second time, He shall collect His believing people into a place of safety. He will send His angels and gather them from every quarter. The sea shall give up the dead that are in it, and the graves the dead that are in them, and the living shall be changed. Not one poor sinner of mankind who has ever laid hold on Christ by faith shall be wanting in that company. Not one single grain of wheat shall be

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True and False Examples Contrasted

By Tom Ross
of South Point, Ohio

Philippians 3:17-21

Paul concludes the third chapter of Philippians much the same way he started it, by admonishing the believers to follow the true example of holiness and piety he had set for them and reject the false example of worldliness and impiety exhibited by the Judaizers. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he skillfully sets before them the stark contrast between



a true example of Christian living and its final end, with a false example of Christianity. The true example exemplified

in the life of the apostle presses toward the mark of holiness, whereas the false example is occupied with worldly things and ends in destruction. As we examine this passage it would

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The Evil of Sin

PART ONE

By Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

"Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity;



wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. . . .For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them" (Isa. 59:7-8, 12).

Sin seems to be one of those words irrelevant to modern society. Many have substituted the word crime for sin. Much of what used to be sins against God have been reduced to crimes against society and individuals. Still others call sins social maladjustment, ignorance, hereditary deficiency, and immaturity.

Look at the world today, and you will see sin abounding more than ever before. The sins of hippiedom and college campuses would put the antediluvians to shame. In the home, wife swapping and infidelity

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Bearing Witness of Christ

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

"If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from



man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season

to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his

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July 5, 2017
Volume XXXVII, Number 7

Whole Number 456
Editor: Christopher Cockrell
Staff: Sheron Cockrell, Marsha Kiser, Virginia Cockrell

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

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

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

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES - U.S.

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES - FOREIGN One Year \$45

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

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

CHURCH PHONE: 1-662-282-7794.

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The purpose of the *Berea Baptist Banner* is as follows:

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

Wheat or Chaff?

(Continued from page 1) ♦

missing and left outside, when judgments fall upon a wicked world. There shall be a garner for the wheat of the earth, and into that garner all the wheat shall be brought.

Ah! Reader, it is a sweet and comfortable thought, that **"the Lord careth for the righteous."** But how much the Lord cares for them, I fear is little known, and dimly seen. They have their trials beyond question, and these both many and great. The flesh is weak. The world is full of snares. The cross is heavy. The way is narrow. The companions are few. But still they have strong consolations, if their eyes were but open to see them. Like Hagar they have a well of water near them, even in the wilderness, though they often do not find it out. Like Mary, they have Jesus standing by their side, though often they are not aware of it for very tears.

Bear with me, while I try to tell you something about Christ's care for poor sinners that believe in Him. Alas! indeed that it should be needful. But we live in a day of weak and feeble statements. The danger of the state of nature is feebly exposed. The privileges of the state of grace are feebly set forth. Hesitating souls are not encouraged. Disciples are not established and confirmed. The man out of Christ is not rightly alarmed. The man in Christ is not rightly built up. The one sleeps on, and seldom has his conscience pricked. The other creeps and crawls all his days, never thoroughly understands the riches of his inheritance. Truly this is a sore disease, and one that I would gladly help to cure. Truly it is a melancholy thing that the people of God should never go

up to mount Pisgah, and never know the length and breadth of their possessions. To be brethren of Christ, and sons of God by adoption; to have full and perfect forgiveness, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; to have a place in the book of life, and a name on the breast-plate of the Great High Priest in Heaven; all these are glorious things indeed. But still they are not the whole of a believer's portion. They are upper springs indeed, but still there are nether springs beside.

The Lord takes pleasure in His believing people. Though black in their own eyes, they are comely and honorable in His. They are all fair. He sees no spot in them. Their weakness and shortcomings do not break off the union between Him and them. He chose them, knowing all their hearts. He took them for His own with a perfect understanding of all their debts, liabilities, and infirmities, and He will never break His covenant and cast them off. When they fall, He will raise them again. When they wander, He will bring them back. Their "prayers" are pleasant to Him. As a father loves the first stammering efforts of his child to speak, so the Lord loves the poor feeble petitions of His people. He endorses them with His own mighty intercession, and gives them power on high. Their "services" are pleasant to Him. As a father delights in the first daisy that his child picks up and brings him, even so the Lord is pleased with the weak attempts of His people to serve Him. Not a cup of cold water shall lose its reward. Not a word spoken in love shall ever be forgotten. He told the Hebrews of Noah's faith, but not of his drunkenness, of Rahab's faith, but not of her lie. Oh! Reader, it is a blessed thing to

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Wheat or Chaff?

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be God's wheat!

The Lord cares for His believing people "in their lives." Their dwelling-place is well known. The street, called strait, where Judas dwelt, and Paul lodged, the house by the sea-side where Peter prayed, were all familiar to their Lord. None have such attendants as they have: angels rejoice when they are born again; angels minister to them; and angels encamp around them. None have such food: their bread is given them, and their water is sure, and they have meat to eat of which the world knows nothing. None have such company as they have. The Spirit dwelleth with them. The Father and the Son come to them, and make their abode with them. Their steps are all ordered from grace to glory. Those that persecute them persecute Christ Himself, and those that hurt them hurt the apple of the Lord's eye. Their trials and temptations are all measured out by a wise Physician: not a grain of bitterness is ever mingled in their cup, that is not good for the health of their souls. Their temptations, like Job's, are all under God's control: Satan cannot touch a hair of their head without their Lord's permission, nor even tempt them above that which they shall be able to bear. As a father pitieth his own children, so does the Lord pity them that fear Him. He never afflicts them willingly. He leads them by the right way. He withholds nothing that is really for their good. Come what will, there is always a needs-be. When they are placed in the furnace, it is that they may be purified. When they are chastened, it is that they may become more holy. When they are pruned, it

is to make them more fruitful. When they are transplanted from place to place, it is that they may bloom more brightly. All things are continually working together for their good. Like the bee they extract sweetness even out of the bitterest flowers. Ah! Reader, it is a blessed thing to be Christ's wheat.

The Lord cares for His believing people "in their deaths." Their times are all in the Lord's hand. The hairs of their heads are all numbered, and not one can ever fall to the ground without their Father. They are kept on earth till they are ripe and ready for glory, and not one moment longer. When they have had sun and rain enough, wind and storm enough, cold and heat enough, when the ear is perfected, then, and not till then, the sickle is put in. They are all immortal till their work is done. There is not a disease that can loosen the pins of their tabernacle, until the Lord gives the word. A thousand may fall at their right hand, but there is not a plague that can touch them till the Lord sees good. There is not a physician that can keep them alive, when the Lord gives the word. When they come to their death-bed, the everlasting arms are round about them, and make all their bed in their sickness. When they die, they die like Moses, according to the word of the Lord, at the right time and in the right way. And when they breathe their last, they fall asleep in Christ, and are at once carried, like Lazarus, into Abraham's bosom. Ah! Reader, it is a blessed thing to be Christ's wheat. When the sun of other men is setting, the sun of the believer is rising. When other men are laying aside their honors, he is putting his on. Death locks the door on the unbeliever, and shuts him out

from hope. But death opens the door to the believer, and lets him into paradise.

And the Lord will care for His believing people "in the dreadful day of His appearing." The flaming fire shall not come nigh them. The voice of the Arch-angel and the trump of God shall proclaim no terrors to their ears. Sleeping or waking, quick or dead, moldering in the coffin, or standing at the post of daily duty, believers shall be secure and unmoved. They shall lift up their heads with joy, when they see redemption drawing nigh. They shall be changed, and put on their beautiful garments in the twinkling of an eye. They shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Jesus will do nothing to a sin-laden world till all His people are safe. There was an ark for Noah when the flood began. There was a Zoar for Lot when the fire fell on Sodom. There was a Pella for early Christians when Jerusalem was besieged. There was a Zurich for English Reformers when Popish Mary came to the throne. And there will be a garner for all the wheat of the earth in the last day. Ah! Reader, it is a blessed thing to be Christ's wheat.

I often wonder at the miserable faithlessness of those among us what are believers. Next to the hardness of the unconverted heart, I call it one of the greatest wonders in the world. I wonder that with such mighty reasons for confidence we can still be so full of doubts. I marvel above all things, how any can deny the doctrine that Christ's people persevere unto the end, and can fancy that He who loved them upon the cross will ever let them be cast away. I cannot think so. I do not believe the Lord Jesus will ever lose one of His flock. He will not let Satan pluck away from Him so much as one sick lamb. He will not allow

one bone of His mystical body to be broken. He will not suffer one jewel to fall from His crown. He and His bride have once been joined in an everlasting covenant, and they shall never, never be put asunder. The trophies won by earthly conquerors have often been wrested from them, and carried off; but this shall never be said of the trophies of Him, who triumphed for us on the cross. **"My sheep,"** He says, **"shall never perish"** (John 10:28). I take my stand on that text. I know not how it can be evaded. If words have any meaning, the perseverance of Christ's people is there.

I do not believe when David had rescued the lamb from the paws of the lion, that he left it weak and wounded to perish in the wilderness. I cannot believe when the Lord Jesus has delivered a soul from the snare of the devil, that He will ever leave that soul to take his chance, and wrestle on in his feebleness against sin, the devil, and the world.

Reader, I dare be sure, if you were present at a shipwreck, and seeing some helpless child tossing on the waves, were to plunge into the sea, and save him at the risk of your own life, I dare be sure you would not be content with merely bringing that child safe to shore. You would not lay him down when you had reached the land, and say, "I will do no more; he is weak, he is insensible, he is cold; it matter not: I have done enough, I have delivered him from the waters, he is not drowned." You would not do it. You would not say so. You would not treat that child in such a manner. You would lift him in your arms. You would carry him to the nearest house. You would try to bring back warmth and animation. You would use every means to restore health and vigor.

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Wheat or Chaff?

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You would never leave him till his recovery was a certain thing.

And can you suppose the Lord Jesus Christ is less merciful, and less compassionate? Can you think He would suffer on the cross and die, and yet leave it uncertain whether believers in Him would be saved? Can you think He would wrestle with death and Hell and go down to the grave for our sakes, and yet allow our eternal life to hang on such a thread as our poor miserable endeavors.

Oh! No! He does not do so. He is a perfect and complete Saviour. Those whom He loves, He loves unto the end. Those whom He washes in His blood He never leaves nor forsakes. He puts His fear into their hearts, so that they shall not depart from Him. Where He begins a work there He also finishes. All whom He plants in His garden enclosed on earth, He transplants sooner or later into paradise. All whom He quickens by His Spirit He will also bring with Him when He enters His kingdom. There is a garner for every grain of the wheat. All shall appear in Zion before God.

From false grace man may fall, and that both finally and foully. I never doubt this. I see proof of it continually. From true grace men never do fall totally. they never did and they never will. If they commit sin like Peter they shall repent and rise again. If they err from the right way, like David, they shall be brought back. It is not any strength or power of their own, that keeps them from apostasy. They are kept because the power, and love, and promises of the Trinity are all engaged on their side. The election of God the Father shall not be fruitless: the intercession of God the Son

shall not be ineffectual: the love of God the Spirit shall not be labor in vain. The Lord shall keep the feet of His saints. They shall all be more than conquerors through Him that loved them. They shall all conquer and none die eternally.

"Blessed forever and ever be that mother's child whose faith hath made him the child of God. The earth may shake, the pillars of the world may tremble under us, the countenance of the heaven may be applied, the sun may lose his light, the moon her beauty, the stars their glory: but concerning the man that trusteth in God, what is there in the world that shall change his heart, overthrow his faith, alter his affection towards God, or the affection of God to him?" (Richard Hooker, 1585).

Reader, if you have not yet taken up the cross and become Christ's disciple, you little know what privileges you are missing. Peace with God now and glory hereafter; the everlasting arms to keep you by the way, and the garner of safety in the end; all these are freely offered to you without money and without price. You may say that Christians have tribulations; you forget that they have also consolations. You may say they have peculiar sorrows; you forget they have also peculiar joys. You see but half the Christian life. You see not all. You see the warfare; but not the meat and the wages. You see the tossing and conflict of the outward part of Christianity; you see not the hidden treasures which lie deep within. Like Elisha's servant, you see the enemies of God's children; but you do not, like Elisha, see the chariots and horses of fire which protect them. Oh! judge not by outward appearances. Be sure that the least drop of the water of life is better than all the rivers of

the world. Remember the garner and the crown. Be wise in time.

Reader, if you feel that you are a weak disciple, think not that weakness shuts you out from any of the privileges of which I have been speaking. Weak faith is true faith, and weak grace is true grace; and both are the gift of Him who never gives in vain. Fear not, neither be discouraged. Doubt not, neither despair. Jesus will never break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax/ The babes in a family are as much loved and thought of as the elder brothers and sisters. The tender seedlings in a garden are as diligently looked after as the old trees. The lambs in the flock are as carefully tended by the good shepherd as the old sheep. Oh! rest assured it is just the same in Christ's family, in Christ's garden, in Christ's flock. All are loved. All are tenderly thought of. All are cared for. And all shall be found in His garner at last.

Reader, think on these things. Remember my question at the beginning of a new year. Meditate upon it. Are you wheat or chaff?

IV. Let me show you, in the last place, *the portion which remains for all who are not Christ's people.*

The text at the beginning of this tract describes this in words which should make our ears tingle, Christ shall "**burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**"

When the Lord Jesus Christ comes to purge His floor, He shall punish all who are not His disciples with a fearful punishment. All who are found impenitent and unbelieving, all who have held the truth in unrighteousness---all who have clung to sin, stuck to the world and set their affections on things below, all who are without Christ, All such shall come to an awful end. Christ shall "**burn up the chaff.**"

Their punishment shall be most "severe." There is no pain like that of burning. Put your finger in the candle for a moment if you doubt this and try. Fire is the most destructive and devouring of all elements. Look into the mouth of a blast furnace and think what it would be to be there. Fire is of all elements most opposed to life. Creatures can live in air, and earth, and water; but nothing can live in fire. Yet fire is the portion to which the Christless and unbelieving will come. Christ will "**burn up the chaff with...fire.**"

Their punishment shall be "eternal." Millions of ages shall pass away, and the fire into which the chaff is cast shall still burn on. That fire shall never burn low and become dim. the fuel of that fire shall never waste away and become consumed. It is "**unquenchable fire.**"

Oh! reader, these are sad and painful things to speak of. I have no pleasure in dwelling with them. I could rather say with the Apostle Paul, "**I have great sorrow.**" But they are things written for our learning, and it is good to consider them. They are a part of that Scripture which is all profitable, and they ought to be heard. Painful as the subject of Hell is, it is one about which I dare not, cannot, must not be silent. Who would desire to speak of hell-fire if God had not spoken of it? When God has spoken of it so plainly, who can safely hold his peace?

I dare not shut my eyes to the fact, that a deep-rooted infidelity lurks in man's minds on the subject of Hell. I see it coming out in the utter apathy of some: they hear, and drink, and sleep as if there was no wrath to come. I see it creeping forth in the coldness of others about their neighbors'

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souls; they show little anxiety to pluck brands from the fire. I desire to denounce such infidelity with all my might. Believing that there are terrors of the Lord, as well as the recompense of reward, I call on all who profess to believe the Bible, to be on their guard.

I know that some do not believe there is any Hell at all. They think it impossible there can be such a place. They call it inconsistent with the mercy of God. they say it is too awful an idea to be really true. The devil, of course, rejoices in the views of such people. They help his kingdom mightily. They are preaching up his old favorite doctrine, **“ye shall not surely die.”**

I know, furthermore, that some do not believe that Hell is eternal. They tell us it is incredible, that a compassionate God will punish men forever. He will surely open the prison-doors at last. This also is a mighty help to the devil's cause. “Take your ease,” he whispers to sinners, “if you do make a mistake, never mind, it is not forever.”

I know also that some believe there is a Hell, but never allow that anybody is going there. All people with them are good as soon as they die, all were sincere, all meant well, and all, they hope, got to Heaven. Alas! what a common delusion is this! I can well understand the feeling of the little girl who asked her mother where all the wicked people were buried, “for she found no mention on the gravestones of any except the good.”

And I know very well that some believe there is a Hell, but never like it to be spoken of. It is a subject that should always be kept back in their opinion. They see no profit in bringing it forward, and are rather shocked when

it is mentioned. This also is an immense help to the devil. “Hush, hush!” says Satan, “say nothing about Hell.” The fowler wishes to hear no noise when he lays his snares. The wolf would like the shepherd to sleep which he prowls around the fold. The devil rejoices when Christians are silent about Hell.

Reader, all these notions are the opinions of man. What is it to you and me what man thinks in religion? Man will not judge us at the last day. Man's fancies and traditions are not to be our guide in this life. There is but one point to be settled, “what says the Word of God?”

Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, “Hell is real and true.” It is as true as Heaven, as true as justification by faith, as true as the fact that Christ died upon the cross, as true as the Dead Sea. There is not a fact or doctrine which you may not lawfully doubt if you doubt Hell. Disbelieve Hell, and you unscrew, unsettle, and unpin everything in Scripture. You may as well throw your Bible aside at once. From “no Hell” to “no God” there is but a series of steps.

Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it “Hell will have inhabitants.” The wicked shall certainly be turned into Hell, and all the people that forget God. These shall go away into everlasting punishment. The same blessed Saviour who now sits on a throne of grace, will one day sit on a throne of judgment, and men will see there is such a thing as the wrath of the Lamb. The same lips which now say “come, come unto me,” will one day say “depart, ye cursed!” Alas! how awful the thought of being condemned by Christ Himself, judged by the Saviour, sentenced to misery by the Lamb!

Little Hills By Nathaniel Hille of Plant City, Florida



One Thing You MUST Know

“One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25). These are the words of a blind man whom the Lord Jesus Christ gave sight to. He did not know the answers to the questions he was being asked; but he knew this one thing! We are approaching the commencements of many students. They have spent a great deal of time and energy coming into knowledge of many things. Some useful; some not so useful. But there is one thing you MUST know: Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior! You must not know about Jesus, but you must know Jesus as YOUR Lord and Savior!

You must know Him as your Redeemer (Job 19:25), your Rock, your Fortress, your Deliverer, your God (Psalm 18:2), your satisfying Sacrifice or Propitiation (I John 2:2), your Savior (Isa. 43:11). You must know Jesus as your Advocate (I John 2:1) and Intercessor (I Tim. 2:5) who pleads His righteousness and His blood on your behalf. The blind man knew he could see, where before He could not. It was clearly evident. It was real. Is Jesus Christ known to you? Is He real to you? To gain the whole world and not know Christ is the greatest tragedy.



Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, “Hell will be intense and unutterable woe.” It is vain to talk of all the expressions about it being only figures of speech. The pit, the prison, the worm, the fire, the thirst, the blackness, the darkness, the weeping, the gnashing of teeth, the second death, all these may be figures of speech if you please. But Bible figures mean something beyond all question, and here they mean something which man's mind can never fully conceive. Oh! reader, the miseries of mind and conscience are far worse than those of the body. The whole extend of Hell, the present suffering, the bitter recollection of the past, the hopeless prospect of the future, will never be thoroughly known except by those who go there.

Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, “Hell is eternal.” It must be eternal, or words have no meaning at all. Forever and ever, everlasting, unquenchable, never-dying, all these are expressions used about Hell, are expressions that cannot be explained away. It must be eternal, or the very foundations of Heaven are cast down. If Hell has an end, Heaven has an end, too. They both stand or fall together. It must be, or else every doctrine of the Gospel is undermined. If a man may escape Hell at length without faith in Christ, or sanctification of the Spirit, sin is no longer an infinite evil, and there was no such great need for Christ making an atonement. And where is there warrant for saying that Hell can ever change a heart, or make it fit

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for Heaven? It must be eternal, or Hell would cease to be Hell altogether. Give a man hope, and he will bear anything. Grant a hope of deliverance however distant, and Hell is but a drop of water. Ah! reader, these are solemn things. Well said old Caryl, "FOREVER is the most solemn saying in the Bible." Alas! for that day which will have no tomorrow, that day when men shall seek death and not find it, and shall desire to die, but death shall flee from them! Who shall dwell with devouring fire! Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings!

Do you believe the Bible? Then depend upon it, Hell is a "subject that ought not to be kept back." It is striking to observe the many texts about it in Scripture. It is striking to observe that none say so much about it as our Lord Jesus Christ, that gracious and merciful Saviour, and the Apostle John, whose heart seems full of love. Truly it may well be doubted whether we ministers speak of it as much as we ought. I cannot forget the words of a dying hearer of Mr. Newton's, "Sir, you often told me of Christ and salvation: why did you not oftener remind me of Hell and danger?"

Let others hold their peace about Hell if they will: I dare not do so. I see it plainly in Scripture, and I must speak of it. I fear that thousands are on that broad way that leads to it, and I would fain arouse them to a sense of the peril before them. What would you say of the man who saw his neighbor's house in danger of being burned down, and never raised the cry of "fire?" What ought to be said of us ministers if we call ourselves watchmen for souls, and yet see the fires of Hell raging in

the distance, and never give the alarm? Call it bad taste, if you like, to speak of Hell. Call it charity to make things pleasant, and speak smoothly, and soothe men with constant lullaby of peace. From such notions of taste and charity may I ever be delivered! My notion of charity is to warn men plainly of danger. My notion of taste in the ministerial office, is to declare all the counsel of God. If I never spoke of Hell, I should think I had kept back something that was profitable, and should look on myself as an accomplice of the devil.

Reader, I beseech you, in all tender affection, beware of false views of the subject on which I have been dwelling. Beware of new and strange doctrines about Hell and the eternity of punishment. Beware of manufacturing a God of your own---a God who is all mercy but not just, a God who is all love, but not holy, a God who has a Heaven for everybody, but a Hell for none, a God who can allow good and bad to be side by side in time, but will make no distinction between good and bad in eternity. Such a God is an idol of your own, as really as Jupiter, or Juggernaut, as true an idol as any snake or crocodile in an Egyptian temple, as true an idol as was ever molded out of brass or clay. The hands of your own fancy and sentimentality have made Him. He is not the God of the Bible, and beside the God of the Bible there is no God at all. Your heaven would be no heaven at all. A heaven containing all sorts of characters indiscriminately would be miserable discord indeed. Alas! for the eternity of such a heaven. There would be little difference between it and Hell. Ah! reader, there is a Hell! There is a fire for the chaff! Take heed lest you find it out to your cost too late.

Beware of being wise above that which is written. Beware of forming fanciful theories of your own, and then trying to make the Bible square in with them. Beware of making selections from your Bible to suit your taste---refusing, like a spoilt child, whatever you think bitter, seizing, like a spoilt child, whatever you think sweet. What is all this but taking Jehoiakim's penknife? What does it amount to but telling God, that you, a poor short-lived worm, know what is good for you better than He. It will not do. It will not do. You must take the Bible as it is. You must read it all, and believe it all. You must come to the reading of it in the spirit of a little child. Dare not to say, "I believe this verse, for I like it. I reject that, for I do not like it. I receive this, for I can understand it. I refuse that, for I cannot reconcile it with my views." **"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"** By what right do you talk in this way. Surely it were better to say over every chapter in the Word, **"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."** Ah! reader, if men would do this, they would never deny Hell, the chaff, and the fire.

Think on these things once more. Meditate upon them. Remember my question, "Are you wheat or chaff?"

And now, reader, let me say four things in conclusion, and then I have done. I have shown you the two great classes of mankind, the wheat and the chaff. I have shown you the separation which will one day take place. I have shown you the safety of the Lord's people. I have shown you the fearful portion of the Christless and unbelieving. I commend these things to your conscience as in the sight of God.

1. And now settle it down in your mind that the things of

which I have been speaking are "all real and true."

I do believe that many never see the great truths of religion in this light. I firmly believe that many never listen to the things they hear from ministers as realities. They regard it all, like Galio, as a matter of names and words, and nothing more, a huge shadow, a formal part-acting, a vast sham. Macauley's History of England, Dickens's last Novel, the latest news from California, New Zealand, or New York, all these are things they realize. They feel interested and excited about them. But as to the Bible and Heaven, and the kingdom of Christ, and the judgment-day, these are subjects that they hear unmoved. They do not really believe them. If Layard had dug up at Nineveh anything damaging the truth and authority of the Old Testament Scriptures, it would not have interfered with their peace for an hour.

Reader, if you have unhappily gotten into this frame of mind, I charge you to cast it off forever. Whether you mean to hear or forbear, awaken to the thorough conviction that the things I have brought before you are real and true. The wheat, the chaff, the separation, the garner, the fire, all these are great realities, as real as the sun in Heaven, as real as the paper which your eyes behold. For my part, I believe in Heaven, and I believe in Hell. I believe in a coming judgment. I believe in a day of sifting. I am not ashamed to say so. I believe them all, and therefore write as I do. Oh! reader, take a friend's advice, live as if these things were true.

2. Settle it down in your mind, in the second place, that the things of which I write "concern yourself." They are your business,

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Wheat or Chaff?

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your affair, and your concern.

Many, I am satisfied, never look on religion as a matter that concerns themselves. They attend on its outward part, as a decent and proper fashion. They hear sermons. They read religious books. They have their children christened. But all the time they never ask themselves, "What is all this to me?" They sit in our churches like spectators in a theatre or court of law. They read our writings as if they were reading a report of an interesting trial, or of some event far away. But they do not say to themselves, "I am this man."

Reader, if you have this kind of feeling, depend upon it, it will never do. There must be an end of all this if ever you are to be saved. You are the man I write to, whoever you may be that reads this tract. I write not specially to the rich. I write not specially to the poor. I write to everybody who will read, whatever his rank may be. It is on your soul's account that I am pleading, and not another's. You are spoken of in the text that begins this tract. You are this very day either among the wheat or among the chaff. Your portion will one day either be the garner or the fire. Oh! that men were wise, and would lay these things to heart! Oh, that they would not trifle, daily, linger, live on half-and-half Christian, meaning well, but never acting boldly, and at last awake when it is too late.

3. Settle it down in your mind in the third place, that if you are willing to be one of the wheat of the earth, "the Lord Jesus Christ is willing to receive you."

Does any man suppose that Jesus is not willing to see His garner filled? Do you think He does not

desire to bring many sons to glory? Oh! but you little know the depth of His mercy and compassion, if you think such a thought. He wept over unbelieving Jerusalem. He mourns over the impenitent and the thoughtless in the present day. He sends you invitations by my mouth this hour. He invites you to hear and live, to forsake the way of the foolish, and go to the paths of understanding. "As I live," He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Oh! reader, if you never came to Christ for life before, come to Him this very year. Come to Him with the penitent's prayer for mercy and grace. Come to Him without delay. Come to Him while the name of the new year is still strange to you. Come to Him before the winter is past, and let the spring find you a new creature.

If you are determined to have the world, and the things of the world, its pleasures and its rewards, its follies and its sins; if you must have your own way, and cannot give up anything for Christ and your soul; if this be your case, there is but one end before you. I fairly warn you. I plainly tell you. You will sooner or later come to the unquenchable fire.

But if any man is willing to be saved, the Lord Jesus Christ stands ready to save him. "Come unto me," He says, "weary soul, and I will give you rest. Come, guilty and sinful soul, and I will give you free pardon. Come, lost and ruined soul, and I will give you eternal life."

Oh! reader, let this message be a word in season. Arise and call upon the Lord. Let the angels of God rejoice over one more saved soul. Let the courts of Heaven hear the good tidings that one more lost sheep is found.

4. Settle it down in your

mind last of all that if you have committed your soul to Christ, "Christ will never allow that soul to perish."

The everlasting arms are round about you. Lean back in them and know your safety. The same hand that was nailed to the cross is holding you. The same wisdom that framed the heavens and the earth is engaged to maintain your cause. The same power that redeemed the tribes from the house of bondage is on your side. The same love that bore with and carried Israel from Egypt to Canaan is pledged to keep you. Ah! reader, they are well kept whom Christ keeps. Our faith may repose calmly on such a bed as Christ's omnipotence.

Take comfort, doubting believer. Why are you cast down? The love of Jesus is no summer-day fountain: no man ever yet saw its bottom. The compassion of Jesus is a fire that never yet burned low; the cold, gray ashes of that fire have never yet been seen. Take comfort. In your own heart you may find little cause for rejoicing. But you may always rejoice in the Lord.

You say your faith is so small. But where is it said that none shall be saved except their faith be great? And after all, "who gave thee any faith at all?" The very fact that you have any faith is a token for good.

You say your sins are so many. But where is the sin, or heap of sins that the blood of Jesus cannot wash away? And after all, "who told thee thou hadst any sins? That feeling never came from thyself." Blessed indeed is that mother's child who really knows and feels that he is a sinner.

Take comfort, I say once more, if you have really come to Christ. Take comfort, and know your privileges. Cast every care on

Jesus. Tell every want to Jesus. Roll every burden on Jesus, sins, unbelief, doubts, fears, anxieties, lay them all on Christ. He loves to see you doing so. He loves to be employed as your high priest. He loves to be trusted. He loves to see His people ceasing from the vain effort to carry their burdens for themselves.

I commend these things to your notice. Only be among Christ's wheat now, and then as sure as the Bible is true, you shall be in Christ's garner hereafter.

Reader, I heartily pray that this tract may do you good. If it does, I have one request to make. Name the writer before the throne of grace. Pray for me.

I remain, your affectionate friend,

J. C. Ryle



True and False

(Continued from page 1) ♦

be wise for every reader to search their heart to determine whether or not they are following the example of the true or the example of the false. II Peter 1:8-11 declares: **"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."**

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Gleanings for the Young & Old



THE DISCONTENTED HORSE-SHOE

A well-shaped horse-shoe, as it hung against the wall in a blacksmith's shop, bitterly complained of the ill-usage to which it had been subjected. "No one," said the shoe, in a whining tone, "has endured the fiery trials through which I have passed, without any respite being allowed me. The hard-hearted sledge-hammer and anvil were my enemies, and between the two I was cruelly treated, and found no pity. I was beaten by them unmercifully, and the blows I received at their hands would have killed an ox; as I said before, no one has endured the fiery trials through which I have passed."

"Hold your foolish tongue," said a ploughshare, which had been sent to be repaired, unless you can talk more wisely. Both you and I have been greatly benefited by the ordeal through which we have passed, and are valued highly by those who once might have despised us. Once we were useless pieces of iron, but now you are a useful horse-shoe, and I a ploughshare."

Thus seasonably admonished, the horse-shoe became silent, and was never afterwards heard to complain.

We seldom commit a greater error than that of repining at our trials and afflictions; for our heavenly Father often renders these the medium of his greatest mercies. **"...No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby"** (Heb.



12:11). The complaining horse-shoe, though a fiction in the fable, is a fact when applied to mankind, for multitudes of repiners have become dumb, when experience has proved the value of their bitterest trials.

*Fear the Lord, love Him,
and trust Him and then,
If properly improved, thy grief and pains
And heaviest losses all will turn to gains;
Hope, peace, and joy from trouble will arise,
To bless thee, and prepare thee for the skies.*

A CLAY POT

Now, it don't matter a bit what sort of clay a pot's made of, if when it's been tried in the fire it turns out sound and rings well when it's struck.

If I'm only common red ware, without even a bit of glaze on me, and yet answer the purpose well for which I'm made, why I'm a good pot, ain't I, even if I only hold water? But what I hate is this—to see the pots that we come against every day of our lives all on the grumble and murmur system, and never satisfied. The pot of common clay wishes he was glazed, and the glazed pot wishes he was blue crockery, and the blue crock pot wishes he was gilt, and the gilt pot ain't satisfied because he ain't china; and one and all are regularly blind to the good they have themselves, and think their neighbors have all the pleasures of this world. All us pots need to learn that, **"in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"** (Phil. 4:11).

LAME AND LAZY

Two beggars, Lame and Lazy, were in want of bread. One leaned on his crutch, the other reclined on his couch.

Lame called on Charity, and humbly asked for a cracker. Instead of a cracker, he received a loaf.

Lazy, seeing the gift of Charity, exclaimed, "What, ask a cracker and receive a loaf? Well, I will ask for a loaf."

Lazy now applied to Charity, and called for a loaf of bread.

"Your demanding a loaf," said Charity, "proves you a loafer. You are of that class and character who ask and receive not; you ask amiss."

Lazy, who always found fault, and had rather whine than work, complained of ill treatment, and even accused Charity of a breach of an exceeding great and precious promise, "Ask, and you shall receive."

Charity pointed him to a painting in her room, which presented to his vision three personages, Faith, Hope, and Charity. Charity appeared larger and fairer than her sisters. He noticed that her right hand held a pot of honey, which fed a bee disabled, having lost its wings. Her left hand was armed with a whip to keep off the drones.

"Don't understand it," said Lazy.

Charity replied, "It means, that Charity feeds the lame and flogs the lazy."

Lazy turned to go.

"Stop," said Charity, "instead of coin I will give you counsel. Do not go and live on your poor mother, for I will send you to a rich ant."

"Rich aunt?" echoed Lazy. "Where shall I find her?"

"You will find her in Proverbs, 6th chapter and 6th verse."

Moral. Instead of waiting and wishing a rich uncle to die, go and see how a rich ant lives.



True and False

(Continued from page 7) ♦

THE TRUE EXAMPLE SET FORTH v. 17

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample" (Phil. 3:17).

1. Paul exhorts the Philippian believers to follow the example of piety and holiness that he had set before them. This was not a self-righteous boast, but rather an inspired exhortation. Paul could make this statement because he knew that he was following God. He had previously told the saints at Corinth: **"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"** (I Cor. 11:1). Every true minister of the Gospel who is worth his salt should be able to honestly exhort those he ministers too to follow his example as he follows the Lord. If a man is not committed to following Christ and submitting to His claims he has no business standing behind the sacred desk and preaching. No preacher is perfect, but he must live an exemplary life before his hearers so as not to bring reproach upon Christ or the ministry (Titus 1:6-9).

2. Paul's example and standard of piety is clearly outlined in the third chapter of Philippians and it is certainly a testimony that is worthy of imitation because of his sincere desire to resemble Christ and please Him in all things. A true example of holiness is marked by "...rejoicing in the Lord" (v. 1); "worshipping God in the spirit...and having no confidence in the flesh" (v. 3); renouncing all the glamour and glory of the world **"...that I may win Christ"** (v. 4-8); trusting only the righteousness of Christ, desiring to be conformed to His

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True and False

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image whatever the cost, and be a partaker in the first resurrection (v. 9-11); and finally confessing our present imperfection but earnestly pressing **“toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”** (v. 12-15).

3. Paul then tells his readers that there were others within the Philippian church whose example was worthy of imitation. He exhorts them to mark or look on those with a testimony of holiness and follow them as they follow the Lord. Within every church there are generally two classes of members, those who desire to follow the Lord in faithfulness and those who are apathetic and indifferent to the claims of Christ. We should set before our minds the best examples, and endeavor to imitate the most holy men and women. Proverbs 13:20 declares: **“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”** I like what Albert Barnes wrote:

“...Young Christians should set before their minds for imitation, and associate with, the purest and most spiritual members of the church. Our religion takes its form and complexion much from those with whom we associate; and he will usually be the most holy man who associates with the most holy companions.” (1)

4. There is a holy responsibility set before every true child of God in this verse. Every genuine believer should aspire to live so as to be the right kind of example to others. Can we, with Paul, honestly exhort others to follow our example because we are striving with all our might to follow and please the Lord? Let us never forget that the eyes of others

are always upon us examining our way of life and testimony. May God help all believers to recognize the solemn importance of being the right kind of example to others. Are our attitudes, speech, dress, study habits, spiritual aspirations, and way of life bringing glory to the Lord and therefore worthy of imitation? Or are we more concerned with pleasing the world, catering to the flesh, and compromising the truth? May God help us all to search our hearts and enable us to obey the admonition of II Timothy 2:19 which declares: **“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”**

THE FALSE EXAMPLE EXPOSED v. 18-19

“(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things)” (Phil. 3:18-19).

1. Paul was never bashful about exposing falsehood. He had faithfully warned the members of the Philippian church of the false teachers who were promoting the pernicious errors of legalism on the one hand and antinomianism on the other. Every faithful minister must meet heresy head on and warn others of the dangers of being influenced by it. Just as the believers were to mark those who set forth an example of piety and holiness, they were likewise to mark those who were guilty of perverting the truth. Romans 16:17-18 declares: **“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and**

offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”

2. Those who were setting forth an example of impiety grieved the heart of the apostle. His heart was so affected by their error that it moved him to tears. Paul literally wept as he witnessed the hypocrisy of those who professed Christ but dishonored His holy name by the way in which they lived. We should likewise weep and be burdened for those who are false professors of Christianity because they bring reproach upon the name of the Altogether Lovely One and they are destroying their own souls. Oh, that we would be as tender hearted as Paul was! Jeremiah 9:1 states: **“Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”**

3. Paul's weeping did not prevent him from faithfully exposing the true nature of the false professors of his day. He labels them as **“enemies of the cross of Christ.”** They were promoting a religion of fleshly trust, rather than dependence upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. The Judaizers were guilty of teaching salvation by works rather than by free grace through faith in the blood of Jesus. Anyone who teaches that salvation is through works, either in whole or in part, is the worst sort of heretic and should be exposed as such. Those who despise the cross as the only means of acceptance with God are not friends of Christ, but rather His enemies. It is sad, but true, that in our day many who profess to represent Jesus Christ are in reality revealed to



be His enemies when what they believe and practice are carefully examined in light of Scripture. True preachers should follow the admonition of Titus 1:9 which declares: **“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”**

4. Doctrinal heresy usually is followed by immortality. These enemies of the cross were practicing antinomians who set their own standard of morality rather than following God's laws and commands as a rule of conduct. They were idolaters who were given over to the pursuit of fleshly lusts and sensual gratification **“whose God is their belly.”** Rather than being ashamed and convicted of their sinful conduct they gloried **“in their shame.”** It is sad indeed when those who profess to know Christ glory in their immortality. They will say that they are free and have liberty to do as they please because of their supposed position of justification, but in reality they are blinded by Satan and in bondage to sin. I tend to doubt the sincerity of anyone who can consistently practice immortality without being convicted. Genuine Christian liberty is not the freedom to sin without the consequence of condemnation, but rather the ability to bring forth fruits of holiness because of our justified position in Christ (Rom. 6:15-22). These false examples were also marked by minding **“earthly things.”** Their affections and desires were directed toward the things of the world rather than the things of God. Oh, that God would deliver His churches from the scourge of earthly idolaters who glory in that which they

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The Noted Pastor

By Todd
Bryant
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Have We Departed from Biblical Preaching Without Realizing It?

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

It happens all too often. A preacher is invited to speak at a revival meeting or Bible conference. The hope of the host church and pastor is that the speaker will ignite a flame in the people of God to serve Him with more zeal. As the song service ends, he ascends into the pulpit with Bible in hand. The crowd is prepared as he asks them to open their Bibles. The church reads along as a few verses are read—verses inspired by the Holy Spirit of God—literally “breathed out by God” (II Timothy 3:16). God has placed these verses in the middle of context in the book. And He has placed the book into the middle of context within the Bible as a whole. There is a full message contained in this powerful passage – maybe a weeklong series. The foundation is prepared. Now the preaching commences.

What happens next is puzzling. The speaker focuses only on a word or two in a sentence. Nothing is said of the setting of the passage. Nothing is said of the main subject of the book. Nothing is said of either the author or the recipients. Nothing is even

mentioned concerning the point of the specific passage. It becomes apparent quickly that the passage was not read as a foundational text. It was read because it contained a word or two that the pastor needed to preach a sermon that he had in mind prior to ever locating the passage. It is as though the speaker had a thought, a message, if you will, and then located a passage simply to use as a springboard for his own thoughts. And oddly, following the sermon, the people are awed and amazed that a man can preach “such a powerful sermon from only two words.” But that is not Biblical preaching. It is not the way the Word of God should be approached. We, as pastors, become little more than motivational speakers when we show such disdain for the text of God’s Word.

Now, do not misunderstand. This message may be rather full of Biblical truth...maybe. But that does not justify such a flippant use of God’s Word. We must realize that a passage (or in this case, part of a passage) can never mean to us today what it did not mean to the original audience. There is one meaning of a Bible text and only one. That is the meaning that God “breathed out” through the original author to His intended audience. We have no leeway and no right, if you will, to use the passage otherwise. And why would we? In His high priestly prayer, Jesus said, **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”** If we are to be sanctified, it must be with truth. Where do we find truth? We find it in God’s Word – the Bible. And lest we misunderstand, this means God’s Word as originally intended to the original audience in context. It does not mean “you have your interpretation and I have mine and that is OK.” It is not OK. We

may both be wrong. Therefore, we must do our absolute best to find God’s message through the text of Scripture. **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”** (II Tim. 2:15).

Preacher, if you have a Biblical message, there will be a passage that teaches it. If your main idea must pull passages and phrases out of their context for proof, then your main idea is not Biblical and it needs to be discarded. The Bible is not a book written in some mysterious way whereby we must search and search for a hidden meaning. The Bible is written in plain language that we can understand. I do not mean that some truths are not difficult to wrap your head around. That is not the point at all. But we can understand the words on the page. We do not need to spend great amounts of time trying to draw out “new truths.” If you are having difficulty finding a passage that teaches your point, you probably have a point that needs much more consideration. It may even be that your message is unscriptural. Let me stress once more, if you have a Biblical message, there will be a passage to preach it from, and a passage full of context, which carried the same meaning to the original audience, that you are trying to convey to the congregation you are speaking to.

When we rip passages kicking and screaming out of their context, we are not preaching the Word. We are using the Word to promote our own thoughts. We, as preachers, need to understand fully that the message of the Biblical text is far more beneficial to a congregation than our own ideas and thoughts. Preachers need to hide behind the text of the Bible. We need to make sure that the text is doing the

speaking. We need to make sure that the Bible is foundational in our preaching. Paul told Timothy, **“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”** (II Tim. 4:1-4). This is the preacher’s charge. We, as church leaders, need to open the Bibles to the people much like they did in the days of Nehemiah. **“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading”** (Neh. 8:8). Simple, right? Read the Bible and tell the people what it means. This is the same idea Paul stressed to Timothy.

Why did Paul stress so strongly that Timothy (and all preachers, for that matter) needed to **“preach the word?”** We are not left in the dark here. We need to preach the Word because “the time is coming when people will not endure sound doctrine.” By the authority of this text, if pastors handle the Word of God in a flippant sort of way, the congregation will ultimately **“turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”** It is impossible for an assembly of believers to view the Word of God as a book which merely proves our own thoughts without departing from the truth. And it is the duty of pastors to make sure the church has great respect for the Word of God. This is not done, necessarily,

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The Noted Pastor True and False

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by standing to reverence the book or by defending a manuscript tradition. This is done by the repetitive preaching of the Word of God, week after week after week, year after year after year. Only when the Word of God is approached in this way will the congregation have the proper respect for the Word of God. Only then will we understand rightly that, **"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"** (II Tim. 3:16-17).

Preacher, if you want to mature the people God has placed you over, you must teach them the Bible. This will never be done by using a word or two to preach a 45-minute sermon full of your own ideas – even if many of those ideas are Scriptural. Such an approach will only further the idea that the Bible is just there to support our own thoughts. And a church that views the Bible in this way is doomed to "turn away from listening to the truth." We know this because God's Word is truth – truth that God uses to sanctify His people. We, as church leaders, must preach the text of Scripture. We must preach it as intended to the original audience. We must preach it in context. We must make the meaning clear. Only when we do this are we faithfully laboring as God has called us to. And only then can we be assured that the church we have been called to lead will be grounded in the truth.

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should be ashamed of! I agree with B. H. Carroll, the Texas Baptist of the nineteenth century, who wrote:

"I do not know any worse enemies to the cross of Christ than the Antinomians...To me the most horrible thing in the world is for a man to profess belief in the high doctrines of grace and then live an evil life. God calls men to good works; God regenerates men, creates them unto good works, and whom He calls He not only justifies but sanctifies, and I am sure that the unsanctified man will never enter heaven." (1)

5. Paul makes it clear that the enemies of the cross are heading for certain judgment by stating **"Whose end is destruction."** Those who are trusting in their own flesh or living immoral lives should not expect to reach Heaven at last. Yet, there are literally multitudes of men and women who make some sort of profession of religion who have deceived themselves into thinking that they are alright. Proverbs 14:12 is a solemn warning for all false professors of religion: **"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."** A mere profession of faith without any evidence of piety and holiness is vain and worthless. Hebrews 12:14 makes this clear by stating: **"Follow peace with all men, AND HOLINESS, WITHOUT WHICH NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD"** (emph. TR). What terror will strike the heart of all false professors of religion when they stand before Jesus Christ and hear him pronounce their sentence of eternal judgment by saying: **"I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work**

iniquity" (Matt. 7:23).

THE FOCUS AND HOPE OF A TRUE EXAMPLE v. 20-21

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20-21).

1. The true example of a Christian testimony is very much unlike the false example set by the false professors of religion in several respects. Those who are truly saved have a high and holy citizenship in Heaven. Their names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world in the decree of election (Rev. 13:8; 17:8). They are positionally seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus and entitled to all spiritual blessings that flow from union to Him (Eph. 1:3; 2:6). They have gladly submitted to the laws of Heaven as loyal citizens committed to obeying and following Jesus Christ. Their affections are focused upon heavenly things as Colossians 3:1-2 declares: **"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."**

2. In every respect the genuine believer is diametrically opposed to the enemies of the cross by virtue of his calling and conduct. The false professors were still under the dominion of Satan and citizens of a world that is in opposition to God. The genuine Christian, on the other hand, is united to Christ and has been translated out of the darkness of Satan's kingdom into the kingdom

of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13). The false professor continues to mind earthly things, whereas the true believer confesses he is a pilgrim and a stranger in this world and is longing to be transported into the land of glory. Praise God if you are one of those of whom it can be said **"For our conversation is in heaven...."**

3. The owner of a true testimony of Christianity also is looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. His home is not set upon the world and its wealth. Rather, he is found anxiously anticipating and longing for the day when Jesus comes again to deliver him from the presence of sin. This has been the expected hope of the saints of God ever since Jesus ascended into Heaven after His resurrection.

4. The reason why the believer is intently **"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"** (Titus 2:13) is because of the glorious transformation that will occur at that moment in time. When Jesus returns in the air all believers are going to experience the change of glorification when their vile body of sin and humiliation will be exchanged for a glorious body of incorruption and immortality. I Corinthians 15:51-53 declares: **"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."**

5. What is even more amazing is that every believer will be entirely conformed to the image of Jesus

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. What Old Testament prophet best compares to your ministry as a pastor (i.e. are you a Jonah or an Elijah)?

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That is really a big leap, to compare our ministries to the Bible heroes of yore. The prophets of God had a sanctified responsibility to proclaim God's Word to the people of their generation, and it is a very sobering thought, that we pastors have the same accountability to our God and our flocks that He has given us charge of in 2017. Selah! Think about it!

As I compiled a list of the Old Testament saints, and made notations of what might summate their ministries, I did find some kindred spirit and circumstances between them and my pastorate here at Big Creek Baptist Church. I do not believe that any preacher's ministry is completely confined to his flock, but also to the community environment and lost circumstances that our churches find ourselves witnessing unto.

Isaac is the first prophet that I found I could relate somewhat unto. Having to follow in his father's footsteps would have been a difficult challenge. His father was Abraham, the father of the faithful! How could Isaac have ever lived up to that? As I have grown older, I have constantly been amazed at the strength and faithfulness of my father, Elder Dan Stepp. And while he may

not have the world-wide acclaim of father Abraham, Daniel Stepp is the flesh and blood saint that I have come to trust for wisdom, faith, and love for our Lord Jesus Christ. Following my father, as he followed Christ, has been a challenge, but what a blessing for me, as I am sure it was for Isaac (Gen. 26:24, I Kings 3:7-9, Lev. 19:3).

In some of the same echoes of inadequacy, I found myself feeling like Joshua, too. What big shoes I have had to fill here at Big Creek Baptist Church. The pastors gone on before were holy servants of God, like Moses had been. Joshua was used to just being a helper, and that is all I ever imagined myself to be when I taught the adult Bible class at Heritage Landmark Baptist Church, where my father, and then brother Elder Benjamin Stepp pastored. To feel, and then to know the call of the Lord to pastor one of His precious bodies, was a daunting feeling. I was able to take comfort with Joshua, in our great God, to be able to fill the shoes of Elders Clyde Hancock, George Sherman, Mike Channell, Doyal Thomas, and Bobby Lakes among others. I can not be them, any more than Joshua could be a Moses, but our God is able to use us in our own unique ways to still fulfill His decrees and exhort the people of God (Josh. 1:5-9).

I guess I can not leave out Amos. Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa, he identifies himself. Not as Paul the apostle, nor as Solomon the king. Just a shepherd, rancher, or farmer. No public schooling, unlearned like the fisherman

Christ surrounded Himself with in Galilee, but taught by Christ, Himself. If Amos were used of God to utter "**Thus saith the LORD,**" I also have found that God does not care about my background as installer for Stepp & Sons Garage Doors, and I have not the ability to quench the fire of God's Word in my bones, (yes, Jeremiah, too!). In fact, the Lord rejoices to use my baseness, to exalt His own holiness (I Cor. 1:26-31).

I thought I was going to use Jeremiah as a kindred minister in a time when God was harshly judging his beloved Judah/my beloved America, as recently as October of last year, 2016. But when God performed a miracle on Election Day, and has continued to show His mercy in so many ways since, that point toward a possible reprieve of sorts, I have incorporated also, Isaiah (1:18-20). Sort of a calm before the storm. Unquestionably the judgment is certain and coming, but maybe not as imminent as I had feared. Isaiah and I are looking for the coming Messiah to rescue us (PreTrib!) from the inescapable verdict of death upon this world, and the time may be short, but let us be about the work of proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ while we yet have a day or two to serve. Jeremiah, Isaiah, and I must make known "A relevant God!"

Surprisingly to me, Micah might be the prophet that best corresponds to my ministry. His book could be titled: "An Exhortation to Be a Good Servant in Evil Times" (6:8). That is what my ministry summed up feels like. A pastor needs to exhort his flock to be holy, and to be aware of the dangers, but also point them toward hope, victory and the Lord—Saviour of the World!

May we all continue to be about that labor. Preach the Gospel and cherish the truth held by His peculiar people! Selah! Think about it!

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I would have to say that Moses, Jonah, and Jeremiah compare to my ministry. I say this about Moses (Exodus 3 and 4) and Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6) because they both made excuses for not wanting to be the one to speak unto God's chosen people.

Moses had a temper I believe, which at one point he lost when he smote the rock. I, too, have a temper but have never lost my temper with any of God's people, but I have been close. And Moses made many excuses to convince God he was not the man for the job. His main excuse was a question to God "**Who am I?**" (Ex. 3:11). My question was similar! This timid, stammering, reluctant Moses went away from that burning bush to become the great emancipator of God's people and leader of a great nation. This same man who began by asking, "**Who am I?**" is last seen in Scripture on the Mount of Transfiguration amidst the glory of Jesus Himself.

I was timid, stammering, and reluctant. I am still that way today, but when God called me to preach, I used all the excuses I could think of. Now, I am not nearly the man Moses was, I am not worthy, just a worm of the earth, and was not fit to carry

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. With the Muslim religion being the fastest growing currently in the world, could it also be the one world religion spoken of during the tribulation? It seems to be taking over everywhere, even in parts of America.

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There is no doubt that the Muslim religion is growing. As of 2012 the estimated adherents to Islam were 1.6 billion split into two factions, Sunni and Shi'ite. The same year estimated that there were 2.2 billion under the umbrella of "Christianity," but that number is not really accurate. I would estimate that is really a much smaller minority within the umbrella of "Christianity" who are genuinely saved followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The bulk of what most people would define as "Christianity" would be those who belong to the Roman or Greek Orthodox Catholic Church and the various Protestant sects that trace their existence back to Rome.

Without getting into the weeds of an eschatological dissertation, I believe that the Antichrist is a real person who will be revealed during the Tribulation Period, immediately after the Rapture of the saints (I Thess. 4:13-18; II Thess. 2:1-12). He will be aided by the ministry of the False Prophet, who I believe will be whoever the Pope is at the time. They will combine forces to head up the global religion and lead their adherents to persecute the Jews and any people who are converted

during the Tribulation Period who will refuse to take the mark of the Beast (Rev. 13:12-18). I am of the old school of interpreters who see that the Roman Catholic Church is the Mother of Harlots revealed in Revelation 17, whose commercial interests and spiritual influence are worldwide.

I preached a series of messages entitled "Not Christian" as an exposé of the errors of Romanism in February and March of 2016. What I found interesting is that there are many tenets and practices of Roman Catholicism that are duplicated in Islam, and vice versa. Therefore, I do not think it will be that much of a leap to believe that Romanism and Islam will combine forces during the Tribulation under the direction of the Antichrist. Through the centuries they both have a history of persecuting those who do not believe their errors. They both believe in works salvation. They both are governed by singular rulers who are deified by their adherents. They both believe in some form of coercion and intimidation to advance their religion. I think it is interesting to note that the current Pope is making an ecumenical effort to appeal to Protestants and Muslims alike. I am not saying the current Pope is the False Prophet. I do not believe in trying to fit every current event into a prophetic fulfillment. I do think that Islam will come under the umbrella of the Antichrist and the False Prophet during the Tribulation, so in some sense they

will compromise with the one world religion led by the Pope.

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"And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. ...Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; ...And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" (Gen. 16:10-12). Ishmael, according to this direct prophecy, will be the father of the Arabs, wandering wild men, in eternal conflict with other nations, that will not go away from his brethren's presence until the end of the Great Tribulation, at the end of time. Selah! Think about it!

Three reasons why the Arabs, and their primary religion of Islam, instituted by Muhammad (570-632AD) will NOT be the one world religion of the Anti-Christ:

1) Muslims are not very tolerant, ecumenical-type worshippers. Too many peoples and religions are/will be either a) Anti-Muslim because of their arrogant infidel proclamations or b) resist because the Muslims have made them a target of their Jihad persecution, showing no desire to ecumenicalize these factions. This is evident as a fulfillment of the Angel's prophecy to Hagar: **"...his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against**

him..." (Gen. 16:12). The Arabs and Muslims will ALWAYS be at odds with the rest of the world. God has stated thusly.

2) The one world religion will incorporate "modern Christianity" in its body, which Islam is really INCAPABLE of, **"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues"** (Rev. 18:4). In this prophecy of the judgment of the Great Whore, the Spiritual religion of the Anti-Christ, God gives departure warning to the saved people that might be in her midst! So evidently, some semblance of Christianity is REQUIRED of this pervasive religion, taking in citizens of every rank and denomination. Some have called Pope Francis the "Protestant Pope," in that he is paving the way for Catholicism to re-assimilate her harlot daughters in the future.

That leads to 3) The appellations "whore/harlot" speak of apostasy, not rivalry or even paganism, which is the categories that Islam must fall under. **"...Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. ...and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was**

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Forum #1

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God's Word to His people, but He gave me everything I needed to do the work He called me to do as He did Moses. I am still not worthy, the worst of the worst, but it is by God's Sovereign Grace that I am able to do what I do.

Jeremiah said he was just a child. I feel like a child that knows nothing at all. But again, by the grace of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit I am able. Jeremiah had to speak tough words to God's people and I feel I do the same, I speak what God says, I do not try and sugarcoat it. Jeremiah was in the midst of false prophets. I am in the midst of 17 so-called (false) churches that do not preach the truth.

But the one I really can relate to is Jonah. There was only one Jonah but certain things he did I have also done. When the Lord called me to the ministry I did not want anything to do with it (still do not in many ways). I ran for four years, trying to convince God and myself that I was the wrong guy. I could no more get up in front of people then the man in the moon and had not the tongue to speak as Moses argued.

Also, I sometimes get upset that we preach and preach the Gospel for long periods where no one is saved. I have argued with God (does not do me any good) and say I know you are not going to save everyone so why do you not just send your elect to have the Gospel preached to them? Jonah got upset with God because he knew God would eventually destroy Nineveh. But at this time God wanted salvation for this generation of Ninevites. Then I have to stop and realize I do not know who His elect are and He will bring them to the saving

knowledge of Jesus Christ in His time and those that He chose before the foundation of the world will be saved. So as it was with Jonah, God questions me **"Doest thou well to be angry"** (Jonah 4:4)? And I have to always answer...no!

I am sure there are other things, but this should suffice to answer the questioner's question. God Bless!

ROGER REED



I wish I could even be in the conversation as being like one of the prophets of the Old Testament. Without trying to sound falsely humble or overly modest, I fear that I am not nearly as devoted, courageous, spiritual, or powerful in preaching as those men of God were. In fact, as I pondered this question I began to get convicted of the many deficiencies I see in my ministry.

I would love to always be as bold as Nathan was when he rebuked David (II Sam. 12:7-14), or as fearless as Elijah was when he slew the prophets of Baal (I Kings 18:15-40). Sadly, there have been times when I have been as melancholy as Elijah when he took refuge under the juniper bush (I Kings 19:3-8).

I know that I have been separated and consecrated to the work of the ministry by Divine appointment as Jeremiah was (Jer. 1:4-6). There have been times when I get in a rut, or feel sorry for myself, that I have to repent of my selfishness and recognize God's call on my life and the purpose for

which I have been called, to glorify God! In those times I can say with Jeremiah: **"...But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones..."** (Jer. 20:9). Thank God that He always brings me back where I should be, preaching the Word in season and out of season. I pray that God will give me a burden and concern for sinners like He did Jeremiah who often wept over the wicked who rejected the Word.

I have often admired the discipline, consecration, spiritual discernment, and faith of Daniel. He was a captive in Babylon but he would not allow his heart to be captivated by the worldly wickedness and idolatry of Babylon. He stayed true to God no matter who the earthly ruler was. He prayed just as faithfully when he knew the consequences would be spending a night in the den of lions. God trusted Daniel with some of the most important prophetic declarations in the Word. We used to sing a song in Vacation Bible School, Dare to be a Daniel, Dare to stand Alone! Yet he was never alone, the presence and power of God was always with him.

In the days in which we live where so many have forsaken the house of God and the things of God, I pray that God will give me grace to preach with boldness like He did Haggai of old: **"Consider your ways..."** (Hag. 1:5-11). God did a mighty work and stirred the people to repent, obey, and do the work of the Lord. How I long to see God stir up His people in our day to be entirely devoted to the work of the Lord and the glory of His name!

I realize I have not answered the question in a precise manner. I find myself desiring to emulate the good qualities of the prophets, but identifying more with their

collective flaws. My ultimate desire is to be conformed to the image of the Prophet Moses wrote of: **"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth: and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him"** (Deut. 18:18). Oh, to be more like Christ! Oh, to be entirely devoted to Him and the Word He has called me to preach in His name! May God stir all the preachers, elders, and pastors He has called to proclaim the truth with the power of the Holy Spirit, and a burden to serve and minister to the lost and the saved in these last days.

TOM ROSS



Forum #2

(Continued from page 13) ♦

a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus..." (Rev. 17:1-6).

The Roman Catholic church fits the prophesies as perfectly now, as they did in the Dark Ages when they atrociously persecuted our AnaBaptist forefathers (and mothers). A religious city on seven hills that "reigns over the kings of the Earth?" No Islam city or chief potentate can fulfill the position like the Roman Catholic church and her "infallible" pope! Revelation 13:11-16 shows the rise of the false prophet, the third part of the "unholy triumverate" of Satan, the Anti-Christ, and the Pope. He will be capable of calling down fire from Heaven, and great

♦ (Continued on page 15)

Forum #2

(Continued from page 14) ♦

signs and wonders, that Jesus Christ predicted in Matthew 24:24, *et al.* Selah! Think about it!

The one world religion is tied by prophecy inextricably with the one world government of the End Times. Rome and a future revived Roman Empire is what the books of Daniel and Revelation are unmistakably referencing. Isaiah 47 is a parallel passage with Revelation 18, where the queen of Heaven is destroyed in one day, even one hour. Daniel's prophecies from chapter 7 to the end of his book have multiplied references to Rome and the fourth empire that will return with even deadlier destruction.

Concerning Islam, I believe it is going to continue to gain influence, but that power will be wielded by the king of the south, as the four corners of the earth throw their armies at Jerusalem in the End Time battles. From the north will come Magog (Russia), the east will send China, the west the revived Roman Empire, and the south, the hordes of Arabs/Islam. But the second advent of Jesus Christ will overthrow the dark powers of this earth with a resounding victory that terminates the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16-19, Joel 1-3, Zec. 12-14, etc) and ushers in the ascendancy of His personal 1000-year Millennial Reign. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP

Muslim religion is not, or will not, become the one world religion. Why I believe this is as follows.

First, I believe the same as Baptists have believed for centuries that the one world church is the **"Great Whore"** found in Revelation 17 and 18. Of course we are talking about the Catholic Church and her harlot daughters (Rev. 17:1) **"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters"** (Rev. 17:1). **"And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH"** (Rev. 17:5).

Second, Muslims are the descendants of Ishmael. After Abraham cast out Hagar and Ishmael, God promised Hagar that He would make Ishmael a great nation. **"And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation"** (Gen. 21:17-18). From that we have the Arab nation or Ishmaelites (eventually Islam). Now I have not studied this to the fullest but it is what I believe and it is very controversial. But this is why both Jews and Arabs have been fighting over the land over there for thousands of years because the Arabs (Ishmaelites) claim that Abraham is their father also. Again this is very controversial, but it is what I believe!

With that said, there are no

harlot daughters of the Arab (Islam) faith that I know of. But the great whore, the Catholic Church has many harlot daughters which I believe are all the churches that are the reformed churches that came out of the reformation, the ones that have come out of the Catholic Church and brought many of her teachings with them. They are Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, etc.

But the main reason I believe that Muslims cannot be the one world religion is because of the Dome of the Rock (an Islamic shrine) that now sits on the site where the Temple that Solomon built once was. In Jerusalem, it will be replaced by the rebuilding of the Temple that was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. I will not take the time here to go into details, all one has to do is search the Internet or go to the library, or get a Bible dictionary and look it up.

I will close with this; Baptists believe that chapters 40-47 of the book of Ezekiel tell us that the temple will be rebuilt during the start of the seven-year tribulation period. This is where the antichrist will attempt to sit. But his reign will be short-lived. "Most Muslims view the movement for the building of a Third Temple on the Temple Mount as an affront to Islam due to the presence of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in the stead of the former Holy Temple. Today the area is regarded by the majority of Muslims as the third holiest site in Islam. Furthermore, the mosque and the shrine have been on the mountain for a greater length of time than the Temples were. Thus, Muslims [which?] are resolute in calling for recognition of their exclusive rights over the site and demand that it be

wholly transferred to Muslim sovereignty; furthermore, some Muslims deny any association with the Mount to the former Jewish Temples which stood at the site." (copied from the Internet).

Again this is very controversial, but I believe the Bible to be very clear on the matter. The one world religion will be a Christian based religion (false religion) and peace will be established by the antichrist but holy terror will be on the face of all the earth and many will be deceived. Muslims want to see all Christians annihilated.

So, dear reader, I have told you why I believe Muslims will not be the one world religion, you decide! God Bless!

ROGER REED



True and False

(Continued from page 11) ♦

Christ as revealed in Philippians 3:21. What a glorious exchange, our body of sin and corruption for a body like unto the Lord Jesus Christ's! No wonder John exclaimed: **"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is"** (I John 3:2). Our hearts should beat with holy anticipation for the glorious day when we shall be delivered from our present state of sin to inherit the joys of glory. Oh, how I long for the day when I shall be eternally changed so as to never again commit or even think about a sinful act. I long to see the One who loved me and gave Himself for me, so that I can worship Him throughout eternity in the perfection of purity.

6. The glorification described in

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I will answer no to this question.

True and False

(Continued from page 15) ♦

these verses will be accomplished by the almighty power of God. Just as God subdued our stubborn nature and slew the natural enmity of our will when He saved us, He will exercise that same power when He glorifies us and puts away our fleshly nature for ever. Nothing less than the sheer power of the Lord could accomplish the task of completely conforming us to the holy image of Jesus Christ. Because God predestinated every believer to be conformed to the image of His Son we can say with Paul: **"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in your will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"** (Phil. 1:6). What we could not accomplish in a lifetime, our omnipotent God will accomplish in **"a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."** We should be humbled and amazed as we consider the awesome power of the God who has saved us and who will one day glorify us! Certainly we owe it to Him to live holy lives as citizens of Heaven, setting forth an example of godliness that is true to the standards of Scripture!



Bearing Witness

(Continued from page 1) ♦

shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his

own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words" (John 5:31-47)?

When the Lord Jesus Christ took upon Him flesh, He inhabited the world of men, and He shielded the glory that was His in Heaven, and He mixed and mingled, in a humble fashion, with the men and women who were a part of the Creation that He had made, and for which He was responsible.

And yet, as God manifest in the flesh, the deity and the glory of Jesus Christ could not be utterly hid, and would not be shielded in its entirety. During the course of His earthly ministry there were some ways in which He and His glory were revealed. During (and after) the course of His earthly ministry there were witnesses who proclaimed and asserted the person, the glory, and the mission of Jesus Christ.

Our text uses John the Baptist as an example: "There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (John 5:32-35).

Let us consider some ways in which Christ is made known to the world – some persons and means that bear witness of Jesus

Christ.

THE WORKS OF CHRIST

Though the Lord Jesus Christ did not often use plain words to claim His deity and His identity as Saviour of the world, the works that He performed did daily proclaim Him and His person and commission. The works that He did could not have been performed by any other than the Son of God; the duty and the responsibility that He came to perform, could not have been accomplished by any other than the ordained Saviour of men.

We already noticed that John the Baptist was a renowned witness of Jesus Christ. Notice the words of Jesus Christ in our text passage: "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me" (John 5:36). The works of Jesus Christ were an evidence of His Godhood and mission. The works of Jesus Christ were an even greater witness than that which John the Baptist afforded.

"Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me" (John 10:24-25). "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him" (John 10:37-38). Jesus Christ went about doing good. Jesus Christ went about saying words, and doing works, that no other man could say or do.

"And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre

and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid" (Mark 7:24).

GOD THE FATHER

Our text passage also reminds us that the Father in Heaven was a witness to the person of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not" (John 5:37-38). When God the Father lays claim to a person and a work, what further proof do men need? Who greater to bear witness of Jesus Christ, then the very God and Father of all? Jesus said, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43).

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

"While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5).

"Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes" (John 12:28-30).

I know that the Scriptures do tell us that the Son of God did bear witness of Himself. But, in a sense, this, too, was the witness

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Bearing Witness

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of God the Father – since the two are inseparable. “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come” (John 8:12-20).

THE WORD OF GOD

The Holy Scriptures bear witness – from beginning to end, from front cover to back cover – of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament saints prophesied of, and believed in the coming of the Saviour. The writings of these men – the inspired writings which we have contained in the Holy Bible – bear witness of a Saviour and God manifest in the flesh. In the New Testament, we have further writings of men which are inspired by the Holy Spirit,

which proclaim the Saviour, and identify Him as Jesus the Christ.

The Word of God, in fact, is meant to point men’s attention to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, Himself, is known as “The Word of God.” Men must hear of Him, and must believe in Him, in order for any to be saved. The Word of God presents Jesus Christ – bearing witness of Him – as the only hope and the only Saviour of men. And yet, men will refuse Him, and neglect Him, and even ridicule Him and His Word.

In our text passage, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to the Jews this way: “And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:38-39).

Within our text passage, the Lord Jesus Christ makes mention of Moses, who penned the Pentateuch, and whom the Jews revered. The Lord Jesus Christ told the Jews that this man, Moses, witnessed of His coming, and of His salvation that He would accomplish on behalf of those who are ordained unto salvation. “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words” (John 5:45-47)? One time, Moses even appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration (along with Elijah) to meet with Jesus the Christ. There, Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus Christ about the death of Christ, and about the accomplishments of Christ, even in His death. I suppose that they were aware of the salvation that Jesus Christ

was, even then, in the process of accomplishing. Is it any wonder that the words and the writings of such men of God, would testify and witness of Jesus Christ and His accomplishments?

The Word of God stands alone, and unrivaled, as the witness and the testimony of Jesus Christ and the need that men have for such a Saviour. The Apostle Peter, who also was at the Mount of Transfiguration, had this to say about the witness of Jesus Christ and the Word of God: “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Peter 1:16-21). Peter considered the written Word of God to be a more sure word, and a more sure testimony, than any eyewitness account. You, I, and the world would “do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place!” This is the Word of God. A light for a dark place. A guide for lost and wandering souls. A beacon that proclaims Jesus Christ to the world.

THE SERVANTS OF CHRIST

Finally, I want to remind each of us that we, too, have a responsibility to bear witness of Jesus Christ. By this I mean that we have the responsibility to tell others about the Saviour – to warn men concerning their sinfulness, and to point men to Jesus Christ as the Saviour and Salvation of mankind. Those of us that are saved are entrusted with this beautiful, glorious, and necessary task. “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27). What He has done for us – from the beginning – we should bear witness and proclaim unto others. To reveal to the world of men the beauty and the wonders of God, and His Son, Jesus Christ.

In many ways, our witness of Christ is only so effective as is our knowledge of, and love for, the Word of God. “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:14).

Our witness of Jesus Christ is intimately involved with the preaching and proclaiming of the Word of God, and with the strength and leadership of the Holy Spirit. “And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33).

“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

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Bearing Witness

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"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son" (1 John 5:9-10).

John the Baptist was an example. In our text, Jesus Christ said of John, "He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (John 5:35). He was a burning and a shining light. But, his was not a random light. Nor was his a light that gave no direction. His light pointed men towards Christ. "... Behold, the Lamb of God" (John 1:36)! "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). His light was bright, because of his diligence, his fervor, his faith, and even his sense of urgency. We would do well to imitate such a man, and such a witness of Jesus Christ. "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light" (Luke 11:33-36).



THE

BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

PUBLIC SCHOOL PULLS BIBLE ELECTIVE AFTER LAWSUIT

(WNS)--A West Virginia school district has suspended its optional Bible class for elementary school students following a lawsuit filed by the Freedom From Religion Foundation. Last week, the Mercer County board of education voted to halt the Bible in the Schools program for one year while it reviews the curriculum. High school students can still sign up for "The Bible and Its Influence," a course used for academic study that has broad acceptance in the educational community, according to Superintendent Deborah Akers. The Freedom From Religion Foundation wants to see all Bible-related classes removed from public schools. Mercer County offers the courses in 15 elementary schools and three middle schools. The classes are financed by donations but administered by the district. West Virginia schools gained permission to teach classes about the Bible in 1985 when then-Attorney General Charlie Brown declared them constitutional, as long as they focus on historical and literary qualities and do not try to produce a "personal religious commitment." First Liberty Institute is representing the school district in the lawsuit.

THIS SCHOOL HASN'T GOT A PRAYER

(WNS)--Toni Richardson, who works for the Augusta School Department in Augusta, Maine, recently told a co-worker in a private conversation over an

apparent conflict that she would pray for him. That crossed a line only school administrators could see. In a "coaching memorandum," Richardson's superiors said her turn of a phrase constituted "public school-sponsored religious expression" that must end. They claimed it violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. First Liberty Institute filed a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on Richardson's behalf, charging the district with religious discrimination and retaliation.

NOT JUST FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

(WNS)--The Constitution's free speech protections do not just apply to college students. Another team of Christian lawyers, this time from First Liberty Institute, is reminding a Pennsylvania public school district it cannot censor students asked to speak during graduation ceremonies. Earlier this year, the Beaver High School senior class president asked Moriah Bridges to give the closing remarks at the school's commencement. When Bridges submitted her planned speech in writing to the Beaver Areas School District, Superintendent Carrie Rowe demanded she remove all religious references. Rowe told Bridges her comments could not include references to her faith and insisted she could not "recite a prayer that excludes other religions." Bridges modified her speech for the June 2 ceremony but wants to make sure other students do not face similar

censorship. First Liberty is asking the school district to acknowledge its error and come up with a process for protecting students' free speech and religious liberty in the future.

MORE ABORTIONS, MORE MONEY, LESS REAL SUPPORT FOR WOMEN

(WNS)--Despite a significant decrease in clients, decrease in contraceptive services, and increase in the number of abortions it performs, Planned Parenthood still claims abortions make up only 3 percent of its overall business. According to the abortion giant's annual report it performed 328,348 abortions and 9,494,977 total services. The report came out about six months later than normal, prompting speculation about what it might contain. Kristi Hamrick, a spokeswoman for Americans United for Life, suspects Planned Parenthood released its report in May rather than December because it "plays against their narrative." "Everything they fundraise on, they do less of all the time. But when it comes to just simply ending life, that is their business," she said.

CHRISTIAN FARMERS BANNED FROM CITY MARKET OVER MARRIAGE VIEWS

(WNS)--Like many business people today, Steve and Bridget Tennes rely on multiple streams of income to pay the bills. They run an orchard called Country Mill Farm in Charlotte, Mich., that doubles as a wedding venue. When the city of East Lansing learned the Tenneses only host heterosexual weddings, it banned them from the town's farmers market. On May 31, Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) filed suit on behalf of the Tennes family. ADF senior counsel Jeremy Tedesco said the city found out

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about the family's religious beliefs in August. Steve Tennes was selling organic corn, apples, blueberries, and pumpkins at the farmers market, as he had for seven years. The city pressured Tennes not to come back to the market, citing concerns over protests and disruptions. He kept going, and no disruptions or protests disturbed the market's peace. When pressuring Tennes did not work, the city adopted a new policy and began enforcing it this year. The policy requires farmers market vendors to comply with the city's "Human Relations Ordinance and its public policy against discrimination ... while at the market and as a general business practice."

JUSTICE SAMUEL ALITO'S FIRST FREEDOM FEARS

(WNS)--"This case is an ominous sign." That is the opening salvo of Justice Samuel Alito's dissent in the U.S. Supreme Court's decision last June not to hear the case of Stormans v. Wiesman. The owners of a Washington pharmacy sought an exemption from the state's mandate that all pharmacies dispense abortion-inducing drugs. Citing First Amendment protections, the Storman family objected on religious grounds. State and appellate courts disagreed. "If this is a sign of how religious liberty claims will be treated in the years ahead, those who value religious freedom have cause for great concern," Alito wrote.

ON-CAMPUS ABORTION

(WNS)--California state Sen. Connie Leyva introduced a bill this year that would require California State University campuses and California Community Colleges to cover abortion in student and faculty health insurance plans and to provide abortion pills and "abortion

counseling services" at on-campus health centers. The health centers also would be required to employ staff "who are trained and licensed to provide abortion by medication." The bill aims to help students seeking abortion save time and money. It claims the travel and expense of getting an abortion are "burdens" that hurt students' grades and mental health.

A CLUB BY ANY OTHER NAME

(WNS)--Some public school administrators still do not get it: Students do not leave their constitutional rights at the school door. For those who need reminding, like Parkland High School in Allentown, Pa., the Thomas More Society stands ready to send a legal notice with remedial lessons on the First Amendment, the Federal Equal Access Act, and—for good measure—the school's own policy handbook. Parkland High School students jumped through the requisite hoops last fall to launch a pro-life student group, only to have an assistant principal reject the club as "too political" and "controversial." Those concerns apparently were not an issue for the Gay Straight Alliance Club and the Political Science Club. Thomas More attorneys sent administrators a letter May 17 demanding a reversal of their decision. Other public schools that have tried to similarly censor pro-life groups reversed course after receiving their own legal warning letters.

KENTUCKY APPEALS COURT SIDES WITH CHRISTIAN PRINT SHOP

(WNS)--The owner of Hands on Originals, a Lexington, Ky., print shop, did not violate a local nondiscrimination ordinance when he refused to create T-shirts for an annual gay pride festival, the

Kentucky Court of Appeals ruled on May 12. The 2-1 decision is the second to uphold Blaine Adamson's right to engage in "viewpoint or message censorship." A local gay and lesbian advocacy organization asked Adamson to create T-shirts promoting the organization's 2012 Pride Festival. Adamson declined, saying he could not promote that message as a Christian. The organization filed a complaint against Hands on Originals with the Fayette County Human Rights Commission, which ruled in 2014 the company violated a county ordinance prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

MARRIED LESBIANS SUE TENNESSEE OVER SPOUSAL DEFINITIONS

(WNS)--Four married lesbian couples in Tennessee are fighting a new state law they say denies their parental rights. The couples, each expecting a baby this year, filed a lawsuit last week against a law mandating that undefined words in state statutes be interpreted to have "natural and ordinary" meanings. Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam signed the measure into law May 5. Advocates say the simple law mandates words in state legal codes not be extended or changed beyond their natural definition. One of the bill's sponsors, Republican state Rep. Andrew Farmer, told NBC News the legislation had "nothing to do with same sex-marriage or gender." But LGBT activists are calling the law "sneaky," arguing it "clearly targets LGBTQ Tennesseans" by requiring words like "husband," "wife," "mother," and "father" in state law apply only to opposite-sex couples.

TENNESSEE PASSES VIABILITY TEST FOR ABORTIONS AFTER 20 WEEKS

(WNS)--Tennessee Gov. Bill

Haslam signed a bill May 12 that requires abortionists to evaluate unborn babies for their ability to live outside the womb after 20 weeks gestation. The new law bans abortions on unborn babies shown to be viable and requires medical opinions from two abortionists. Violators could be slapped with possible felony charges, sent to prison for up to three years, and have their medical licenses revoked. The law makes exceptions for cases in which carrying a baby to term endangers the mother's life or vital organs. Tennessee's new law follows the example of Ohio's 2011 ban on abortions after 20 weeks unless a doctor proves the baby is not viable.

A SWITCH TOO FAR

(WNS)--Two gender changes is enough, according to administrators at a Long Island high school. Earlier this school year, Valley Stream South High School required a female student, who asked to remain anonymous, to sign a contract barring her from switching her gender identity because she had already switched it twice, according to the New York Post. The student, born a girl, asked that the school recognize her as male with a new name last year, her sophomore year. Teachers and students addressed her by her new male name in class and she changed clothes in the nurse's office for privacy. But this year she asked to revert to being treated as a female. Her guidance counselor agreed to the change, but required her to sign a contract promising she would no longer switch gender identities while at the school. "A student should feel safe to figure their identity out no matter how many times they change who they are," the student told the Post. But she now says she will likely continue to identify as female for the foreseeable future: "I just came to the realization that gender is not a big

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deal either way.”

PRO-LIFE CAMPUS GROUP GETS ZERO DOLLARS

(WNS)--Despite granting nearly \$300,000 to LGBT groups to host speakers and put on events, California State University–San Marcos denied money to the Students for Life group on campus—and now the school faces a lawsuit. The pro-life organization requested \$500, the capped amount granted to student groups from a cache of mandatory student fees, to host a speaker on the topic of “Abortion and Human Equality.” The school allegedly denied the request, and Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) filed a lawsuit on behalf of the group and its president, Nathan Apodaca. “This is yet another example of a university using their power, along with student fees, to restrict speech they do not agree with or particularly like, giving credence to the emerging fact that tolerance does not apply to pro-life or conservative speech,” said Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America.

CREATIONIST BARRED FROM STUDYING GRAND CANYON ROCKS

(WNS)--Andrew Snelling, an Australian geologist, has spent nearly four years attempting to get a permit to gather about 60 half-pound rock samples from four locations in the Grand Canyon for geological research. The National Park Service has responded with unnecessary delays and stall tactics, according to his attorney Gary McCaleb. Now Snelling is suing the park service for discriminating against him because of his creationist worldview. Snelling has a Ph.D. in geology from the University of Sydney and over 45 years’ laboratory and field experience

in geological research, according to the official complaint, filed May 9. Snelling has published numerous professional articles in peer-reviewed geology journals and has served as the geologic interpreter on more than 30 river trips through the Grand Canyon since 1992. Despite Snelling’s credentials, the park service refused to grant him a permit because “he does not have a credible scientific track record.”

FOSTERING CONFUSION

(WNS)--Illinois’s child welfare agency now requires that any individual working with a child in its system support LGBT rights. The new policy, signed and implemented May 6 by Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) director George Sheldon, is intended to promote the “well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) children and youth in the department’s care.” Effectively immediately, the DCFS “will not tolerate exposing LGBTQ children and youth to staff/providers who are not supportive of children and youths’ right to self-determination of sexual/gender identity.” Under the new policy, staff and volunteers must affirm children’s exploration of sexuality and provide affirming care “regardless of one’s personal attitudes, beliefs, preconceptions and/or judgments, if any, surrounding matters of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.”

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH VOTES TO ALLOW GAY MARRIAGE

(WNS)--The Scottish Episcopal Church voted June 8 to allow clergy to marry same-sex couples, the first Anglican branch in Britain to permit gay marriage. Church members voted to remove the doctrinal clause describing marriage as a “union of

one man and one woman,” putting the Scottish Church at odds with the official stance of the Anglican Communion. The decision required the backing of at least two-thirds of each house of bishops, clergy, and laity at the annual synod meeting in Edinburgh. Opponents of the decision announced they will appoint a missionary bishop “to serve the needs of those who oppose gay marriage,” according to the BBC. At last year’s synod, church members agreed to send the issue for discussion to the seven dioceses of the Scottish Episcopal Church. Six of them voted in favor of amending the law.

STUDY: LESS SEX EDUCATION LEADS TO LESS SEX

(WNS)--Teen pregnancies in England fell dramatically after cuts to sex education program funding, according to a new study. The analysis, published in May in the Journal of Health Economics, examined the effect of budget cuts to government-run teen pregnancy-prevention programs—including sex education, free condoms, and access to the “morning after pill”—in the last decade. The results surprised the authors and frustrated sex-ed advocates.

IS OPPOSITION TO THE LGBT AGENDA CHILD ABUSE?

(WNS)--Canadian parents are pushing back against a child welfare bill recently passed in Ontario that elevates gay rights over parental prerogative. Opponents say the measure, called the Supporting Children, Youth, and Families Act, or Bill 89, would give the state the power to remove children from families who oppose LGBT and gender ideology, as well as disqualify couples from fostering or adopting. The bill, passed by a vote of 63 to 23 late last week, repeals and replaces the previous act governing child

protective services, foster care, and adoption. Under the new law, both “gender identity” and “gender expression” are factors government officials must consider when examining a child’s best interest. The act also removes parents’ religious faith as a factor and says only the child’s own “creed” or “religion” can be considered.



The Evil of Sin

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are growing in popularity. In business, fraud, larceny, cheating, and swindling are the general rule. In government, there is coverup, income tax evasion, bribery, lying, cursing, homosexuality, adultery, and other evils to be seen in high places.

People’s attitudes toward sin has certainly changed in the last twenty years. Modern man has attempted to de-emphasize the importance of sin. What was formerly unthinkable is now thinkable. What was once horrible and wrong is now not so bad. What would have gotten you put in jail twenty years ago is accepted in religious circles. What was at one time considered evil is now acceptable.

Society once condemned homosexuality and passed laws against it. Now it has won acceptance in society. Premarital sex was formerly denounced. Now it has many advocates---even the National Council of Churches. Nudity and pornography were once intolerable, but at present it is common in movies, magazines, and theaters. We have arrived at a day of unrestrained immorality.

Sin may have changed in the mind of man, but sin has not undergone any change in the mind of God. God still hates all

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The Evil of Sin

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the workers of iniquity (Ps. 5:5). God will not be mocked. Every sin will be exposed and every offense paid for. **"Be sure your sin will find you out"** (Num. 32:23). **"But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons"** (Col. 3:24).

FAMILY OF SIN

What is sin? To this question one can get a variety of answers. Some would say, "sin is what ever you believe is wrong." Others would state: "Sin is whatever backfires in your face." Still others might reply: "It was the bombing of Cambodia and the war in Vietnam." All such answers come short of giving the correct definition of sin.

The word "sin" is "harmartia" in the Greek, and it means "a failing to hit the mark." The word in its original sense is found in Judges 20:16: **"Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss."** The sense of this passage is that these men could sling stones at a hair breadth, and not miss the mark. Hence sin is any moral deviation from the divine goal, either in going beyond or falling short.

TRANSGRESSION OF LAW

The underlying idea of sin is that of a law and of a lawgiver. **"For where no law is, there is no transgression"** (Rom. 4:15). The Bible reveals God is man's lawgiver: **"There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy"** (James 4:12). Hence sin is everything that is contrary to the expressed will of God: **"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law"** (I John 3:4). All sin is law-breaking, and he who commits it is

a transgressor in the eyes of God. Sin is rejecting God's authority and consequently, rejecting God Himself.

ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

"All unrighteousness is sin" (I John 5:17). God is righteous: **"The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works"** (Ps. 145:17). Any want of conformity on the part of the creature to the character of God whether it be in act, disposition, or state, is sin. To sin is to be unlike God; therefore sin displeases God.

LACK OF FAITH

Romans 14:23 declares: **"For whatsoever is not of faith is sin."** Here we see that questionable indulgence is sin. Whatever is done with a conviction that it is disagreeable to the will of God is sinful to the doer. Often the minister is asked, "Is it right to dance, smoke, drink, etc." The very fact that one doubts God will approve of his actions is enough to tell the questioner the answer to his query.

FOOLISH THOUGHTS

"The thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov. 24:9). We become guilty of sin not only by foolish acts, but also by foolish thoughts. We pass off many things with a jest which are really sin.

VAIN CONVERSATION

"In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin" (Prov. 10:19). In much speaking there is often much sinning. Generally those who speak much speak much amiss. Jesus Christ said: **"But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil"** (Matt. 5:37). He again declared: **"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment"** (Matt. 12:36).

NEGLECT OF GOOD

"Therefore to him that

knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). This Scripture discloses that omission of known good is wrong. For a Christian to miss church or fail to pray is to commit sin. Many saved people are guilty of the sins of omission more than of commission. But let us not forget that sin is still sin in God's sight.

UNBELIEF

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me" (John 16:8-9). Unbelief is behind all sins to some degree. It is the taproot of all our sinning. Unbelief separates one from the cure of sin, Jesus Christ. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict men of sin by showing them their unbelief in Christ. He uses the sin of unbelief to intensify our sense of all other sins.

FACT OF SIN

He who doubts the existence of sin is a fool: **"Fools make a mock at sin"** (Prov. 14:9). Sin is no laughing matter; it is a sad and awful reality. There are four very conclusive proofs of the existence of sin in the world.

TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURES

Of this terrible thing the Bible gives no uncertain sound. **"For there is no man that sinneth not"** (I Kings 8:46). **"For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not"** (Eccl. 7:20). **"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one"** (Ps. 14:2-3). **"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"** (Rom. 3:23). **"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin"** (Gal.

3:22). **"For in many things we all stumble"** (James 3:2 ASV). **"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us"** (I John 1:8, 10).

TEACHING OF ENVIRONMENT

Do you know why we possess weak, sick, aging, and dying bodies? Because we are all sinners: **"For the wages of sin is death"** (Rom. 6:23). Do you know why our world is war-torn? Because men are sinners: **"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members"** (James 4:1)? Do you know why there is crime, divorce, and poverty in the world? It is because **"the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil"** (Eccl. 8:11).

DECLARATION OF CONSCIENCE

Man's consciousness gives witness to the fact of sin: **"Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another"** (Rom. 2:15). Every person knows he is a sinner. No mortal has ever lived a life free from the sense of personal guilt. Each son of Adam is haunted by the remorse of conscience for wrong doing.

WITNESS OF MEN

The prophet Isaiah said: **"Woe is me! for I am undone"** (Isa. 6:5). Simon Peter declared: **"Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord"** (Luke 5:8). When speaking of sinners the Apostle Paul would say: **"Of whom I am chief"** (I Tim. 1:15). **"Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity"**

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The Evil of Sin

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(Ps. 39:5). When we do our best for God as Isaiah, Peter, and Paul did, we remain **“unprofitable servants”** (Luke 17:10).

Human governments give their testimony to the reality of sin by enacting laws against it. Even false religions and secular literature reflects it to some degree. Seneca, the Roman philosopher, said: “We have all sinned, some more, and some less.” The German poet and philosopher, Goethe declared: “I see no fault in others which I myself might not have committed.” An old Chinese proverb reads: “There are two good men: one is dead and the other is not yet born.”

FOUNTAIN OF SIN

Sin originated with Satan. When pride entered the heart of Lucifer, he sought to exalt himself above God (Isa. 14:12-17). He fell by committing the sin of pride. **“Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil”** (I Tim. 3:6). This is the first entrance of sin into the universe.

Sin entered the human race through Satan’s deception and man’s disobedience. The Devil in the form of a serpent tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit. Both our first parents partook of this tree. **“And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression”** (I Tim. 2:14). **“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world. . . For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners. . .”** (Rom. 5:12, 19). Ever since Adam ate the forbidden fruit, the Adamic race has been fond of forbidden paths.

At present sin proceeds from man’s corrupt nature. The psalmist disclosed: **“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin**

did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5). Sin is in our bodies as soon as we come out of the loins of our parents. We come into the world with a wretchedly degenerated nature. We have from birth the snares of sin in our bodies, the seed of sin in our souls, and the stain of sin upon both. This is the foolishness bound in the heart of a child.

Jeremiah the prophet said: **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it”** (Jer. 17:9)? There is more wickedness in our hearts than we want to think about, more than any of us suspect to be there. The human heart is subtle and false; it is apt to supplant. It is prone to call evil good and good evil. It puts false colors upon things and cries peace to those to whom no peace belongs. This means men are self-deceivers and self-destroyers since their hearts are incurably wicked.

Jesus Christ, who knew the hearts of all men, said: **“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies”** (Matt. 15:19). What horrible creatures lurk in the heart of man! What a corrupt stress which flows from the fountain of man’s being! Their awful sins are the outward fruits of that wickedness which resides in the heart.

Nowadays you hear preachers who tell the sinner to give his heart to Jesus Christ. How foolish and unscriptural. Christ does not want the old defiled, corrupt, polluted heart of the natural man. For the sinner to be delivered from his sins he must have a new heart. God only can give this to him by efficacious grace. The Lord promised: **“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your**

flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26).

I pray not that you shall open up your heart and let Jesus in as modern evangelists plead. Instead, I pray that the God of all grace will open your heart that you might believe in Jesus Christ to be your Savior. **“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul”** (Acts 16:14). O may God work in you both to will and to do His good pleasure.

♦ (To be continued in August issue)



The Short Pews



Brief
Articles
by Curtis
Pugh

A NEW BIRTH NEEDED

In order to be saved a person must be born again. Jesus said so in John 3:6-7. His words were: **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”** The reason each person needs a new birth is because each of us was born of fleshly parents and we are flesh. We lack spiritual life, having only received a natural or fleshly life from our parents. Paul wrote these words about himself and the members of the congregation in Ephesus: **“Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)”** (Eph. 2:5).

The question is this: just how

bad off are we because of our fleshly or natural birth? Being descended from Adam and all the generations of sinners between him and us, we are like our ancestors: sinners! Romans 3:10-11 sums up our natural born condition in these words: **“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.** In our natural born condition men do not seek after God. They may seek religion in order to feel good. They may seek to escape eternal punishment by doing religious things, but they do not seek God.

People think that there is something religious that they can do which will please God and motivate Him to save them. But that is impossible. The Bible says: **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God”** (Rom. 8:7-8). Go ahead and pray the so-called sinner’s prayer. Go forward in a religious meeting. Make a public profession of your home-made faith in Christ. Get baptized. Try keeping the Old Testament Law of God. Do your best. **“They that are in the flesh cannot please God.”** Nothing that people in the flesh can do pleases God. Your efforts will not motivate Him to save you! You are lost!

It is obvious that the Lord Jesus was right. **“Ye must be born again.”** Sinners need to be born of the Holy Spirit. He must work first by making the dead spirit alive else the natural man remains forever dead spiritually. The Holy Spirit, being God, is sovereign. That means, He does as He pleases. Jesus likened the Spirit to the wind saying **“The wind bloweth**

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The Short Pews

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where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Men do not control the wind. They can only observe it by its evidences. Neither can man control the Spirit. **"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time"** (I Peter 5:6).

WHEN GRACE IS NOT GRACE

Most religious folk think that there are certain things that you must do to qualify for God's grace. In other words, they say, God saves by grace but in order to get God to be gracious to you you must be do this or that or the other thing. The popular idea is that there is some religious exercise or work that a sinner must do in order to please God and get Him to dispense saving grace.

At least four things are wrong with that approach. First of all, if there is anything a person must do in order to obtain God's grace then grace is not grace. We know that, because God's Word says, **"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work"** (Rom. 11:6). The context of this verse has to do with God's election (choice) of whom He will save, but the principle extends to all matters of grace. What the verse says is that grace and works cannot be mixed. Either a thing is a matter of grace or a matter of works. Obtaining salvation is either a matter of works or a matter of grace. It cannot be a

matter of both works and grace. If you have done something in order to be saved, you have changed grace into works. You have earned God's favor. Grace means unearned favor.

The second thing wrong with the idea that a sinner can do something to qualify for grace is this: there is absolutely nothing that a lost person can do to please God. Proof: **"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God"** (Rom. 8:7-8). Lost sinners are so bad off because of their fleshly minds – their corrupt sinful minds – that they cannot do anything pleasing to God. Selfishness and greed enter into their motives and are unacceptable to God. Plain words from God's Word, these: and true ones.

The third and fourth things wrong with this approach are that no one naturally understands his lost condition and no one seeks after God. **"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God"** (Rom. 3:11). The Holy Spirit must first regenerate the sinner before he or she can understand his or her hopeless and helpless condition. Only in a regenerate condition will a sinner seek after God. That is why the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus **"...Ye must be born again"** (John 3:7). Being born spiritually has absolutely nothing to do with a human act of the will. It is **"...not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"** (John 1:13). Remember: **"...Ye must be born again."**

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

It is a wonderful thing to know

you are saved! Some people think that it is not possible to know that you are saved. Some say you cannot know until what they call "judgment day." However, the Bible teaches that God's children know who they are. We read, **"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is"** (I John 3:2). And again we read, **"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God"** (I John 5:13). Eternal life – being a child of God – is a present possession, not something awaiting the future. Note the Bible says **"...that ye may know that ye have eternal life..."** and **"now are we the sons of God..."** - **"ye have"** and **"now are"** - important words!

But just how can a sinner know that he or she is saved? Some people believe they are saved – that they are a child of God – because someone told them that they are. Many people think they are saved because they have done something. They prayed a "magical prayer," or "went forward" in a religious meeting, or "got baptized," or some such thing. But that makes salvation based upon works and the Bible says that salvation is **"not of works, lest any man should boast"** (Eph. 2:9). Others think they are saved because they believe in God and that the Bible is true, etc., but the Bible says, **"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble"** (James 2:19). So then there is a kind of faith that is like the demons have which is not at all **"the faith of God's elect"**

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BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 5-1-2017 to 5-31-2017

Beginning Balance	\$1,116.33
RECEIPTS:	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX	50.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	25.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	1,300.00
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
Bruce Allen, Fairmont, GA	25.00
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR	12.50
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Rural Hall, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	35.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
Parkway L. B. C., Springfield, OR	200.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR	50.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	75.00
Anonymous	1,225.00
Dividing checks	150.00
Sub Total	\$4,337.50
TOTAL	\$5,453.83

EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	660.05
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.96
Supplies	389.00
Dividing checks	150.00
Bank Charge	13.00
Total Expenditures	\$4,178.01
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,275.82



BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 5-1-2017 to 5-31-2017

Beginning Balance	\$5,319.64
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Briar Creek, B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
Calvary I. B. C., Everson, WA	100.00
.....	425.00
TOTAL	5,744.64
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	800.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	800.00
.....	4,944.64
Interest	+0.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$4,944.68

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Northport, AL, and Pastor Todd Bryant would like to announce their 2017 Bible Conference is scheduled for July 21st thru 23rd.

The scheduled speakers are Elders Lewis Kiger, Mark Campbell, Brian Farley and Pastor Todd Bryant.

The theme of the conference is "The Glory of God"

Service times are Friday at 7:00 p.m., Saturday at 10:00 a.m. with lunch following, and Sunday at 10:00 a.m. with lunch following.

All are invited to attend.

The Windsor Baptist Church in Windsor, IL is seeking a qualified candidate for pastor. We are a sovereign grace independent Baptist church, small in number but rich in truth. We are seeking a candidate qualified for the position as described in I Timothy 3. Any interested potential candidate please contact Brother John Gregory at windsorbaptist.grace@gmail.com or phone 217-728-8311.

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 Faith Missionary Baptist Church of Cobbitty, South Wales,

Australia is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact David Jackson at 4 Station Street, Thirlmere, NSW 2572, Australia or Email: shellie45@bigpond.com.au.

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



The Short Pews

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(Titus 1:1).

Being born again or regenerated is a work of the Holy Spirit. You cannot birth yourself into God's family by praying, being baptized, or any other work. It is something the Spirit does. And real assurance of salvation – of the new birth – is a work of the Spirit also. The Bible says, **"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"** (Rom. 8:16). The Bible teaches that whenever a sinner is born again the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in or indwell the newborn one. The Bible tells us the difference between lost sinners and born again children of God: **"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"** (Rom. 8:8-9). Does "the Spirit of God dwell in you"?



THE WASP IN THE PEAR

It was near to the close of an autumn day,
When Willy ran into the orchard to play;
Or rather, to look if perchance there might be
A pear that had dropped from his favorite tree.
So thither he scampered, and presently found
A beautiful one, which lay there on the ground.
Its colors were rich, and he knew it was sweet;
So he seized it with joy, and began it to eat.
O, how happy was he thus its juices to taste;
But alas, his enjoyment was speedily chased,
For a wasp was concealed in the pulp of the pear,
And Willy soon painfully found it was there;
For, pressed in his mouth, the passionate thing
Pierced his tongue and his lips with its venomous sting.
With screams and with tears to his mother he ran,
Who at once to reprove and relieve him began;
And the means which a mother knows how to employ,
Soon abated the pain of her much-beloved boy.
But she thought an event which such anguish had caused,
Bestowed an occasion too good to be lost,
For storing with cautions the mind of her son,
Which might guide and preserve him as life should roll on.
"Ah, Willy," she said, "there are hundreds of things
That are lovely without, but within have their stings.
When pleasure allures thee, take heed of her snare,
Else, oft thou wilt find there's a wasp in the pear.
Thus the pleasure of sin doth thousands entice;
How transient the pleasure, how fearful its price!
Health, money, friends, peace, are but part of the cost;
Reputation and life, and the soul, too, are lost.
The joy of an hour or two, after it brings
Guilt, piercing the conscience with terrible stings.
In this world the anguish is oftentimes great;
But a doom far more dreadful doth sinners await.
O then, Willy, when tempted to taste it, beware;
And always remember the wasp in the pear."

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