

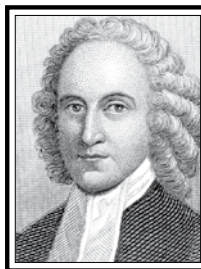
The Berea Baptist Banner

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

The Preciousness of Time, and the Importance of Redeeming It

By Jonathan Edwards
(1703 - 1758)

Christians should not only study to improve the opportunities they enjoy, for their own advantage, as those who would make a good bargain; but also labor to reclaim others from their evil courses; that so God might defer His anger, and time might be redeemed from that terrible destruction, which, when it should come, would put an end to the time of divine patience.



And it may be upon this account, that this reason is added, Because the days are evil. As if the apostle had said, the corruption of the times tends to hasten threatened judgments; but your holy and circumspect walk will tend to redeem time from the devouring jaws of those

◊ (Continued on page 2)

Three Important Coming Events

By Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

The Second Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians was written a few months after the first letter. The second epistle has been well called "the Pauline apocalypse." In chapter 2 the writer looks down through time to the closing days of the Times of the Gentiles and in a few vivid sentences declares the revelation of the Man of Sin.

THE COMING OF CHRIST



The Apostle Paul began chapter 2 by entreating them by the advent of Christ. **"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him"** (v. 1). What a thrilling, cheering, practical doctrine the

◊ (Continued on page 8)

How to Come to the House of God

By Tom Ross
of South Point, Ohio



"For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man. But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple. Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face" (Psa. 5:4-8).

Our text furnishes us with quite a contrast between the wicked and the righteous. They are diametrically opposed to one another in their attitudes, actions, habits, and way of life. The wicked delight in sin and are considered to be foolish in the sight of a holy God. They are guilty of lying (leasing), deceit, and violence. Considered as workers of iniquity the wrath of God abides on them. In fact, according to our text they are subjects of the holy hatred of God Almighty.

David, the inspired writer of this Psalm, declares that he has an entirely different way of life than that of his wicked counterparts.

David recognized that he was a partaker of the mercy of the Lord which moved him to worship God. David had a

sincere desire to be led of the Lord in the way of righteousness and holiness. David understood the importance of engaging in public worship as a means of expressing his love and devotion for God. In David's time he would have publicly worshiped in the Tabernacle, called **"the house of the LORD"** in I Chronicles 9:23, since the Temple was not yet built. I find it interesting that he also states that he would worship towards God's holy temple, which could have reference to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the fulfillment of all the Tabernacle and Temple types. All true worship is accepted by God only through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ as intimated in Hebrews 13:15: **"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."** I Peter 2:5 also affirms this truth: **"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house,**

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

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

Preciousness of Time

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calamities. However, thus much is certainly held forth to us in the words; viz. that upon time we should set a high value, and be exceeding careful that it be not lost; and we are therefore exhorted to exercise wisdom and circumspection, in order that we may redeem it. And hence it appears, that time is exceedingly precious.

WHY TIME IS PRECIOUS.

Time is precious for the following reasons:

1. Because a happy or miserable eternity depends on the good or ill improvement of it. Things are precious in proportion to their importance, or to the degree wherein they concern our welfare. Men are wont to set the highest value on those things upon which they are sensible and their interest chiefly depends. And this renders time so exceedingly precious, because our eternal welfare depends on the improvement of it. Indeed our welfare in this world depends upon its improvement. If we improve it not, we shall be in danger of coming to poverty and disgrace; but by a good improvement of it, we may obtain those things which will be useful and comfortable. But it is above all things precious, as our state through eternity depends upon it. The importance of the improvement of time upon other accounts, is in subordination to this.

Gold and silver are esteemed precious by men; but they are of no worth to any man, only as thereby he has an opportunity of avoiding or removing some evil, or of possessing himself of some good. And the greater the evil is which any man hath advantage to escape, or the good which he

hath advantage to obtain, by anything that he possesses, by so much the greater is the value of that thing to him, whatever it be. Thus if a man, by anything which he hath, may save his life, which he must lose without it, he will look upon that by which he hath the opportunity of escaping so great an evil as death, to be very precious. Hence it is that time is so exceedingly precious, because by it we have opportunity of escaping everlasting misery, and of obtaining everlasting blessedness and glory. On this depends our escape from an infinite evil, and our attainment of an infinite good.

2. Time is very short, which is another thing that renders it very precious. The scarcity of any commodity occasions men to set a higher value upon it, especially if it be necessary and they cannot do without it. Thus when Samaria was besieged by the Syrians, and provisions were exceedingly scarce, an **"...ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver"** (II Kings 6:25). So time is the more to be prized by men, because a whole eternity depends upon it; and yet we have but a little of time. **"When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return"** (Job 16:22). **"My days are swifter than a post;... they are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey"** (Job 9:25-26). Our life; what is it? It is but a vapour which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). It is but as a moment to eternity. Time is so short, and the work which we have to do in it is so great, that we have none of it to spare. The work which we have

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to do to prepare for eternity, must be done in time, or it never can be done; and it is found to be a work of great difficulty and labor, and therefore that for which time is the more requisite.

3. Time ought to be esteemed by us very precious, because we are uncertain of its continuance. We know that it is very short, but we know not how short. We know not how little of it remains, whether a year, or several years, or only a month, a week, or a day. We are every day uncertain whether that day will not be the last, or whether we are to have the whole day. There is nothing that experience doth more verify than this. If a man had but little provision laid up for a journey or a voyage, and at the same time knew that if his provision should fail, he must perish by the way, he would be the more choice of it. How much more would many men prize their time, if they knew that they had but a few months, or a few days, more to live! And certainly a wise man will prize his time the more, as he knows not but that it will be so as to himself. This is the case with multitudes now in the world, who at present enjoy health, and see no signs of approaching death. Many such, no doubt, are to die the next month, many the next week, yea, many probably tomorrow, and some this night. Yet these same persons know nothing of it, and perhaps think nothing of it, and neither they nor their neighbors can say that they are more likely soon to be taken out of the world than others. This teaches us how we ought to prize our time, and how careful we ought to be, that we lose none of it.

4. Time is very precious,

because when it is past, it cannot be recovered. There are many things which men possess, which if they part with, they can obtain them again. If a man have parted with something which he had, not knowing the worth of it, or the need he should have of it; he often can regain it, at least with pains and cost. If a man have been overseen in a bargain, and have bartered away or sold something, and afterwards repents of it, he may often obtain a release, and recover what he had parted with. But it is not so with respect to time. When once that is gone, it is gone forever; no pains, no cost will recover it. Though we repent ever so much that we let it pass, and did not improve it while we had it, it will be to no purpose. Every part of it is successively offered to us, that we may choose whether we will make it our own, or not. But there is no delay. It will not wait upon us to see whether or no we will comply with the offer. But if we refuse, it is immediately taken away, and never offered more. As to that part of time which is gone, however we have neglected to improve it, it is out of our possession and out of our reach.

If we have lived fifty, or sixty, or seventy years, and have not improved our time, now it cannot be helped. It is eternally gone from us. All that we can do, is to improve the little that remains. Yea, if a man have spent all his life but a few moments unimproved, all that is gone is lost, and only those few remaining moments can possibly be made his own. And if the whole of a man's time be gone, and it be all lost, it is irrecoverable. Eternity depends on the improvement of time. But when once the time of life is gone, when once death is come, we have no more to do with time; there

is no possibility of obtaining the restoration of it, or another space in which to prepare for eternity. If a man should lose the whole of his worldly substance, and become a bankrupt, it is possible that his loss may be made up. He may have another estate as good. But when the time of life is gone, it is impossible that we should ever obtain another such time. All opportunity of obtaining eternal welfare is utterly and everlastingly gone.

REFLECTIONS ON TIME PAST.

You have now heard of the preciousness of time; and you are the persons concerned, to whom God hath committed that precious talent. You have an eternity before you. When God created you, and gave you reasonable souls, he made you for an endless duration. He gave you time here in order to a preparation for eternity, and your future eternity depends on the improvement of time. Consider, therefore, what you have done with your past time. You are not now beginning your time, but a great deal is past and gone; and all the wit, and power, and treasure of the universe, cannot recover it. Many of you may well conclude, that more than half of your time is gone. Though you should live to the ordinary age of man, your glass is more than half run; and it may be there are but few sands remaining. Your sun is past the meridian, and perhaps just setting, or going into an everlasting eclipse. Consider, therefore, what account you can give of your improvements of past time. How have you let the precious golden sands of your glass run?

Every day that you have enjoyed has been precious; yea, your moments have been precious.

But have you not wasted your precious moments, your precious days, yea, your precious years? If you should reckon up how many days you have lived, what a sum would there be! And how precious hath every one of those days been! Consider, therefore, what have you done with them? What is become of them all? What can you show of any improvement made, or good done, or benefit obtained, answerable to all this time which you have lived? When you look back, and search, do you not find this past time of your lives in a great measure empty, having not been filled up with any good improvement? And if God, that hath given you your time, should now call you to an account, what account could you give to him?

How much may be done in a year? How much good is there opportunity to do in such a space of time! How much service may persons do for God, and how much for their own souls, if to their utmost they improve it! How much may be done in a day! But what have you done in so many days and years that you have lived? What have you done with the whole time of your youth, you that are past your youth? What is become of all that precious season of life? Hath it not all been in vain to you? Would it not have been as well or better for you, if all that time you had been asleep, or in a state of nonexistence?

You have had much time of leisure and freedom from worldly business. Consider to what purpose you have spent it. You have not only had ordinary time, but you have had a great deal of holy time. What have you done with all the Sabbath-days which you have enjoyed? Consider those things seriously, and let your own consciences make answer.

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Preciousness of Time

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WHO ARE CHIEFLY DESERVING OF REPROOF FROM THE SUBJECT OF THE PRECIOUSNESS OF TIME.

How little is the preciousness of time considered, and how little sense of it do the greater part of mankind seem to have! And to how little good purpose do many spend their time! There is nothing more precious, and yet nothing of which men are more prodigal. Time is with many, as silver was in the days of Solomon, as the stones of the street, and nothing accounted of (I Kings 10:21). They act as if time were as plenty as silver was then, and as if they had a great deal more than they needed, and knew not what to do with it. If men were as lavish of their money as they are of their time, if it were as common a thing for them to throw away their money, as it is for them to throw away their time, we should think them beside themselves, and not in the possession of their right minds. Yet time is a thousand times more precious than money; and when it is gone, cannot be purchased for money, cannot be redeemed by silver or gold. There are several sorts of persons who are reprov'd by this doctrine, whom I shall particularly mention.

1. Those who spend a great part of their time in idleness, or in doing nothing that turns to any account, either for the good of their souls or bodies; nothing either for their own benefit, or for the benefit of their neighbor, either of the family or of the body-politic to which they belong. There are some persons upon whose hands time seems to lie heavy, who, instead of being

concerned to improve it as it passes, and taking care that it pass not without making it their own, act as if it were rather their concern to contrive ways how to waste and consume it; as though time, instead of being precious, were rather a mere encumbrance to them. Their hands refuse to labor, and rather than put themselves to it, they will let their families suffer, and will suffer themselves. **"... an idle soul shall suffer hunger"** (Prov. 19:15)." **"... drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags"** (Prov. 23:21).

Some spend much of their time at the tavern, over their cups, and in wandering from house to house, wasting away their hours in idle and unprofitable talk which will turn to no good account. **"In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury"** (Pro. 14:23)." The direction of the apostle, in Ephesians 4:28 is, that we should labour, working with our hands the thing that is good, that we may have to give to him that needeth." But indolent men, instead of gaining anything to give to him that needeth, do but waste what they have already. **"He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster"** (Prov. 18:9).

2. They are reprov'd by this doctrine who spend their time in wickedness, who do not merely spend their time in doing nothing to any good purpose, but spend it to ill purposes. Such do not only lose their time, but they do worse; with it they hurt both themselves and others. Time is precious, as we have heard, because eternity depends upon it. By the improvement of time, we have opportunity of escaping eternal misery, and obtaining eternal blessedness. But those who spend their time in wicked works, not

only neglect to improve their time to obtain eternal happiness, or to escape damnation, but they spend it to a quite contrary purpose, viz. to increase their eternal misery, or to render their damnation the more heavy and intolerable.

Some spend much time in reveling, and in unclean talk and practices, in vicious company-keeping, in corrupting and ensnaring the minds of others, setting bad examples, and leading others into sin, undoing not only their own souls, but the souls of others. Some spend much of their precious time in detraction and backbiting; in talking against others; in contention, not only quarreling themselves, but fomenting and stirring up strife and contention. It would have been well for some men, and well for their neighbors, if they had never done anything at all. For then they would have done neither good nor hurt. But now they have done a great deal more hurt than they have done or ever will do good. There are some persons whom it would have been better for the towns where they live, to have at the charge of maintaining them in doing nothing, if that would have kept them in a state of inactivity.

Those who have spent much of their time in wickedness, if ever they shall reform, and enter upon a different mode of living, will find, not only that they have wasted the past, but that they have made work for their remaining time, to undo what they have done. How will many men, when they shall have done with time, and shall look back upon their past lives, wish that they had no time! The time which they spend on earth will be worse to them than if they had spent so much time in hell. For an eternity of more dreadful misery in hell

will be the fruit of their time on earth, as they employ it.

3. Those are reprov'd by this doctrine, who spend their time only in worldly pursuits, neglecting their souls. Such men lose their time, let them be ever so diligent in their worldly business. And though they may be careful not to let any of it pass so, but that it shall some way or other turn to their worldly profit. They that improve time only for their benefit in time, lose it; because time was not given for itself, but for that everlasting duration which succeeds it. They, therefore, whose time is taken up in caring and laboring for the world only, in inquiring what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed; in contriving to lay up for themselves treasure upon earth, how to enrich themselves, how to make themselves great in the world, or how to live in comfortable and pleasant circumstances, while here; who busy their minds and employ their strength in these things only, and the stream of whose affections is directed towards these things; they lose their precious time.

Let such, therefore, as have been guilty of thus spending their time, consider it. You have spent a great part of your time, and a great part of your strength, in getting a little of the world; and how little good doth it afford you, now you have gotten it! What happiness or satisfaction can you reap from it? Will it give you peace of conscience, or any rational quietness or comfort? What is your poor, needy, perishing soul the better for it? And what better prospects doth it afford you of your approaching eternity? And what will all that you have acquired avail you when time

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Little Hills

By Nathaniel Hille of
Plant City, Florida



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON - BIBLE SURVEY #3 JESUS CHRIST: THE CENTER & THEME OF THE SCRIPTURES

TEXT: John 5:39

DEVOTIONAL READING: Hebrews 10:7

SUGGESTED HYMN: *More About Jesus*

AIM: To show that Jesus is the subject of the Scriptures.

INTRODUCTION—The Scriptures speak primarily of one person: The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In this lesson, we want to observe that Jesus is revealed in type in the Old Testament; in reality in the New Testament. “The whole Bible is builded around this beautiful story of Christ, and His promise of Life Eternal to those who [receive] Him.”¹ **“Search the Scriptures:...and they are they which testify of me”** John 5:39). When Christ spoke of the Scriptures, He was referring to Genesis thru Malachi. That is all they had in His day. Jesus said the Scriptures testify of Him! They do NOT testify of good works or religious rites (such as baptism, Lord’s supper for salvation). So many thought they spoke of the Law, but Jesus said He was the one the Scriptures speak of. There are approximately 456 prophecies concerning the Christ in the Old Testament.² And Jesus said that they are all in reference to Him.

I. CREATOR—In the Bible we find that Christ is spoken of as Creator of the universe. **“In the beginning God created the heaven(s) and the earth”** (Gen. 1:1). We compare Scripture with Scripture and we are told that it was Christ Who did this: **“For by him [Jesus] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him”** (Col.1:16). See how it was Christ Jesus whom all things were created by and were done so for Him.

II. REDEMPTION—Ps. 40:6-8; Heb. 10:6-12. The story of redemption runs through the Scriptures like a crimson thread throughout every Old Testament book. Time would fail us to mention each and every reference of Jesus as the Messiah. Here are a few:

A. The Seed of the Woman: Gen. 3:14-15—Upon man sinning, God pronounced to Satan that the woman’s seed (offspring) would, bruise Satan’s head and Satan would bruise his heel. The Lord announces that redemption and complete triumphant over Satan would come by the seed of the woman. That this is evidently the Lord Jesus Christ is clear in that He had no seed of man, but only of woman as He was virgin born, conceived of by the Holy Spirit (Isa.7:14; Matt.1:20).

B. The Paschal Lamb: Ex.12:1-13—Here, the Lord spoke to Israel of old, of a Lamb and its blood. They were to take the blood and put it upon the two side-posts and the upper post of the door. And when the Lord passed through Egypt that night, **“when I see the blood, I will pass over you”** and He would not kill the firstborn of man and beast

in that house. Jesus is the Lamb of God. When God sees His blood on you and your account, He will pass over you. Blood indicates a death has taken place. As sinners, we are sentenced unto death for that is the wages of sins (Rom. 6:23). When we are washed in the blood of Jesus, God sees the death of His Son, He sees the penalty for all of our sins has already been exacted and He will pass over us.

C. The Brazen-Serpent: Num. 21:5-9—In this passage, we find that Israel had sinned. We, too, have sinned. A plague broke out among the people. Fiery serpents bit people and they died. The Lord gave Moses the remedy, just as the Lord gave Jesus the Christ to be our remedy for sin! God told Moses to make a Brass Serpent, brass is a type of sin being judged. And Moses, was to take that serpent and put it on a tall pole and hold it up in the midst of the people. And whoever was bitten by one of those fiery serpents, would live by looking at the brazen-serpent. That brazen-serpent was a type of Jesus. God has judged sin in Jesus Christ. He died for our sins. He died on the Cross of Calvary high and lifted up. And it is by looking to Him, in faith believing that you too shall be delivered from death. It is Jesus that we uphold that all might behold Him and be saved—John 3:15; John 1:29.

CONCLUSION—Many other references³ to Jesus in the Scriptures, but, we can clearly see He is the center and theme of the Scriptures.

FOOTNOTES:

1. *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, pg. 20
2. *Betrayed*; Telchin, Stan, pg. 145
3. Teacher/Instructor—Feel free to add or replace any other references of Christ you feel impressed to use for the lesson.

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

Preciousness of Time

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shall be no longer?

AN EXHORTATION TO IMPROVE TIME.

Consider what hath been said of the preciousness of time, how much depends upon it, how short and uncertain it is, how irrecoverable it will be when gone. If you have a right conception of these things, you will be more choice of your time than of the most fine gold. Every hour and moment will seem precious to you. But besides those considerations which have been already set before you, consider also the following:

1. That you are accountable to God for your time. Time is a talent given us by God; He hath set us our day; and it is not for nothing. Our day was appointed for some work; therefore He

will, at the day’s end, call us to an account. We must give account to Him of the improvement of all our time. We are God’s servants; as a servant is accountable to his master, how he spends his time when he is sent forth to work, so are we accountable to God. If men would aright consider this, and keep it in mind, would they not improve their time otherwise than they do? Would you not behave otherwise than you do, if you considered with yourselves every morning, that you must give an account to God, how you shall have spent that day? And if you considered with yourselves, at the beginning of every evening, that you must give an account to God, how you shall have spent that evening? Christ hath told us, that for every idle word which men speak they shall give account in the day of judgment” (Matt.

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12:36). How well, therefore, may we conclude, that we must give an account of all our idle misspent time!

2. Consider how much time you have lost already. For your having lost so much, you have the greater need of diligently improving what yet remains. You ought to mourn and lament over your lost time. But that is not all, you must apply yourselves the more diligently to improve the remaining part, that you may redeem lost time. You who are considerably advanced in life, and have hitherto spent your time in vanities and worldly cares, and have lived in a great measure negligent of the interests of your souls, may well be terrified and amazed, when you think how much time you have lost and wasted away. In that you have lost so much time, you have the more need of diligence, on three accounts.

A. As your opportunity is so much the shorter. Your time at its whole length is short. But set aside all that you have already lost, and then how much shorter is it! As to that part of your time which you have already lost, it is not to be reckoned into your opportunity; for that will never be any more; and it is no better, but worse to you, than if it never had been.

B. You have the same work to do that you had at first, and that under great difficulties. Hitherto you have done nothing at all of your work, all remains to be done, and that with vastly greater difficulties and opposition in your way than would have been if you had set about it seasonably. So that the time in which to do your work is not only grown shorter, but your work is grown greater.

You not only have the same work to do, but you have more work. For while you have lost your time, you have not only shortened it, but you have been making work for yourselves. How well may this consideration awaken you to a thorough care, not to let things run on in this manner any longer, and rouse you up immediately to apply yourselves to your work with all your might!

C. That is the best of your time which you have lost. The first of a man's time, after he comes to the exercise of his reason, and to be capable of performing his work, is the best. You who have lived in sin till past your youth, have lost the best part. So that here all these things to be considered together, *viz.* that your time in the whole is but short, there is none to spare. A great part of that is gone, so that it is become much shorter. That which is gone is the best; yet all your work remains, and not only so, but with greater difficulties than ever before attended it. And the shorter your time is, the more work you have to do.

What will make you sensible of the necessity of a diligent improvement of remaining time, if these things will not? Sometimes such considerations as these have another effect, *viz.* to discourage persons, and to make them think, that seeing they have lost so much time, it is not worth their while to attempt to do anything now. The devil makes fools of them; for when they are young, he tells them, there is time enough hereafter, there is no need of being in haste, it will be better seeking salvation hereafter; and then they believe him. Afterwards, when their youth is past, he tells them, that now they have lost so much, and the best of their time, that it is not worth their while to attempt to do anything; and now

they believe him too. So that with them no time is good. The season of youth is not a good time; for that is most fit for pleasure and mirth, and there will be enough afterwards. And what comes afterwards is not a good time, because the best of it is gone. Thus are men infatuated and ruined.

But what madness is it for persons to give way to discouragement, so as to neglect their work, because their time is short! What need have they rather to awake out of sleep, thoroughly to rouse up themselves, and to be in good earnest, that if possible they may yet obtain eternal life! Peradventure God may yet give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, that they may be saved. Though it be late in the day, yet God calls upon you to rouse, and to apply yourselves to your work. And will you not hearken to His counsel in this great affair, rather than to the counsel of your mortal enemy?

3. Consider how time is sometimes valued by those who are come near to the end of it. What a sense of its preciousness have poor sinners sometimes, when they are on their deathbeds! Such have cried out, O, a thousand worlds for an inch of time! Then time appears to them indeed precious. An inch of time could do them no more good than before, when they were in health, supposing a like disposition to improve it, nor indeed so much. For a man's time upon a deathbed is attended with far greater disadvantage for such an improvement as will be for the good of his soul, than when he is in health. But the near approach of death makes men sensible of the inestimable worth of time. Perhaps, when they were in health, they were as insensible of its value as you are, and were as

negligent of it. But how are their thoughts altered now! It is not because they are deceived, that they think time to be of such value, but because their eyes are opened. And it is because you are deceived and blind that you do not think as they do.

4. Consider what a value we may conclude is set upon time by those who are past the end of it. What thoughts do you think they have of its preciousness, who have lost all their opportunity for obtaining eternal life, and are gone to hell? Though they were very lavish of their time while they lived, and set no great value upon it; yet how have they changed their judgments! How would they value the opportunity which you have, if they might but have it granted to them! What would they not give for one of your days, under the means of grace! So will you, first or last, be convinced. But if you be not convinced except in the manner in which they are, it will be too late.

There are two ways of making men sensible of the preciousness of time. One is, by showing them the reason why it must be precious, by telling them how much depends on it, how short it is, how uncertain, etc. The other is experience, wherein men are convinced how much depends on the improvement of time. The latter is the most effectual way; for that always convinces, if nothing else doth. But if persons be not convinced by the former means, the latter will do them no good. If the former be ineffectual, the latter, though it be certain, yet is always too late. Experience never fails to open the eyes of men, though they were never opened before. But if they be first opened by that, it is no way to their benefit. Let all therefore be

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Small Drops

By Joseph M. Sidders of
Temperance, Michigan

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



ELISHA ON CONTENTMENT, "IT IS WELL"

II Kings 4:8-37

Let us look at the life and service of this Shunammite woman. The city of Shunem meant "double resting place" and we see that it was Elisha and his servant Gehazi that found rest in this woman's home. God's Word refers to her as a "great woman" (verse 8). What great blessings must await one who shows such love and charity to men about the Father's work!

The initial Blessing came to the Shunammite woman in response to her generous heart toward God's prophet. **"And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people. And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old. And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door. And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid. And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life" (II Kings 4:13-17).** Her response to

this offer was that all was well, she did not have a want that drove her to love them but rather it was an unconditional act of love!

As the boy was a little older we see a great test of faith for his mother. **"And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died"** (II Kings 4:18-20). Oh how her words come back to haunt this writer as we see this test that has come about. **"Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid"** (II Kings 4:16).

Where did this dear woman run during her time of trouble? **"And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again"** (II Kings 4:22). To the man of God! We too should write it to our memories that there is no better place to run to in our times of trouble than to God and His living Word.

Did she run expecting another blessing? Perhaps she might think that another son might be gifted to her as a replacement? In II Kings 4:23 when asked why she was running to the man of God she says to her husband **"It shall be well."** Her husband even

pointed out that it was not the time of the year or month or even time of the week in which she should expect to be seen or heard of the man of God. She responds that **"It shall be well."**

Beware of the words of Satan as he tempts us to lose faith, sometimes even using those closest to us, that he might speak fear into hearts made anew by the work of the Lord! I recall even the words of Job's dear wife when she asked, **"Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die"** (Job 2:9), as this poor family lost everything and everyone that they held dear in this life. Let us now hear his response to his wife from Job 2:10, **"Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? What is given of God is always good. What is taken of God is always good!"**

Upon losing all he had in this life aside from his own life and health Job fell upon the ground and worshipped saying **"...naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD"** (Job 1:21). Note 'Yhwh' is used to name the God Who gave as well as the God that taketh away; He is one and the same eternal and living!

When Jesus was explaining to the church all the things that He would suffer for my sins Peter began to rebuke Him, saying **"... Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."** To this Jesus turned and said **"Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men"** (Matt. 16:22-23) God has ordained for things to take place

in this life exactly how they need to, **"for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose"** (Rom. 8:28).

Did this woman want her son back? To answer this question I want to look at two things: where she went and how she felt.

"So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel" (II Kings 4:25). A great many trials of faith have occurred here. One most recent to this account is Elijah. In I Kings 18 he showed the very existence of God to the nation of Israel as he slayed the 450 prophets of Baal, at mount Carmel. I Kings 19 he departs the mount a day's journey and in fear cries out for the LORD to "take away his life" for in his own ability he could do nothing. She came to this mount seeking the counsel and comfort of God, through his prophet. Be careful, dear reader, that the trials in our life send us TO God rather than fleeing AWAY from Him!

In looking at how she felt we read in II Kings 4:26, **"Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well."** She did not scream from pain and sorrow. She did not lash out in a lack of faith. She did not even give the specifics of the problem to Gehazi, but rather recognized her condition was of the hand of God.

This "great" woman was having her faith tested, and in so doing she has provided for us an amazing testimony. As she reached Elisha he recognized her **"soul was vexed"** meaning bitter or twisted. She was hurting. **"Then she said, Did I desire a**

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Small Drops

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son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me" (II Kings 4:28)? She had not asked for this son so her question now was, why give me that which I did not ask for only to take it away and cause such pain....such a trial of her heart...such a vexing of her soul?

This happens from time to time does it not? Doubtless many who are reading this sermon have lost someone they loved and asked the question, "Why Lord?" My wife and I have had two miscarriages over the past three years. Neither one hurt more than the other, yet they both hurt. Time distances us from the pain of the initial discovery of our loss, but it does not replace what we had hoped to have. Why do we go through these very painful, very real occurrences in life? Hebrews 12:10 says that it is for our profit, **"...that we might be partakers of His holiness."** I am certain if you are in that particular season as you read this, these words may not help much. Understand that the plagues caused in Egypt during the great Exodus were for the same purpose. It was God's wrath on Egypt certainly, but if you look closely at the Scriptures (Exodus chapters 7-12) and watch the nation of Israel, they are being sanctified or separated from Egypt with every plague. They are being cleansed and distinguished with every great movement of God's hand. Praise the Lord that He thought enough of us, while we were yet enemies, to do the same for us. With everlasting life we are forever able to sing, **"It is well!"**

(Joseph Sidders is pastor of the Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Temperance, Michagan.)

Preciousness of Time

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persuaded to improve their time to their utmost.

ADVICE RESPECTING THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

I shall conclude with advising to three things in particular.

1. Improve the present time without any delay. If you delay and put off its improvement, still more time will be lost; and it will be an evidence that you are not sensible of its preciousness. Talk not of more convenient seasons hereafter; but improve your time while you have it, after the example of the psalmist. **"I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments"** (Ps. 119:60).

2. Be especially careful to improve those parts of time which are most precious. Though all time is very precious, yet some parts are more precious than others; as, particularly, holy time is more precious than common time. Such time is of great advantage for our everlasting welfare. Therefore, above all, improve your Sabbaths, and especially the time of public worship, which is the most precious part. Lose it not either in sleep, or in carelessness, inattention, and wandering imaginations. How sottish are they who waste away, not only their common, but holy time, yea the very season of attendance on the holy ordinances of God! The time of youth is precious, on many accounts. Therefore, if you be in the enjoyment of this time, take heed that you improve it. Let not the precious days and years of youth slip away without improvement. A time of the strivings of God's Spirit is more precious than other time. Then God is near; and we are directed, in Isaiah 55:6, to seek the LORD

while He may be found, and to call upon Him while He is near." Such especially is an accepted time, and a day of salvation: **"(...I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation)"** (II Cor. 6:2).

3. Improve well your time of leisure from worldly business. Many persons have a great deal of such time, and all have some. If men be but disposed to it, such time may be improved to great advantage. When we are most free from cares for the body, and business of an outward nature, a happy opportunity for the soul is afforded. Therefore spend not such opportunities unprofitably, nor in such a manner that you will not be able to give a good account thereof to God. Waste them not away wholly in unprofitable visits, or useless diversions or amusements. Diversion should be used only in subserviency to business. So much, and no more, should be used, as doth most fit the mind and body for the work of our general and particular callings.

You have need to improve every talent, advantage, and opportunity, to your utmost, while time lasts; for it will soon be said concerning you, according to the oath of the angel, in Revelation 10:5-6, **"And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer."**

Three Important

(Continued from page 1) ♦

second coming of Christ was to Paul! It was not to him some boring non-essential truth. It was as precious to him as **"the mercies of God"** (Rom. 12:1).

The glory of the rapture is that the saints will be gathered to meet their Savior in the air and to live with Him forever (I Thess. 4:17). When they are gathered unto Christ they will go with Him to the Father's house (John 14:1-3) where Christ will say: **"Behold I and the children which God hath given me"** (Heb. 2:13; Col. 1:22; Jude 24).

The term **"gathering together"** in the Greek is found only one other time in the New Testament. In Hebrews 10:25 it has the sense of "assembling together." Our **"gathering together"** looks back to Paul's words in the first letter: **"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be CAUGHT UP TOGETHER with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"** (I Thess. 4:16-17) (emph. MRC).

DO NOT BE MISLED

Paul did not want the Thessalonians to be unsettled in their minds about this vital truth: **"That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand"** (v. 2).

There was a possibility that such disturbance might come from three sources. **"By spirit"** means a person professing to have the spirit of prophecy (I

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Narrow Paths

By Doug Newell IV of
Clendenin, West Virginia

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

BUILD UP AND SAVE

Preachers may sound like a broken record when they tell you to read your Bible over and over, but they care for your soul because you need to remember the words of the apostles of Christ (Jude 17-23). Keep their truths in mind and remember God's promises and warnings. Remember, there will be mockers in the last times who walk, not after the way of Christ but after the way of flesh. They separate themselves from truth, authority, the church, from Christian fellowship, and yoke themselves to the world. They may have a testimony, but they do not have the Holy Spirit.

Instead of being disheartened, build yourselves up on the most holy faith and use the call for preparedness as an opportunity to strengthen yourself. You accomplish this by the Word of God (Acts 20:32) and by God's grace (I Cor. 3:10). You build yourself up in Christ (Col. 2:6-7), in His church (Eph. 4:16) and by praying in the Spirit. By doing this, you keep yourself in the love of God (Jude 21), or, in other words, we keep our minds and hearts in the love of God. We guard our affections against anything that pulls us from the thoughts of the love of Christ Jesus. While nothing can eternally separate us from the love of God in Christ, we can wander and be led from magnifying God's love in our life. Read the Bible, pray, meditate on the Scripture, fellowship with other Christians, join the church and attend the worship services,

look to Christ and His promises, and look for Christ and His return.

Plus, you need to stay ready for the good of your friends. Someone needs to be strong to protect them (Jude 22-23)! With some, we need to move with pity, mercy, grace. Being tender hearted because they may be caught up unawares. Romans 16:18, **"...by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."** Some will be deceived and fall off the path of orthodoxy. Others are too close to the edge, or too hardheaded to pick up the tender and gentle warnings. In Jude 22-23, there are two types of people with basically the same problem, but we need wisdom to determine how to deal with different people in different situations. Ignoring the issue and hoping it goes away is not an option if we love our friends. Sometimes a gentle reproof is enough to do the trick and sometimes you have to yank them out of the fire (Jude 23). If a one year old baby is waddling toward an open fire, mere feet from going headfirst into the flame, you do not suggest in a soft spoken gentlemanly manner, for the babe to reconsider their life choices. You grab them and pull them away from danger. You have to treat sin like a leprous garment. It is diseased and dangerous. Hate it for what it is and instead of falling in the flames, toss the garment of sin in the bonfire.

AIM AND APPLICATION

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:

by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:11).

Did Jesus successfully accomplish what He set out to do? Isaiah 53:11-12 gives us insight to the aim and application of redemption. Jesus said Himself in Luke 19:10, **"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."** The Lord's stated purpose was to seek and save the lost. Was He successful? The angelic announcement also provides the mission statement of our Lord in Matthew 1:20-21 where it says, **"...he shall save his people from their sins."** Not He would try. Not that He would offer, but He shall, without question and without fail, save His people. The Father has chosen a people, the son came to save the people the Father gave Him, and the Spirit draws, gives life, and indwells those Christ died for. The sacrifice Christ made on the cross was made for the people the Father gave Him. Our text in Isaiah says the same thing that Matthew and Luke say, Jesus shall, without question and without fail, justify many, not every and not all. Who is it that will be justified? Those whom **"he shall bear their iniquities."** Jesus Christ is a perfect Saviour.

On the cross, Jesus made atonement for the sins of His people, satisfying God's justice. The aim of that sacrifice, was to save the people Christ came for, and give them eternal life and the forgiveness of sins. The sacrifice Christ made on the cross was made for His people. All that Christ redeemed shall be saved because of redemption. Think about the words of salvation. To redeem is to purchase. To save is to rescue and deliver. Justify is a legal term to declare one

innocent. These are specific terms – mathematical, financial, and judicial expressions. Redemption, salvation, and justification are acts that are done to us, not acts we contribute to.

Before the foundation of the world, God had chosen a people. Christ, the Father and the Spirit had an aim, and unified will in the eternal covenant; Christ came to the Earth, to obtain and provide eternal redemption for His people. The means by which we are saved was the substitutionary sacrifice, and the work on Calvary was not a general work, but a judicial work; a specific work for a predetermined purpose. The aim of redemption was a total success. Christ fully achieved what He came to accomplish. The sacrifice Christ made on the cross was made for His people – redemption, accomplished and applied.

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). Christ will divide the spoil. Christ will reign over His victors, because He poured out His soul unto death. Wait, what? How is that possible? How can Christ be victorious and divide the spoils as a victorious king if He was despised, rejected, deemed forsaken, crushed by the Father and died and laid in a rich man's tomb? Simply stated, it is possible because He was not in the grave very long. Three days and three nights to be precise. He arose.

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



Three Important

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John 4:1). **"By word"** means by word of mouth, an oral message allegedly from Paul to them. **"By letter"** means a letter ascribed to Paul by forgery. The language here and later in chapter 3, verse 17, warrants the conclusion that a false document had already been circulated among them. This forged letter had caused them to believe they had already entered into the day of the Lord. The King James Version has **"day of Christ"** but the oldest manuscripts read **"day of the Lord."**

The church at Thessalonica had understood from Paul's first letter that the saints would not enter into the Day of the Lord. This can be seen by re-examining I Thessalonians. After describing the rapture of the saints in chapter 4, verses 13-18, he discussed the Day of the Lord (I Thess. 5:3). In prophetic Scripture the Day of the Lord is the period of time beginning after the rapture and lasting until the great white throne judgment.

In describing the sudden destruction of the Day of the Lord the Apostle to the Gentiles changed the pronouns from **"we," "ye,"** and **"you"** of chapter 4 to **"they"** and **"them"** in chapter 5:3. Hence they understood this destruction would not overtake the members of the church. Then he again employed **"we"** and **"us"** in verses 9 and 10: **"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."** The saints would escape this time by being **"caught up together"** to **"meet the Lord in the air."**

This view is corroborated by

what he said in I Thessalonians 1:10: **"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come"** (ASV). The word **"delivereth"** is in the Greek the word which means **"to drag out of danger, to rescue, save"** (Thayer). It is also worthy of observation that the apostle says the church will be delivered **"from"** the wrath to come. This in the best Greek texts is the word **"apo"** which signifies **"departure; distance of time or place; avoidance"** (ANALYTICAL GREEK LEXICON). Thus Paul told them that Christ will appear and draw to Himself the saints and cause them to depart from the coming wrath on earth.

In view of the teaching of Paul's first epistle we can see why the Thessalonians were troubled by the forged letter indicating they had entered into the Day of the Lord. Evidently, they looked upon the **"persecutions and tribulations"** they were experiencing (II Thess. 1:4) as proof they were living in the tribulation period. But Paul never taught them such in his first letter. When hearing they labored under such misapprehension, he wrote a letter to assure them they were not living in the Day of the Lord.

In II Thessalonians 2 Paul mentions three things which must happen before the day of the Lord: (1) the saints must depart; (2) the Antichrist must be revealed; (3) the Holy Spirit must be removed. Now let us consider these three in their Scriptural order.

FIRST: THE DEPARTURE OF THE SAINTS

Verse 3 says: **"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first. . ."** The word translated

"falling away" in the Greek New Testament is the word **"apostasia."** Kenneth Wuest says it can mean **"a departure."** The New Berkeley Version and the Amplified New Testament have a footnote declaring **"departure"** as a possible meaning. In 1526 William Tyndale rendered it **"departure."** The Coverdale (1535), Cranmer (1539), and Geneva Bibles have it the same way. The Beza Version of 1565 translated it **"departing."**

Without question **"apostasia"** can be translated **"departure."** But is Paul speaking about a departure from the faith (I Tim. 4:1), or is he speaking of a departure of the saints? There is no mention of a departure from the faith in the Thessalonian epistles, unless it be in the verse in question. In Thessalonians (1:10; 4:16-17) Paul had mentioned a departure of the saints. I firmly believe the apostle here is re-affirming the departure of the saints which he twice mentioned in his first letter.

Hence the Day of the Lord cannot come until the saints are caught out to be with Christ. How wonderful to know the Lord's bride is not destined to enter the Day of God's wrath. The same Lord who saved us from our sins is coming at the rapture to deliver us from the trumpets of God's wrath during the tribulation. Thank God the saints will be moved a great distance from the horrible scenes on earth during the Great Tribulation.

The Lord Jesus will keep His promise to the church. To the church at Philadelphia He promised: **"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth"** (Rev. 3:10). Christ promised the church exemption from the

period of trial, not only from the trial during that period. She is to escape this time by Christ's coming (Rev. 3:11) and by passing through the open door (Rev. 3:8; 4:1-2).

Some are quick to point out that these words were addressed only to the local church at Philadelphia. They contend that they have no application beyond this local church which existed 1900 years ago. But they ignore the fact that the Spirit is speaking through Christ in these seven letters to **"the churches"** (Rev. 3:13). Hence it should be plain Christ promised His churches they would be kept safe by physical removal from earth.

Speaking to His newly organized church in Luke 21:34-36, Christ promised: **"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man"** (Luke 21:34-36).

Notice four things here: First, there is reference to a future tribulation which will come **"on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth."** Second, some will escape these things. Third, those who escape them will escape **"all these things."** Fourth, these escaping ones will leave earth to **"stand before the Son of man,"** meaning the Judgment Seat of Christ. Fifth, only those who go to stand before the Son of man are worthy to **"escape all these things."**

SECOND: THE

♡ (Continued on page 11)

Brief Truths

By Randy Johnson of
Texarkana, Texas

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



WE NEED TO BE CHRIST LIKE

"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24).

When a person who is lost is saved then they change, God calls this change a "new man" or a "new person." This new person has a new nature put there by the Holy Spirit and it is in conflict with the old nature. Your new nature is, as God calls it **"...after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."**

We all need to understand what this means the best that we can, and that starts with understanding God's Word. We must understand God, His thinking, and His ways. We need to understand what God desires of us in this life, and to understand that, God has ordained our walk in life. **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"** (Eph. 2:10).

However, understanding God has ordained our life does not excuse us from working to our spiritual goal of being Christ-like. One of those spiritual goals is to be as one in Christ and this cannot be done if Christians are looking for ways to be separate from one another. God told us through Paul in Ephesians 2:13-14, **"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the**

middle wall of partition between us." That is, the wall that separated Jews and Gentiles was broken-down for the benefit of unity. Jesus spoke much about how Christians are to be one in Him, and this is impossible if we build walls to separate us.

I have noticed that in years past many things separated Christians (i.e., Jews, Gentiles, race, gender, denomination, nationality, etc). I have known Christians not having fellowship with other Christians because we might differ on some scriptural understanding, or because they were not like them. This is called building walls of separation, but how is it exactly that we can become "one in Christ" if we build walls of separation.

Now please understand that I am not talking about the churches, they are different and must be strictly protected from the world's biblical error. But we can protect the churches without separating ourselves from each other because of doctrinal difference.

While biblical understanding has a certain degree of human element to it, it also is largely God given as a measure of grace. **"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith"** (Rom. 12:3). God has given you the measure of grace as He has chosen and others as He has chosen for them. Please remember, God does as He pleases.

"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour" (Rom. 9:21)? Therefore if you are blessed with knowledge and understanding of the Scripture it is because God elected it that way. Please do not give yourself too much credit. God never said that all Christians would be equal, nor that we would all be one in knowledge, understanding, or in any other way except in Christ. But this is what God did say, **"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith"** (Rom. 12:6). Each believer working with the proportion of faith that God has given to us. Allowing others to work with the portion of faith that God has given to them.

But we all never need to lose sight of who we are as Christians, and never allow us to build walls of separation just because we may differ in Scripture. Paul wanted the church at Rome to lay aside their differences and live in peace, understanding that we are not all the same. **"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another"** (Rom. 14:19). Making peace in Christ is much better than making war among the brethren. **"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him"** (I John 2:10). **"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way"** (Rom. 14:13).

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



Three Important

(Continued from page 10) ♦

REVELATION OF ANTICHRIST

The next great event to happen after the departure of the saints is the revelation of the world dictator: **"...and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition"** (v. 3). The person Paul calls attention to in this verse is the future Antichrist (I John 2:18) and the Beast John wrote about (Rev. 13:1-10). This person is the Little Horn of Daniel 7 and the Willful King of Daniel 11. Jesus referred to him when He said: **"I am come in my Father's name, an ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive"** (John 5:43).

The expression **"man of sin"** strongly suggests the Antichrist is a real person, not a system as some claim. Paul calls him the man of sin because his very life is characterized by sin and wickedness. As righteousness found its embodiment in Jesus Christ, so sin shall have its embodiment in **"the man of sin."** This man who is incarnated wickedness is the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15, the son of Satan).

The Antichrist is also called **"the son of perdition,"** a title applied to Judas the traitor (John 17:12). This title is used by Paul to denote the future destiny of the Lawless One who **"goeth into perdition"** (Rev. 17:8, 11). By signs and lying wonders he will lead many to perdition.

We learn something of the attitudes and actions of Antichrist in verse 4: **"Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God,**

♦ (Continued on page 16)

The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. What is the significance of the number seven in Scripture?

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The first time the number seven is used in Scripture is found in Genesis 2:1-2: **“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.”** The number seven in the Bible generally represents divine perfection, totality or completion and is mentioned at least 490 times.

This is a very difficult question to attempt to answer in a brief and concise manner. I believe that there is definite significance to the number seven and its multipliers as it relates to God, Creation, the Sabbath, the Moral Law, and the Civil laws of Israel as revealed in the first five books of the Bible known as the Pentateuch.

The number seven is also significant as it relates to the subject of Eschatology, the study of Bible prophecy. The number seven figures into the calculation of the First Advent and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ in Daniel 9:25-26. Daniel's Seventieth Week as it relates to the Seven Year Tribulation Period is also of great

significance. Jesus referred to Daniel's Seventieth Week as a time of great tribulation unlike any other time in earth's history (Matt. 24:15-22). The number seven is used several times throughout Revelation chapters 6-19 as the Tribulation Period is described as a time of God's judgments upon the earth and its inhabitants during the dark reign of the antichrist. There are seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials of wrath, all displaying several forms of judgment unleashed by God during the Tribulation. There is much more that could be written about the number seven, but this will have to suffice for now.

However, I must add a word of caution regarding the number seven. Most of the time it simply means the number seven in Scripture, without some spiritual, allegorical, or deeply hidden significance that only can be figured out by an elite group of special preachers. There are times when people get carried away with numerology and symbolism and it is usually the way you wind up with crazy predictions about blood moons and such. If a preacher dwells too much on the novelty of numerology and symbolism he will be more inclined to give facts, figures, and predictions rather than the sincere milk and strong meat of the Word. Our aim as preachers of the Word is to expound, explain, exhort, challenge, feed, and rebuke our hearers. Our desire ought to be to please God, see sinners saved by preaching Christ, and then teach them the truth as it is in Jesus.

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That the Bible places significance on particular numbers is not any sort of hocus-pocus superstition, but is repeatedly proven from the text, itself: **“Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six”** (Rev. 13:18). As six is the number of a man, so is seven the number of God and His perfection. 463 times (another 120 for the word seventh) this singular number is used in Holy Writ, and while many times, it is just a number or headcount, many more times it has further nuances of either parabolic, prophetic or spiritual meaning. **“And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times...”** (Josh. 6:4). **“John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne”** (Rev. 1:4). Selah! Think about it!

In both the Old and New Testaments this peculiar number seven proliferates amongst signs and wonders. We have a seven day (Sabbath) week (Gen. 2:2-3); an Hebrew slave goes free the seventh year (Ex. 21:2); jubilee (O.T.) and Pentecost (N.T.) is the year following forty-nine (7x7) years (Lev. 25:11; Acts 2:1); seven deacons in the first Jerusalem church (Acts 6:3); and the

Egyptian seven years of bounty and seven years of famine presaged by God to Joseph and Pharaoh (Gen. 41:29). In Revelation the Great Tribulation is a total of seven years (Daniel's 70th Week) and includes seven seals, seven trumpets and seven vials, as the sevenfold (perfect) wrath of almighty God is poured out upon this hapless, evil generation.

The Mennorah candlestick in God's tabernacle has a seventh shaft and bowl for the holy oil to burn therein (Ex. 37:23); Naaman was required by Elisha to bathe seven times in Jordan (II Kings 5:10); Jacob served seven years each for Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:20); the Lord Jesus cast seven demons out of His precious Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2); the Word of God is said to have been as silver purified seven times (Ps. 12:6); the Lord compassionately fed the multitude with seven loaves and had seven baskets of remnants left over (Matt. 15:34-36); and Elijah was informed that the Lord had preserved seven thousand as a remnant that had not worshipped Baal (I Kings 19:18; 18:43) as well as prophesying in seven parleys the coming rainstorm.

Q- As we study these examples plus many more, what stands out as significantly common factors that would explain the peculiar usage of this special number seven? A- In all these cases, there is a fullness or completeness that is inferred or pictured by these events. A full perfection of God's will, a complete requirement of obedience or purity. Six is eminently the number of man, as our original text began and it often shows the shortfall of man to the perfection of God (and His number seven!).

How many times did Peter think would be godly forgiveness?

◇ (Continued on page 14)

The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. What are the “unfruitful works of darkness” spoken of in Ephesians 5:11?

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Actually Paul's admonishment is very plain and direct. He is instructing the Christians to live faithfully in righteousness and in purity, and not to have any dealings with the evils of Satan and the world. There are two ways of living and they are opposed to each other. Here is the first way:

“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat” (I Cor. 5:9-11).

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said,

I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (II Cor. 6:14-18).

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (II Thess. 3:6).

“And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (II Thess. 3:14).

Those Scriptures I have just listed above are **“the unfruitful works of darkness.”** Here is the second way: Paul further instructs the Christian, **“but rather reprove them”** Or expose them. We have a responsibility, not just to stop our rejection of evil; most Christians today are welcoming evil into their homes, one way or another. The Christian is responsible to reprove (expose) and oppose darkness, evil and wickedness wherever it is found, especially when it is found in the church. Too many evils in our churches these days are being ignored.

This also reminds me of our responsibility as American people. When was the last time you read *The Declaration of Independence* dear reader?

“When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.”

That is just the first part of it, but

we have failed in this, we should have never let our government get to the wickedness they are right now. It is a travesty that our government is in the shape it is in. We should all be ashamed as Baptist people! Because of the liberals and some conservatives (so called) our government has become destructive. And we who could have stood up against it did not, and now we are paying the price, just like some of our churches are doing today.

I know it is not prudent, but I could call out several churches and their pastors and other preachers for the destruction they have caused. Being a pacifist and a peacemaker can only go so far and even that can be destructive.

May God help us! I believe it is a little late, but we need to heed the instructions of the Apostle Paul, and do better. The Lord is coming soon, how do you want Him to find you?

Always remember, **“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”** (Eph. 6:12). **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”** (I Peter 5:8). God Bless!

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Ephesians 5:11-12 states: **“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,”**

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Forum Question #1

(Continued from page 12) ♦

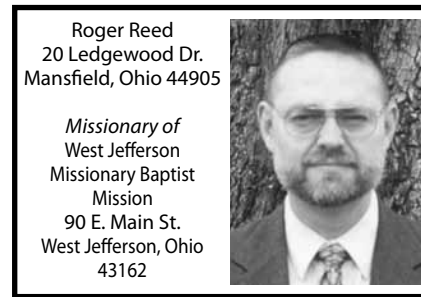
Why seven, of course! Jesus goes on to reveal the perfection in that number by pointing it toward infinity in Matthew 18:22, **“Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.”** Selah! Think about it!

Why would Jesus choose these specific numbers, if not to impress upon us the fullness and completeness of our service to a completely holy and perfect God? **“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;...”** (Rev. 3:1). It is sometimes profitable to search out these passages and wonder what the seven spirits of God are- perhaps the spirit of love; the spirit of obedience; the spirit of holiness; etc... but in reality, as we compare Scripture with Scripture, what we find the seven spirits to be is simply a pictorial and parabolic reference to the fullness of the Spirit of God and the perfection of the Holy Spirit, Himself. The seven churches of Asia were not the literal sum total of churches in Asia, but these seven particular churches were written to specifically to symbolically picture that ALL the Lord's churches are going to experience various trials and tribulations, joys and triumphs.

One last word of admonition concerning the numerology of seven, et al. The chapter and verse divisions were added in various languages at a much later date, and are not inspired. So folks that prophesy, foretell, and base conclusions on the numerology of manmade verse numbers are not believable, nor are they of God. **“It is written...”** and that is where

the truth of the number seven is. It is God's peculiar number. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



The word **“seven”** appears 463 times in the Bible. The word **“seventh”** appears 120 times in the Bible. My studies have brought me to believe that the significance of the number seven in Scripture means “completeness” and/or “perfection.” **“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made”** (Gen. 2:1-3). Thus His work was complete and everything God does is perfect. **“God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.”**

John Gill on Genesis 2:2 states, **“he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made:”** not as though weary of working, for the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, nor is weary (Isa 40:28), but as having done all His work, and brought it to such perfection, that He had no more to do; not that He ceased from making individuals, as the souls of men, and even all creatures that are brought into the world by generation may be said to be made by Him, but from making any new species of creatures; and much less did He cease from

supporting and maintaining the creatures He had made in their beings, and providing everything agreeable for them, and governing them, and overruling all things in the world for ends of His own glory; in this sense He **“worketh hitherto,”** as Christ says, John 5:17.”

To answer the question further I will refer to the *Easton's Bible Dictionary* concerning the number **“seven.”** “This number occurs frequently in Scripture, and in such connections as lead to the supposition that it has some typical meaning. On the seventh day God rested, and hallowed it (Genesis 2:2 Genesis 2:3). The division of time into weeks of seven days each accounts for many instances of the occurrence of this number. This number has been called the symbol of perfection, and also the symbol of rest. “Jacob's seven years' service to Laban; Pharaoh's seven fat oxen and seven lean ones; the seven branches of the golden candlestick; the seven trumpets and the seven priests who sounded them; the seven days' siege of Jericho; the seven churches, seven spirits, seven stars, seven seals, seven vials, and many others, sufficiently prove the importance of this sacred number” (see Leviticus 25:4; 1 Samuel 2:5; Psalms 12:6; 79:12; Proverbs 26:16; Isaiah 4:1; Matthew 18:21 Matthew 18:22; Luke 17:4). The feast of Passover (Exodus 12:15 Exodus 12:16), the feast of Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:9), of Tabernacles (13:15), and the Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8), were all ordered by seven. Seven is the number of sacrifice (2 Chronicles 29:21; Job 42:8), of purification and consecration (Leviticus 42:6 Leviticus 42:17; Leviticus 8:11 Leviticus 8:33 ; Leviticus 14:9 Leviticus 14:51), of forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-22; Luke 17:4),

of reward (Deuteronomy 28:7; 1 Samuel 2:5), and of punishment (Leviticus 26:21 Leviticus 26:24 Leviticus 26:28; Deuteronomy 28:25). It is used for any round number in such passages as Job 5:19; Proverbs 26:16 Proverbs 26:25; Isaiah 4:1; Matthew 12:45. It is used also to mean “abundantly” (Genesis 4:15 Genesis 4:24; Leviticus 26:24; Psalms 79:12).

If one would take the time, it makes for a great study. God Bless!

ROGER REED



Forum Question #2

(Continued from page 13) ♦

but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”

We know from what is recorded in Acts 19 that the city of Ephesus was a dark, sinful, idolatrous, and pagan city. They must have had a real problem with demon possession and practitioners of the occult. They were known for their idolatrous worship of the pagan goddess, Diana. In fact the temple of Diana in Ephesus was considered as one of the seven wonders of the world. When people were converted to Christ, part of their profession of faith included the burning of valuable books containing magical spells and the dark arts of the occult. Acts 19:18-20 records: **“And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”** No

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Forum Question #2

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doubt Paul's warning about the **"unfruitful works of darkness"** had something to do with the ungodly way of life the people of Ephesus were accustomed to seeing.

The context of Ephesians 4-5 as it relates to unfruitful works of darkness would include lasciviousness, uncleanness, and greediness (4:19); deceitful lusts of the old man (4:22); lying (4:25); submission to Satan (4:27); stealing (4:28); corrupt communication (4:29); bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking (4:31); fornication and other forms of sexual uncleanness, covetousness (5:3); filthiness, foolish talking and jesting (5:4); idolatry, deception, and other works of darkness (5:5-8); and drunkenness (5:18). All of these activities could be considered unfruitful works of darkness done out of the energy of the fleshly nature that is opposed to God. They are all evil, worldly, and Satanic. These works of darkness are practiced by those who are in direct opposition to God and His Word. We must regard these dark and sinful practices as God does. They are unfruitful, spiritually unprofitable, unholy, ungodly, and improper. As children of God and followers of Christ we are to be separate from these unfruitful works of darkness, and not fellowship with those who practice them. Instead, our way of life, as we walk in the light of Christ and the truth of His Word, ought to be a rebuke to those who practice wickedness. Hence we are not called just to resist and separate from the unfruitful works of darkness, but we are also to expose them by precept and practice. Our way of life as

followers of Christ ought to be marked by a pursuit of holiness manifested by walking in the light. As such we can have no agreement or communion with the ways and works of darkness. II Corinthians 6:14-18 declares: **"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."**

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"(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:9-11). Here we find contrasted the **"fruit of the Spirit"** with the **"unfruitful works of darkness."** Produced as FRUIT are the qualities and characteristics of **"goodness and righteousness**

and truth." What fruits will the "spirit of darkness" produce? None? Certainly no good fruit. Selah! Think about it!

As I studied this question about "dark fruit," I was struck by one of my commentators, who said the following: "Sins are terminated in themselves, and therefore are called "works," not "fruits" (Gal. 5:19, 22). Their only fruit is that which is not in a true sense fruit (Deut. 32:32), namely, death." – Jamison Faussett Brown Commentary. As I reflected on this distinction between "works" and "fruits," I thought it an eerily dangerous conclusion. Truth, in some way, yet perhaps a naivety about it. Surely it is a correct conclusion that no fruit will grow in darkness, but that does not mean that those dangerous and strangling vines and thorns will not produce many "works" and I wondered how many lives are affected and destroyed by these works/outcomes (rotten fruits?) of darkness. The ramifications of dabbling in these works of darkness will pull down many a stronghold of faith and obedience. Selah! Think about it!

In the Apostle's epistle to the Roman church, Paul writes: **"I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity (unfruitful works of darkness); even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death"** (Rom. 6:19-21). Death, separation from God, destruction, and defamation follow these works of darkness.

Rotten fruit that spoils from lack of light and holy nutrition and splatters on the grounds of unholy degeneration.

The context furthers that nasty picture in Ephesians 5:11-12, **"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."** This "closet shame" is relevant to our generation, where so many abominations are coming out of the "closet of shame" and are now openly "gay parading" up and down our American streets. Certainly it was naive of us to think that "don't ask, don't tell" would continue to hold off these growing perversions and festering wickedness under the surface of our seemingly "righteous" nation. The works of darkness are trying to extend their shadows sufficiently to blot out the very light of God, as they feverishly cast prayer and the very nature of God out of our public schools and the awareness of Society.

This darkness is actually the very essence of what God has liberated us from in the act of salvation. **"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes**

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Forum #2

(Continued from page 15) ♦

darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:3-8).

As the Lord also rebuked Satan, so, too, are we to rebuke the agents of darkness that come into our lives. **"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them"** (Eph. 5:11). Our mission, as the churches of the living God are to 1) stand FOR the truth and 2) stand AGAINST the darkness. We have the authority of God, Himself, to CONDEMN the abominations of this world and REPROVE and REBUKE the works of darkness. **"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee"** (Titus 2:15). **"Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear"** (I Tim. 5:20). May we be fearless of the darkness, as we wield the Sword of Light. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



Three Important

(Continued from page 11) ♦

showing himself that he is God."

This mysterious person opposes God. Daniel gives this description of the willful King: **"And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods. . ."** (Dan. 11:36). John says of the Beast: **"And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven"** (Rev. 13:6). Paul, Daniel, and John all speak of the Antichrist.

The Man of Sin is not only an antagonist to Christ; he is a counter-Christ; He sets himself up as a rival to God and Christ. **"He as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."** Ezekiel reveals this under the title of Prince of Tyrus: **"Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a MAN, and NOT GOD, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God"** (Ezek. 28:2) (emph. MRC).

This is the climax of human sin. Here is a self-assertion in its falsest, most impious and defiant form---a colossal, monstrous life. It is a conscious falsehood, for he cannot believe his own assertion. Antichrist **"exalteth himself above all that is called God"** and says: **"I am God."** John well said: **"Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is Christ? This is the antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son"** (I John 2:22 ASV).

What did Paul mean by **"he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God"**? What temple of God is under consideration? It seems to be the temple which the Jews will build in Jerusalem during the tribulation (Rev. 11:1-2). When he literally takes his seat in the temple all Jewish worship is to cease in its revived form (Dan. 9:27). Being called away by business in his kingdom, an idol will be there in his place (Dan. 9:27). Then the Jews in Judea **"shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place"** (Matt. 24:15). This idol in the Holy Place in the tribulation temple is the image of the beast

in John's writings (Rev. 13:14-15; 20:4).

Although Paul had been with them but a brief space of time, he forewarned them of these matters: **"Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?"** (v. 5). This statement refutes the silly notion that Paul made some errors in his first epistle to them on the subject of the events of the second coming of Christ.

THREE: THE RESTRAINER REMOVED

Listen to verse 6: **"And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time."** The word "withholdeth" is better translated "restraineth." Divine power has determined the delay of Antichrist's revelation and the time appointed for his coming on the stage of human history (Dan. 11:35). Our sovereign God prevents a premature revealing of the Lawless One. The Almighty holds him back, or keeps him in check, until his full and final development (Ps. 76:10).

Verse 7 says: **"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way."** When our English version was made "let" meant "to hinder," now it means "to permit." The thought is that someone is restraining the revelation of Antichrist.

The mystery of iniquity has been active since the Garden of Eden. It was active when Paul wrote. The reference must be to the active principle of sin working in opposition to God---Satan's kingdom against God's kingdom. It had the form of Judaism in the early days of the church, Romanism in later times, and Communism in our time. It has been active and energetic since the dawn of human history. This principle of sin will one day be embodied in a personal Antichrist when Divine restraint is

removed.

The restrainer is a person not a thing. **"That which restrains"** in verse 6 is **"he who restrains"** (masculine and personal) in verse 7. Paul's language distinctly indicates a personality as wielding this power of restraint. This restrainer must be the Holy Spirit who is the active agent of the Godhead in this age.

Since Satan is second power to God his program can only be restrained by God. The Spirit does much of the present restraining through the churches on earth which the Spirit indwells (I Cor. 3:16). When He is taken out of the way the churches and the saints will depart with Him, for believers cannot be separated from the Holy Spirit (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit will keep His residence in the churches of Christ. When they depart to the Father's house with Christ in the air, the Spirit will be taken out with them.

Some try to make the verse read in the Greek: ". . .until he (Antichrist) comes out of the midst." By this they would make it appear that the restrainer simply ceases to restrain, and then Satan brings forth Antichrist. Thus they would eliminate any notion of the rapture in this passage.

There is a very good grammatical reason for rejecting this view. The second "he" in verse 7 would normally refer to the same pronoun earlier in the verse rather than to the pronouns "him" and "his" in verse 6. It is the Restrainer (the Holy Spirit) who is taken out of the world or to come out of the midst.

Others try to make the restrainer Satan. But Satan does not restrain himself (Matt. 12:22-29). He is restrained only by God (Job 1-2). Still others say it is the Roman Empire, but this cannot be as the ten kings of the revived Roman Empire

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are said to give their kingdom to Antichrist (Rev. 17:12-13). The Holy Spirit is the Restrainer of which Paul speaks. When He is **“taken out”** of the way, **“then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming”** (II Thess. 2:8).

CONCLUSION

The two phases of Christ's coming are seen in II Thessalonians 2. At the first Christ comes to gather the saints unto Himself (v. 1). At the second He comes to destroy Antichrist (v. 8). The Lord Jesus must first come and remove the saints and the Holy Spirit before the Antichrist can be revealed. Then after the reign of the Man of Sin Christ comes to terminate the kingdom of Antichrist (v. 8; Dan. 7:11, 26; Isa. 11:4; Rev. 19:20).

It is foolish to try to identify the Antichrist as some person living today. The Bible says he cannot be revealed until the saints and the Holy Spirit are removed from earth. All attempts to make him some person living today discloses gross ignorance of the prophetic Word.

Those of us who live today can be certain we are not now in the day of the Lord, the time of the tribulation period. This time cannot be upon earth until the saints and the Holy Spirit are taken out. Then the Antichrist will reveal himself by making a seven-year covenant with the Jews in Jerusalem (Dan. 9:27).

I believe that Christ will soon come to take the churches and the saints out. With them will go the Holy Spirit. Then there will be the revelation of the Man of Sin. Are you ready for the rapture!

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an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” This would mean that David's ultimate object of worship was not a building, but the person of Christ the Messiah.

By way of application I would like to examine how New Testament believers are to publicly engage in acceptable worship in the Lord's church. I must sadly confess that before I was saved by the sovereign grace of God I had no real interest in the things of God. I rarely went to church, viewing it as a boring waste of my time. However, after I was truly saved by God's amazing grace my heart was filled with a real sense of God's mercy. The more I thought about the greatness of God's salvation through the week, the more I longed to go to the house of God to offer worship and praise to the One who had miraculously changed my life. Public worship was no longer a dreaded chore, now it was a source of spiritual delight. I now saw the house of God as a place of spiritual worship and instruction where I would be built up in the most holy faith and encouraged by Christian fellowship. After nearly 39 years of faithfully attending public worship in and among the Lord's churches, I can cheerfully say that my love for the Lord's house has not waned or dissipated over the years. I know that it is the constant refreshing of God's grace, presence, and power that has kept me from forsaking His house. For the life of me I cannot understand why believers who are born of the Spirit, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and on their way to heaven would ever want to forsake God's house.

I sometimes fear that as

Christians there are times when we merely ‘go to church’ because it is just another part of our weekly routine, another block of time in our social agenda, and another duty to perform. If going to the house of God has become mundane and mechanical we need to refocus on the real reason why we are to faithfully assemble with other like minded believers we have entered into covenant with. The Almighty God who owns and governs this entire universe has issued a command for His people to gather together and worship Him in Spirit and in truth. If our hearts are fixed upon God's glory and majesty we will truly view obedience to this command as one of our choicest privileges as a child of God. Let us come to the house of God to glorify, honor, and praise the wonderful name of our loving Lord, to receive instruction from God's Word, and to publicly proclaim our love and loyalty for the Lord. May God help us not to lose our sense of purpose in coming to the house of God! We do not assemble to see what others are wearing, or to admire the furnishings of the church, or to keep the preacher off our backs. No, we have assembled to worship and exalt our Lord! Someone rightly said of modern man: “He worships his work, works at his play, and plays at his worship.” May it not be said of us!

COME TO THE HOUSE OF GOD PREPARED FOR WORSHIP

Anything that is worth doing well requires adequate preparation and planning. Nearly everyone enjoys eating a fine meal. I love to cook. I guess I inherited my cooking skills from my Dad when we worked together at his meat and produce market. One thing that my Dad taught me was that good cooking requires

careful planning and preparation. A good meal does not just come together by itself. My family loves it when I make beef and chicken fajitas with homemade Spanish fried rice and black beans. Every summer I make and can homemade salsa. Most of the ingredients are picked fresh from the garden. The process for a large batch takes 3-4 hours from start to finish. Cleaning, blanching, skinning, and processing the tomatoes is a chore. All of the onions and peppers have to be cleaned, cut, and processed. Then you put it altogether and season it just right and let it simmer for a couple of hours. The homemade salsa is a key ingredient in making the homemade Spanish rice, yet most people would look at the quart jar and not give any thought to all that went into making it. When you make fajitas you need to slice your chicken breasts and beef very thin and season it the day before you cook it. I also slice all my onions and peppers the day before. Everything is already prepared to sauté the day before cooking. Why go to all the trouble? I love my family and it brings joy to my heart to see them chowing down on a meal I have prepared. All the effort put forth in preparation is worth it when taste buds are tantalized and bellies are filled with nutritious, homemade food. It makes me happy and it makes them happy. I think worship in God's house ought to make us happy and also be pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

The point I am making here ought to be crystal clear. We should prepare ourselves for worship before we ever come to the house of God! Before we ever come to feast on the riches of God's Word faithfully prepared

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and delivered by a God called elder, our hearts and minds should be ready to hear and receive the truth. Sadly, I fear most professing Christians give little if any thought to preparing themselves for public worship. The result is usually a half-hearted attempt at worship that is cold, mechanical, and without any enthusiasm. Deuteronomy 17:1 declares: **“Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness: for that is an abomination unto the LORD thy God.”** The principle set forth is profound. Worshipers were required to carefully examine what they were going to offer as a sacrifice unto the LORD. They were required to give the very best that they had and anything less was regarded as an abomination. Wow! The principle holds true for New Testament believers who must offer spiritual sacrifices unto the Lord. Are we really giving God our best when we come to the house of God for worship? Or are we merely giving Him our leftovers? Romans 12:1-2 demands that we not only give our best, rather we are to give our all unto the Lord: **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”**

1. Be physically prepared for worship on the Lord's Day. Before God gave the 10 Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, He

instructed Moses to prepare the people for what was about to happen. Exodus 19:10-11 states: **“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.”** There are some simple and practical steps you can take to physically prepare yourself for worship on the Lord's Day. Pick out your clothes and lay them out on Saturday night. Go to bed early enough to get a restful night of sleep. As you are drifting off to sleep meditate upon the Scriptures you read that day. Ruminates on memory verses you have stored in your heart and mind. Get up early enough on the Lord's Day so you will not be rushed. Eat a little something so that you will not be thinking about food when you should be thinking upon the Lord. Determine to be on time for Sunday School by simply being physically prepared!

2. Be mentally prepared for worship on the Lord's Day. When you come to the house of God you must make sure your mind is right. All true worship begins with exalted thoughts of God Almighty! As you prepare to come to God's house prepare your mind with Scripture and meditation. Learn to concentrate and focus upon God before you come to the house of God and then while you are worshipping in the services.

Determine to be attentive and engaged during the worship service. As prayer is offered concentrate on seeking the Lord with your heart along with the brother who is praying. As you sing, think deeply upon the songs, the words, the meaning of the

hymn and how it relates to God. While the preacher is preaching do not let your mind wander off on your finances, chores, problems, or a hundred other distracting rabbit trails.

William Gurnall the old Puritan wrote:

“Thou must be an attentive hearer; he that is awake, but wanders with his eye or heart, what doth he but sleep with his eyes open?”

Thomas Watson warned:

“Take heed of drowsiness in hearing; drowsiness shows much irreverence. How lively are many when they are about the world, but in the worship of God how drowsy...In the preaching of the Word, is not the bread of life broken to you; and will a man fall asleep at his food? Which is worse, to stay from a sermon, or sleep at a sermon? (Both quotes taken from *A Puritan Golden Treasury* by I. D. E. Thomas, page 315).

As we come to the house of God we must learn to say to our worldly thoughts and cares what Abraham said to his servants: **“Abide ye here...and I and the lad will go yonder and worship”** (Gen. 22:5).

3. Be determined to make the most out of the time set aside for Sunday School and the Worship services on the Lord's Day. When you think about it, the time spent in public worship is relatively brief in comparison the rest of your week. Do not fritter away the time devoted to public worship. Focus on your purpose for being there. Resolve to put all you energy and attention upon God and the reception of the truth of His Word. More often than not we come to God's house haphazardly, half-hearted, and careless. Sadly, we often leave the same way we came in and are

ill prepared to face the spiritual battles of the week that lay ahead.

One of the most useful and practical books I have ever read is *Spiritual Disciplines For the Christian Life* by Donald Whitney. He has a great illustration of how we often treat God when we come to church and leave with little or no preparation or a sense of worship. It is somewhat lengthy, but has a powerful application:

“One of the saddest experiences of my childhood happened on my tenth birthday. Invitations to the celebration were mailed days in advance to eight friends. It was going to be my best birthday ever. They all came to my house right after school. We played football and basketball outside until dark. My dad grilled hot dogs and hamburgers while my mother put the finishing touches on the birthday cake, it was time for the presents. Honestly, I can not recall even one of the gifts today, but I do remember the great time I was having with the guys who gave them to me. Since I had no brothers, the best part of the whole event was just being with the other boys.

The climax of the grand celebration was a gift from me to them. Nothing was too good for my friends. Cost was immaterial. I was going to pay their way to the most exciting event in town—the high school basketball game. I can still see us spilling out of my parent's station wagon with laughter on that cool evening and running up to the gymnasium. Standing at the window, paying for nine 25 cent tickets and surrounded by my friends. It was one of those golden moments in life. The picture in my mind was the perfect ending to a 10 year old boy's perfect birthday. Four friends on one side and four

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friends on the other. I would sit in the middle while we munched popcorn, punched each other, and cheered our high school heroes. As we went inside, I remember feeling happier than Jimmy Stewart in the closing scene of *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Then the golden moment was shattered. Once in the gym, all my friends scattered and I never saw them again the rest of the night. There was no thanks for the fun, the food, or the tickets. Not even a 'Happy Birthday, but I am going to sit with someone else.' Without a word of gratitude or goodbye, they all left without looking back. So I spent the rest of my tenth birthday in the bleachers by myself, growing old alone. As I recall, it was a miserable ballgame.

I tell that story, not to gain sympathy for a painful childhood memory, but because it reminds me of the way we often treat God in worship. Though we come to an event where He is the Guest of Honor, it is possible to give Him a routine gift, sing a few customary songs to Him, and then totally neglect Him while we focus on others and enjoy the performance of those in front of us. Like my ten year old friends, we may leave without any twinge of conscience, without any awareness of our insensitivity, convinced we have fulfilled an obligation well." (pages 79-80).

4. When we come to the house of God we must do so in a spirit of prayer. Pray that God would open your understanding so that you may behold wondrous things out of His Word. Pray for the the preacher to speak the truth in power. Pray for those in attendance, that God would be pleased to move in their hearts.

Pray for the saints to be edified and the lost to be saved. Pray for the Spirit of the Lord to have free reign in the praying, singing, and preaching. Pray that everyone would be knit together in love for God, for one another, and for His Holy Word. Pray that each and every hearer would be enabled to make application of the truth. Imagine what power would attend our worship services if entire congregations would earnestly pray and spiritually prepare!

I have heard people say from time to time "I really didn't get anything out of the service or the sermon." My first thought is it is probably due to the fact that you put very little into the service and were ill prepared. Instead of blaming the preacher or the atmosphere of the church, try looking internally and getting rid of your bad attitude. You will be pleasantly pleased to find that when you are spiritually prepared and in a prayerful attitude, your worship experience will be powerful and God-honoring.

COME TO THE HOUSE OF GOD WITH PROPER ATTITUDES

How much thought do you give to worshiping God? Have you ever really reflected on what your attitudes should be when you come to the house of God? I fear that many people come to the house of God without giving any real serious thought to what they are doing. When we go to God's house to worship we must have a mindset made up of right attitudes that will enable us to worship God effectively.

1. We must come to God's house with an attitude of reverence and humility. Psalm 89:6-8 declares: **"For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?"**

God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?"

The God that we worship is the only true and living God! There is none like Him! Psalm 145:3 declares: **"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable."** We gather together to worship the most important Person in all the Universe. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He is Sovereign over all His creation. He is the God of infinite power, holiness, and grace. Should we not come to the house of God with a sincere respect for the Almighty? If our hearts are truly overwhelmed with His greatness, glory, and superiority our spirits should be deeply humbled. A God so great and powerful has sovereignly chosen to love us and to redeem us from all our iniquities through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are redeemed by His precious blood! We are loved with an everlasting love! We, who are so unworthy of the least of His blessings have been saved by sovereign grace! Let us bow our hearts to the supreme rule of our sovereign God! If we truly understand Who it is we have gathered together to worship we will do so with a greater sense of His glory and our own unworthiness. Let us come to God's house in godly fear, with sincere respect for the Lord, and a humble desire to please Him in all that we do.

2. Let us come to God's house with an attitude of joy and thanksgiving. Psalm 122:1 states: **"I was glad when they said into me, Let us go into the house of the LORD."** Imagine the

transformation that would take place in our churches if everyone came to the house of God counting their blessings and rejoicing in the Lord! What power would attend the preaching of the Word if all those in the congregation were found delighting themselves in the Lord their God! Where is our joy in worshiping the Lord? We have so much to rejoice in. Worship in God's house is an opportunity to celebrate the goodness, grace, and power of God. The very thought of gathering with God's people to rejoice in God's blessings in God's house ought to be a source of spiritual delight. Psalm 26:8 declares: **"LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth."** I think the Psalmist had a profound sense of joy in God as he longed for the house of God: **"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God"** (Psa. 84:1-2). Let us be found striving to obey the admonition of Psalm 100:1-2, 4 as we come to the house of God: **"Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing...Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name."**

3. Let us come to the house of God with our attitudes under the leadership and control of the Holy Spirit. Jesus clearly stated that if we are to worship God aright we must do so in spirit and in truth: **"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the**

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Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). It is vital that we come to the house of God with our minds and hearts sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God will never lead you into error or sin, but only in paths of righteousness and truth. We must come to the house of God under the control of the Holy Spirit so that we may glorify God in our worship. If you are walking in the Spirit and are being led by the Spirit you will not bring sinful attitudes with you into the house of God. You will not have a tongue filled with gossip or a heart filled with bitterness. Rather you will strive to heed the admonition of Ephesians 4:29-32: **"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."** Imagine how sweet the fellowship of the saints would be if everyone had their hearts and minds in tune with the Spirit of God! We would be focused upon our great God and His glory with nothing to distract us from our grand purpose of honoring Him.

4. Let us come to the house of God with the attitudes of enthusiasm, anticipation, and

expectation. I know men who really enjoy deer hunting. After a long summer they are chomping at the bit to get in the woods to scout for deer. They will enthusiastically talk with other hunters about their prospects as deer season approaches. Before opening day arrives they have already cleaned their guns, stocked their ammo, and laid out their hunting clothes. They are ready! When opening day finally arrives they are filled with anticipation as they visualize killing that 12 point buck. As they walk into the woods to get to their deer stand, adrenaline pumps through their body and the expectation of what the day may bring excites them. The same scenario could easily apply to those who enjoy going to sporting events or other activities.

It should convict us as believers that we can get worked up over temporal things that bring us happiness, but not approach worship on the Lord's Day with the same enthusiasm, anticipation, and expectation. We could definitely change our attitudes if we are really committed to the spiritual discipline of worship on the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day is a special day set apart to publicly declare our love, loyalty, and devotion to God as we gather in His house to worship. Assembling with the saints of God on the Lord's Day is a way in which we can prove that our profession of faith in Christ is genuine and sincere. It is our duty to give a sacred preeminence to worshiping God every Lord's Day in the Lord's church. We must determine to allow nothing to come between us and the house of God. A man who is committed to deer hunting will do everything he can to arrange his schedule so that he can be out in the woods on opening day. Should

not we, as God's children, make sure we arrange our schedule so that nothing can interfere with our heart felt desire of being in God's house? Our hearts should be set upon cheerfully obeying the sacred command found in Hebrews 10:23-25: **"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."** When you truly love doing something it should not be difficult to make time for it. **"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous"** (1 John 5:3).

Oh that God would stir our hearts in such a way that we would actually look forward to the Lord's Day with great anticipation and expectation! I wonder if we can agree with the language of the Psalmist by way of application regarding our attitudes of going to the house of God? Psalm 27:4 declares: **"One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple."** Psalm 42:1-2 states: **"As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"** I fear that often times God's people come dragging into the house of God, viewing their attendance as a bothersome duty rather than a sacred privilege. This attitude has a way of rubbing off on their

children, grandchildren, and other members of the church. It may be one of the reasons why there is so little regard for faithful attendance to God's house among many professing Christians. We must change our attitude if we are to change this damaging trend. May God grant us grace to repent of our lackluster, half-hearted, cold, and apathetic attitudes regarding the Lord's Day and God's house.

5. Let us come to the house of God with a sincere desire to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. When we come to God's house let us do so with a keen interest in learning truth from Scripture. As we enter into the house of the Lord may we do so with the prayer of the Psalmist upon our lips; **"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law"** (Psa. 119:18). A God called pastor will endeavor to feed the sheep the wholesome truth of the Word of God. We should look at each worship service as an opportunity to receive godly instruction aimed not only at informing, but transforming our lives into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. An eager attitude to grow in the knowledge of God through the instruction of His Word is vital to the well being of the Lord's church. Ephesians 4:11-13 records: **"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."**

May we apply the admonition

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given to Israel of old as we come to the house of God, praying that the truth would be passed on to our children and to all who would enter: **“Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it”** (Deut. 31:12-13). May every God called elder who preaches the Word be committed to carefully following the example and admonition of Nehemiah 8:7-8: **“...and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”** This is what feeding the sheep is all about! Accurate information aimed at transformation! Exposition of the Word and application of the truth! All based solely upon the infallible authority of the Word of God. God does not give preachers license to manipulate the unvarnished truth of the Word of God. Preachers are exhorted to **“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine”** (II Tim. 4:2). There are preachers who want to appear to be intellectually superior who will give the impression that they have found something entirely “new and unique.” They will spiritualize,

allegorize, and twist Scripture to prove some convoluted point aimed at establishing their spiritual superiority, rather than feeding the sheep. Away with such nonsense! Preachers, stop trying to come up with some new and improved interpretation of Scripture. When the sheep come to the house of God to be fed they need the wholesome truth of the Word. Baptist preachers should read, explain, and preach the Word of God! It is hard work to mine the depths of a passage of Scripture and explain what it means with clarity and simplicity so the hearers can understand and apply the truth. Yet this is what preachers are called to do if they really love the Lord and the sheep that Jesus died for. May every God called preacher of the Word understand the holy solemnity of their task. Preach the Word. Feed the Sheep.

One aspect of having an attitude committed to growing in grace involves the willingness to receive rebuke and correction from the Word of God. **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”** (II Tim. 3:16). Paul exhorted Titus: **“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority”** (Titus 2:15). Do you have enough godly humility and grace to receive correction when you are wrong? When the preacher admonishes you to repent of sin and follow the commands of Scripture will you do so? If you come to the house of God with a chip on your shoulder, a critical spirit, and an unwillingness to change you will never grow in grace. Too many people want to judge what is preached based upon their feelings and emotions rather than what is right. Stop being so

touchy-feely. Commit yourself to unreservedly receive the truth and to make application of it, even when it involves admitting you are wrong and sinful.

Can you imagine what would happen if we would all come to the house of God on the Lord's Day with minds and hearts devoted to knowing and growing? What if everyone in attendance had a sincere thirst for drinking in the sacred truths of Scripture? What if everyone had a spiritual hunger for God's manna from heaven? What nourishment, strength, and spiritual power would be found in our churches! Hearts would be humbled and convicted of sin once they were truly opened to the truth! Godly zeal would flourish in our churches! A spirit of true revival would be kindled among us. Is not this a worthy goal that every member of the Lord's churches ought to desire? If so, we cannot allow another Lord's Day to pass where we come to the house of God as superficial, half-hearted hearers! We must come with minds sanctified by the Spirit and separated from the cares of the world. We must come with hearts that are wholly set upon God, desiring to know more of Him so that we may better glorify Him! May God grant us the attitude of the Psalmist every time we engage in public worship: **“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight...Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes...Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it....I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth**

great spoil” (Psa. 119:33-35, 135, 140, 162).

6. Let us come to the house of God with a desire to be a blessing to others. If you are a member of one of the Lord's churches you are an integral part of the body of Christ. You have entered into covenant with that body of Christ, endeavoring to serve the Lord with other like minded believers, striving to carry out the Great Commission. As such we must view faithful church attendance and worship as an important way in which we can encourage, edify, and challenge one another as we serve the Lord together. One key aspect of proving our profession of faith as we assemble with the saints is recorded in Hebrews 10:24: **“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”** Each member has a responsibility to contribute to the well being of the body as a whole. We can do that as we gather to worship together in the name of the Lord. When church members are faithful it provides an example to others. It is a source of great encouragement when everyone is gathered in unity to worship the Lord. It saddens me when I see God's people being selfish, only caring about what pleases them, or what is convenient for them. As a member of the Lord's church I have a holy duty to be an example and encouragement to others. We should consider how our behavior affects the other members. Are we faithful? Are we cheerful? Are we thankful? Are we loving and kind? Listen to the language of Paul as he wrote to the church at Philippi: **“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye**

♦ (Continued on page 22)

to the House of God

(Continued from page 21) ♦

be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:1-5). This admonition ought to motivate every member of the Lord's church to come to the house of God with a sincere desire to be an encouragement and a help to one another. Your presence may be a source of comfort to another member. Your well timed words of encouragement to one who is struggling may be the very tonic they needed. Every time we assemble for worship we are expressing our love for Christ and one another. We are also demonstrating that we are committed and unified as a body of Christ. What a pleasant and joyful sight! Psalms 133:1 declares: **"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"**

7. Let us come to the house of God with the aim of exalting and praising God. God is worthy of our highest praise and most fervent adoration. As you prepare to come to the house of God determine to allow nothing to hinder your praise and exaltation of God Almighty! After a week of being bombarded by the cares of the world and the difficulties of life do not let those things distract you from the grand purpose that awaits you. Endeavor to resolve with the Psalmist: **"I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make**

her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together" (Psa. 34:1-3). What a powerful worship service we would all enjoy if our hearts were truly knit together in sincere praise for the God of all grace! Praise Him for who He is! Praise Him for His Sovereign grace! Praise Him for His presence and power in your life! Praise Him for the family and friends He has blessed you with! Praise Him for the infallible truth of His Word! Praise Him for all the promises He has freely given! On we could go, if only our hearts were truly focused and fixed on praising our Great God!

Listen to the words of some of the old Puritans on praise:

Thomas Watson: "Praise is a soul in flower...Praising God is one of the highest and purest acts of religion. In prayer we act like men; in praise we act like angels."

John Boys: "The servants of the LORD are to sing His praises in this life to the world's end; and in the next life, world without end."

Thomas Manton: "Self love may lead us to prayers, but love to God excites us to praises." (*A Puritan Golden Treasury*, page 209).

I have heard many dear brethren say through the years that worshiping in God's house is a foretaste of the glories of Heaven. If we really believe that then we will gladly offer the praise that is due our Lord like the heavenly hosts and glorified saints do: **"Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the**

earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:12-13).

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

1. Let us endeavor to be more aware of what God expects out of us when we come to His house for worship. He is worthy of our best effort and complete dedication. When we come to the house of God may we do so with a single eye that is consecrated to honoring the Lord. **"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him...And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ"** (Col. 3:17, 23-24).

2. May we truly give a sacred preeminence to attending God's house on the Lord's Day. Attending the Lord's church on the Lord's Day ought to be viewed as a holy command that should be carried out with cheerful obedience. It is an honor and a privilege to worship the Lord with other like minded saints. The world and all its pleasures ought not to keep us from the house of God. I can guarantee that you will never be sorry for being faithful in attending God's house. **"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly"** (Psa. 84:10-11).

3. Let us always remember that little eyes are watching us. Our children and grandchildren are constantly monitoring our behavior and attitudes. Children from other families of the church are also watching. We need to be careful that they see us joyfully and faithfully attending God's house. We must be committed to teaching our children by precept and practice. May God stir us to provide a godly testimony of faithfulness for our children and grandchildren to observe and to follow. **"Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding...My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways"** (Prov. 23:23, 26).

4. Consider for a moment how much better our worship services would be if everyone who attended God's house truly applied the principles laid out in this treatise. Imagine the holy transformation that would permeate our worship services! How wonderful it would be if every congregant came to the house of God prepared for worship with godly attitudes sanctified by the Holy Spirit! Our hearts would be lifted to new heights as we sought the Lord in prayer and praised Him in song! The preaching of the Word would be attended with great power in the pulpit and the pew! There would be a renewed interest in the things of God and a longing to draw even closer to Him. Coming to the house of God would be a spiritual delight rather than a mere duty. Oh Lord, please make it so! Grant us godly desires that prompt us to love coming to thy house! **"LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth"** (Psa. 26:8).



The Short Pews



Brief Articles
by Curtis Pugh
(1944 - 2018)

A WOLF IN A FIELD OF WHEAT

If you fence a wolf in a wheat field he will eventually starve and die. While other animals might survive and perhaps even thrive, wolves will not. Why? Because it is not their nature to eat wheat. And animals act according to their respective natures. It is also the case that we human beings act according to our natures.

A person who is what the Bible calls a “natural man” acts according to the nature he inherited at birth. He or she seeks the things that give him or her pleasure. Such persons are servants to their natures acting in accordance with their fallen or depraved nature. Such people, “cannot cease from sin” (II Peter 2:14). They may exchange one sin for another when they tire of the one or perceive that its results are harmful to them, but natural or unregenerate persons continue in sin.

It is not God who makes them sin, nor is it the devil. God says, “...every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14). Every person has “his own lust” or his own passions and desires within himself. Such a nature is ours because we inherited it from our father Adam. While Adam and Eve were created in a state of untested holiness they willfully fell from that holy estate and plunged the race into ruin: into depravity. That this depravity is total is seen in that the whole personality of each person – intellect, will and emotions – have been evilly affected

by the fall. Men think evil thoughts, will to do evil things, and love evil so that all the three things that make up personality are ruined.

Because men love to sin – it is their nature to do so – and chose to do so, because of the pleasure they find in sin they think they are free, and even boast that they have freewill. But in reality their will is not free. It acts in accordance with their sin nature and they sin because they want to sin. God does not make them sin, nor does the devil. It is as the verse last quoted says, each natural man has “his own lust” that draws him away.

The only person who has the ability to please God is one whom He has regenerated. That is because in regeneration, called also the new birth, the Holy Spirit enters and indwells the individual. Consider Paul’s teaching: “Because the carnal [natural fleshy] 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. 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. 8:7-9). Have you the Spirit of Christ – the Holy Spirit – permanently indwelling in you?

A VOLUNTEER OR A DRAFTEE?

In the New Testament not a single instance of Christ accepting a volunteer can be found. When Jesus met with a volunteer He always spoke words which caused the volunteer to go away from Him.

First, consider the rich young ruler. “And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?...Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give

to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” (Matt. 19:16, 21-22). The Lord Jesus told this man to do that which he could not bear to do. Christ told him to sell all that he owned, give the proceeds to the poor and then come and follow Him. But “he went away sorrowful.” Christ never required any other person in the Scripture to sell all their possessions. Jesus knew this man was willing to follow Him if he could keep his affluent lifestyle. Christ did not accept that kind of volunteerism then and we have no reason to believe that He accepts it today.

A second time Jesus rejected volunteerism: “And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:57-58). The Lord’s pointed words about His own poverty seem intended to cause this man to reconsider and leave. The context gives us every reason to believe that this man gave up his volunteerism.

Again we read: “And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:61-62). This man had such ties with family that he was willing to put off following the Lord for a time of farewells with them. Jesus spoke pointed words of rebuke to him. This was the end of his volunteerism.

God calls sinners with an

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BEREA BAPTIST BANNER

Financial Report

5-1-2019 to 5-31-2019

Beginning Balance	\$2,061.31
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	200.00
Carol Willett, Georgetown, TX	60.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Emmanuel B. C., Oldtown, KY	100.00
Eve Knowles, Scarborough, ME	100.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR	12.50
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Rural Hall, NC	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
James Bradshaw, Fairfield, OH	170.76
Landmark M. B. C., Summersville, SC	100.00
The Lord’s Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	70.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
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., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	20.00
Anonymous	10,220.00
Dividing checks	29.24
Sub Total	\$12,217.50
TOTAL	\$14,278.81
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	573.45
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.96
Dividing checks	29.24
Total Expenditures	\$3,568.65
ENDING BALANCE	\$10,710.16



BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST

Financial Report

5-1-2019 to 5-31-2019

Beginning Balance	\$2,180.48
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Calvary Ind. B. C., Sumas, WA	200.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
.....	525.00
TOTAL	2,705.48
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	363.98
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	363.98
.....	2,341.50
Interest	+0.02
ENDING BALANCE	\$2,341.52

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Portland Baptist Church of Plumerville Arkansas has called Elder Lonnie Edwards as pastor.

Please remember the pastor and church in your prayers.

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

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

The Philadelphia Baptist Church of Decatur, Alabama is seeking the Lord's guidance in calling His eternally appointed man to fill the vacancy left when He called His faithful servant Elder Wm. Doyal Thomas unto his everlasting home September 29, 2018.

If any brother of like faith and order would like to be considered for that pastorate or would like information on the church please call or text Brother Mike Gibson at (256) 303-7747 or email Brother James Reynolds at admin@pbcofdecaturalabama.org. or text (ONLY) 931-452-1158.

of Mantachie, Mississippi is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact (662) 282-7794 or Email:request@bereabaptistchurch.org.

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 SGBBC, 400 N. Main St., Caldwell, KS 67022, or by phone Brother Darin Wiley 620-863-2431.

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



The Short Pews

(Continued from page 23) ♦

irresistible call. He drafts His soldiers. He does not accept volunteers. **“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble,**

are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” (I Cor. 1:26-29).

A THOUSAND TIMES NO

Every now and then when the subject of various churches or denominations comes up someone will say something like this: “Well, you know we are all working trying to get to the same place.” My answer is No! No! No! A thousand times no! I am not working trying to get to Heaven! I am not!

The Bible says: **“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law”** (Rom. 3:24-26).

Being **“justified”** or judicially declared righteous in God's eyes does not come about by works. If Christ did not redeem you with the blood He shed on Calvary you are not redeemed. If you do not have **“faith in his blood”** you are not redeemed. If your faith is not in Jesus Christ you are not redeemed. If you are not redeemed you are not going to Heaven.

If salvation (redemption, justification, etc.) were by works – if works have anything to do with it – then men could boast about their good works. But Paul said **“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.”** Furthermore, Paul quoted King David who wrote: **“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin”** (Rom. 4:6-8). Those who have the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed or charged to their account cannot have sin charged to them. And this justification is **“without works”** as the last quotation plainly says.

Anyone who is trying to go to Heaven by his works is cursed. In Galatians 3:10 it is written: **“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”** No one is able, or ever has been able, to keep all the Law. To go to Heaven by works demands perfection: perfect obedience to the holy Law of God.

A thousand times no to the idea of going to Heaven by works. The Bible says: **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”** (Eph. 2:8-9).



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