

Honesty Is the Best Policy And They Preached the Gospel

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

"Proving for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (II Cor. 8:21).

Here the Apostle Paul commands the members of the Corinthian Church to provide for honest things. He speaks of honesty as something essential to Christian character. Believers should have a reputation for sterling honesty. No one has honesty without dross until he has honesty without suspicion. Since we live in a censorious world, we must never through imprudence give non-Christians an occasion to speak reproachfully of us.

"Honest" was a good translation of the Greek word "semnotes" at the time of the making of the King James Version. Due to slight changes in our language, the word "honesty" has become more specific in its meaning. The Greek word suggests more than mere fair dealings. It means probity, gravity, and purity of character. We might say that it means to be morally clean. But I quickly point out that the Greek word is broad enough to carry the meaning of honesty in the modern sense.

What is it to be honest? The dictionary says it is to be "free from fraud and deception, respectable, creditable, truthful, trustworthy, sincere; one that will not lie, cheat, or steal."

HONESTY AND POLITICS

No society on earth can properly function without honest men in positions of leadership. Political dishonesty is detrimental to the people and to the country. Any city or town whose politics are conducted by a perpetual breach of honesty on both sides will be tainted by immorality throughout.

Frequently, we hear the cry, "Politics is rotten to the core." People say this because it seems honesty has dropped out of modern politics. Our society seems to have been conditioned to believe that all is fair in war and politics. America needs some truly Christian men to lead our two national parties who will rebuke every dishonest political practice. Let Christian men of



all parties require honesty, integrity, veracity, and morality in politics. Those who do so will have the approval of God and the votes of all God-fearing people.

Nations cannot negotiate peace and prosperity except on the basis of honesty. Trickery, fraud, and delusion is not uncommon among America's enemies
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By Troy McGahan
of Nancy, Kentucky

"And there they preached the gospel" (Acts 14:7).

As I write this my intentions are not to straighten anyone out, nor is it to downplay any of the Bible's great doctrines. However, my purpose is to indeed remind us what God has called his New Testament churches to do, and what our priority should be. Let me start off with recollections of my childhood and perhaps this will help illustrate my



concern and the reason for writing this. Growing up I was raised in the independent missionary Baptist ranks of Southern/Eastern KY. We had no clue about the terms we find so

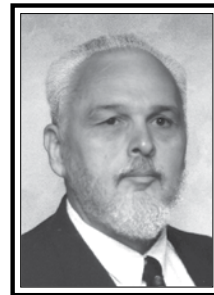
readily available now; sovereign grace, tulip, etc. Along those same lines we didn't have a clue about the term landmarkism either. However, I remember God's sovereignty being preached. I was also taught that no man could be saved on his merits, and the necessity of Holy Spirit conviction. I was so blessed to have been taught these truths along with the foundational truths of the Lord's New Testament church. I am so thankful for that preaching and how it prepared me for later on, but you know what I remember being preached the most with tears in their eyes and with broken hearts? It was the Gospel of Christ!!!! I literally remember being under such conviction that I could not sleep for days and it was the same for many others, as well. People would be saved, and baptized, and added to the Lord's churches, and they would be taught, and grow in grace and knowledge, and then minister the Gospel to their friends and
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Out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth Speaketh

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma

"I thank thee Lord that I am not like those poor presumptuous people that believe in election. Lord, I was born with a glorious free will; I was born with power by which I can turn to thee of myself; I have improved my grace. If everybody had done the same with their grace that I have done, they might all have been saved. Lord, I know thou dost not make us willing if we are not willing ourselves. Thou givest grace to everybody; some do not improve it, but I did. There are many that will go to Hell who were as much bought with the blood of Christ as I was. They had as much of the Holy Ghost given to them. They had as good a chance, and were as much blessed as I am. It was not thy grace that made us to differ. I know it did a great deal, still I turned the point. I made the decision for Christ. I made use of what was given me, and others did not - that is the difference between me and them."

I did not compose the prayer above. It seems to be anonymous. I have only edited it a bit. I have left it substantially the same and present it here for your consideration. It agrees with the ideas of many today, viz. that the will of men was unaffected by the fall of Adam.



They think they have complete freedom of the will and therefore have the ability to come to Christ if properly persuaded by someone. This is the belief-system of those who oppose

God's sovereignty in choosing whom He will save. It is the belief-system of the vast majority of professing Christendom today. I will be so bold to say that if you
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Why God Sent An Apostle to Cornelius

By Matthew Stepp
of Wayne, West Virginia

As we begin our study, I'd like to start in the previous chapter to find a very important verse concerning the direction God has for our lives. Let's read part of this familiar story. . .

Saul of Tarsus was saved when he was arrested by the Holy Spirit on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:3-5 states: **"And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:**



And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou

persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt
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A disease known is half cured.

It is certainly so in the case of the disease of sin:

when free grace reveals the ruin, we soon find the remedy.

"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." (Ephesians 2:8-9).

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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.

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and allies. Our ambassadors will always have trouble in dealing with the godless nations of the world. Those nations under Communism have no standard of morality. Honesty is something of which they have no knowledge. They say that promises are like pie crust made to be broken (II Tim. 3:3-4). They **"speak peace to their neighbors, but mischief is in their hearts"** (Ps. 28:3). Over the years we have learned to our sorrow that **"the counsels of the wicked are deceit"** (Prov. 12:5). You can always trust the Communists. . . to be good Communists!

John the Baptist preached the need of honesty in government. **"Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you"** (Luke 3:12-13).

In John's time it was the duty of the publicans to collect the revenue of the Roman emperor. The Baptist instructed these public servants to be just and honest in their duty. There must always be justice and honesty between the government and the business world. Taxes must not be made more burdensome than necessary and required by law. Government employees must not enrich themselves at public expense. Public revenues must be applied to public service, not to gratify the avarice of private persons.

Amidst the political corruption of our time we often hear about some public servant who misappropriated funds. It seems much dishonesty even goes unobserved. Since Watergate the American public is beginning to discover that some of our leaders are to common honor traitors and to honesty outlaws. We justly now fear that our government is infested with legal rats and rascals who commit the most flagrant dishonesties with impunity.

Too often clever crooks meet the public with cool impudence in spite of their continued dishonesty. They brave the courts with success. Many such scoundrels are pitied and nursed by a sympathizing host of people. A sickly sentimentality hinders the administration of justice and unrepentant criminals run loose.

The law of Jehovah says: **"Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning"** (Lev. 19:11, 13).

The citizen is obligated to be honest with his government. He must be honest in reporting his income and paying his taxes. **"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom**

fear; honour to whom honour" (Rom. 13:7). It is significant that the apostle adds in this same chapter of Romans: **"Let us walk honestly"** (13:13). Honesty is a credit to our profession of faith in Christ, it adorns the doctrine of God our Savior, and it recommends religion in its beauty to unbelievers.

The great need of the hour is to have honesty among the leaders of the nations of earth. Then honesty is needed in all public officials and private citizens. **"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people"** (Prov. 14:34).

HONESTY IN BUSINESS

The markets of commerce all over the world need a double portion of honesty. We are brainwashed with the worth of certain products which do not live up to the expectation of the consumer. Legal honesty is the only policy some care for. It does not matter how poorly and cheaply a product is made, merchants will sell it to make a profit. When profit is gained by falsehood and unfairness, the seller is guilty of dishonesty.

The business man must make a profit to stay in business, but the buyer must get his money's worth. Proverbs 11:1 declares: **"A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight."** Chapter 12, verse 22, of the same book reads: **"Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight."**

What the law of the land permits a businessman to do may be forbidden by the Lord. True religion forbids men to profit by others misfortune, to prowl for prey the ignorant, to suck the last life-drops from the bleeding. Christians must not hover over men as vultures, swooping down upon the weak, the struggling, and the ill-informed.

"Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shall thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Deut. 25:13-15).

Blessed is the farmer who sells a bushel of apples or potatoes that is full and running over. Happy is the merchant whose meat scales give the customer a full pound. Godly is the businessman who gives the buyer his money's worth. With such selling and buying God is well pleased.

Woe to those who give false weights, who cheat under the color of justice. To deceive a man to his damage is worse than to pick his pockets, or to rob him with a gun. Let no man defraud his neighbor, for God will be the avenger of such. **"That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we**

also have forewarned you and testified" (I Thess. 4:6).

"Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth" (James 5:4).

HONESTY AND THE CHURCH

Some professed Christians are honest with men. They will not rob men, but they will do worse by robbing God. The Lord requires one-tenth of our material increase to carry on His work in the world. Malachi 3:10 commands us: **"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house."** The tithe is to be put in God's storehouse, the church where you are a member. To withhold the tithe is highway robbery from the scriptural standpoint: **"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings"** (Mal. 3:8).

There are churches who are not honest with their minister. The laborer is worthy of his hire. Those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel (I Cor. 9:14). They sow spiritual things and they must reap the carnal things of those who they serve (I Cor. 9:11). The church is to pay its pastor a livable wage (II Cor. 11:8). Too often the church pays its pastor a meager sum. Most preachers are overworked and underpaid. Some churches pay their shepherd so little that he is forced to make preaching a sideline job and something else his main business. Most Sovereign Grace Baptist churches are languishing in the work of our Lord because the minister must have an outside job.

Church funds must be handled in the most responsible manner as is humanly possible. In the time of Nehemiah it is written: **"And I made treasurers over the treasures, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Padaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren"** (Neh. 13:13). Any religious organization or church which does not handle contributions faithfully for Christ's cause is dishonest and irresponsible. A church thief is the worst kind of thief.

AN HONEST REPORT

The followers of the Savior must mediate upon ways to be honest in the sight of men. **"Finally, brethren. . . whatsoever things are honest. . . think on these things"** (Phil. 4:8). We are to be concerned about truth and decency in our lives.

One of the qualifications of a deacon is that he be **"of honest report"** (Acts 6:3). This trait of character is needed in all church members, not merely the

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deacons. Every believer ought to be free of scandal, his moral integrity should be well attested in the world.

“And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing” (I Thess. 4:11-12).

The children of God are to live quiet and peaceable lives in this world. We should work to provide for ourselves and not be slothful in business. We are to earn our own bread and have pleasure in doing so. God expects us to make an honest living. We must beware of extravagance, for it is a prolific source of dishonesty.

“Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (I Pet. 2:12). We must adorn our Christian

profession by an honest manner of life. This will tend to stop the mouths of critical unbelievers and cause them to glorify God, seeing Christians excel others in good works.

HOW HONESTY BEHAVES

True honesty will do no harm even when it has the opportunity to do so. Jacob's sons brought home sacks which contained food and the money which they paid for it. He told his sons: **“And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand: peradventure it was an oversight”** (Gen. 43:12).

Honesty obliges us to make restitution, not only of that which comes to us by our own fault, but through the mistakes of others. Though we get something like Jacob by an oversight, if we keep it when it is discovered, it is kept by deceit.

One dear member of a church I once pastored was pronounced at his death by his customers: **“A storekeeper whose change you never needed to count.”** What a noble testimony to leave behind to one's posterity.

Another example of honesty is seen in the reign of Joash when the temple was being repaired. Of those who had the over-sight of the work it is written: **“Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully”** (II Kings 12:15). Their honesty was so well attested that it was not necessary to examine their bills or audit their accounts.

Let all who deal with public money and engage in public work deal faithfully. God will reckon with men for their dishonesty, whether men do or not.

Those who think it is no sin to cheat the government or their countrymen will be of another mind when God shall set their sins in order before them.

HONESTY IS ALWAYS BEST

The prophet Isaiah declared: **“He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the numitions of rocks: bread shall be given him: his waters shall be sure”** (Isa. 33:15-16).

Here the prophet tells us of a man who despises ill-gotten gain. He does not over-value gain; therefore, he can easily abhor dishonest gain. He is not so foolish to suppose **“that gain is godliness”** (I Tim. 6:5).

What does it profit a man to always be honest? First, he shall have an eternity with God: **“He shall dwell on high.”** Second, he will escape some of the calamities of life: **“His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks.”** Divine power will keep him safe, and his faith in that power will keep him easy. Third, he shall not lack the necessities of life: **“Bread shall be given him.”** Fourth, the benefits and blessings of God are sure of continuance upon him: **“His waters shall be sure.”** Truly, honesty is the best policy. (All quotes from Isa. 33:16)

EVIL OF DISHONESTY

Dishonesty is an earthly, sensual, devilish act on the part of man: **“The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again”** (Ps. 37:21). **“For they know not how to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces”** (Amos 3:10).

All dishonest people must stand before the Judge of all the earth Who will bring to light the **“things of dishonesty”** (II Cor. 4:2). The man who lacks honesty is void of the new nature and has never been quickened of God. A fearful reckoning awaits him. What will it profit a man if by dishonesty he has gained the whole world when God takes away his soul? A million dollars in the bank gotten by fraud will scarcely compensate for a Christless eternity. The Lord says: **“In the same day also will I punish all those...which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit”** (Zeph. 1:9). Again He has said: **“For every one that**

stealeth shall be cut off” (Zech. 5:3).

ARE YOU HONEST WITH GOD?

Of all people, Christians should always be honest with God. We are commanded to lay aside all hypocrisies (I Pet. 2:1). Acting a feigned part will get us no where with God. We are to be honest in our prayers, our Bible study, our tithing, our witnessing and our work for Him. Our daily attitude is stated in Hebrews 13:18: **“Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things wiling to live honestly.”**

My unsaved friend, are you being honest with God? Do you know that you were born with an inclination to dishonesty? Knavish propensities are inherent: born with the child and transmissible from parent to child. No man has any desire to be truly honest who does not possess the Divine nature which comes in regeneration. Even if a man could be completely honest in this life that would not save him. Salvation is in Jesus Christ, not being honest in this world.

Honestly before God you are a sinner: **“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”** (Rom. 3:23). If you deny you are a lost sinner before God, you are being dishonest. God knows and so do you.

Preacher, what must a poor struggling sinner do? God commands you to repent. **“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent”** (Acts 17:30). Those who repent are to believe the gospel: **“Repent ye, and believe the gospel”** (Mark 1:15). The gospel is how Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again in fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture (I Cor. 15:1-4). God saves those who believe this message.



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can from your heart pray the prayer above, you do not understand how God saves sinners. More than that, I fear that in all likelihood you lack a heart understanding of God's holiness and your sinfulness. You may know of your sins and God's holiness intellectually, but your heart is revealed by your speech for Jesus said, **“...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”** (Matt.

12:34). From that verse comes the title to this article. Our speech betrays the innermost thoughts of our hearts, and especially do our prayers. You can often tell more about what a man believes by listening to him pray rather than listening to him preach! And the words of the prayer above reveal that one who prays in that manner thinks himself capable of coming to Christ by his own ability. God's Word tells us that Jesus said, **“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day”** (John 6:44). And again Jesus said, **“Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father”** (John 6:65). Anyone who can from his heart pray the above prayer does not believe those last two verses – or most certainly does not understand them! Man certainly has a will. That will is free to act according to man's nature. But the problem is that man inherited from father Adam a fallen or depraved nature. Because of this, man can only choose to do evil, but since man's depraved heart loves sin, men think that they have free will. In Jeremiah 17:9 the Lord tells us **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”** And again the Lord says, **“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”** (Prov. 16:25). Do not rely upon what you feel or think is right! What God says is right and true! The mind of an unregenerate person **“...is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”** (Romans 8:7) How can a natural son of Adam of himself, with unchanged heart and disposition, come in a saving way to Christ? He cannot!

Some people do choose to live a life of refined evil as their sensitivities are repulsed by gross sins. Some even choose a life of religious evil. Some of the motives of men are selfishness, greed, and desire for money and possessions. Some people think ahead and consider eternity, but their motives are still selfish ones. They are not motivated by a concern for the glory of Jesus Christ. They are concerned with securing themselves eternal bliss by their good works. Such people as these may choose a refined, religious life full of good deeds, church activities, and positive thinking. Jesus was visited one night by one such very religious individual whose name was Nicodemus. Jesus told him, **“Ye must be born again”** (John 3:7). This new birth, or as the translators gave as an alternative reading in the margin, to be **“born from above”** is also called regeneration. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ wrote concerning regeneration these words: **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,**

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by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5-6). Here, as in other places, the Bible clearly states that salvation is not by works or good deeds. It is not by religious rituals and observances. Salvation is only by the mercy or grace of God. That means that salvation is a gift and comes to the elect of God as do many other gifts. Such gifts as genius, musical abilities, artistic talents, etc., are all gifts. Some people are endowed with these gifts from birth. They received these gifts without having done anything to deserve them. Neither did they reach out and take them. They received them in a passive and unconscious manner. So it is with regeneration. It is all a work of free and sovereignly dispensed grace. That is what the phrase salvation by grace means.

This new birth or regeneration is truly a matter of being born from above. It is God's work, not a man's. We notice another thing in the last quoted passage above. This regeneration or new birth washes the recipient. Notice the words, **"the washing of regeneration."** This does not mean that some kind of washing regenerates. Washing in water or any other liquid cannot bring about regeneration. The Bible says here that it is the regeneration that washes. One thus regenerated is cleansed from sins. Furthermore, this passage says that this new birth is the **"renewing of the Holy Ghost."** All that a baby faces in life is new to him. He has no previous "record" of sins and so it is with the sinner who has experienced **"the washing of regeneration."** And all this **"He (God) shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."** All that God does to, for, and in His elect ones comes **"abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."** **"Abundantly"** means amply supplied or without any lack or need. We do not bring this abundance of the Holy Spirit down upon us by praying, seeking, making vows or by doing anything. Jesus Christ has done all required by the Father. He paid the price required. He met the demands of divine justice so that in regeneration God shed His Holy Spirit upon us **"through Jesus Christ our Saviour."** God is not a piker who gives stingily. Neither does He lack anything. His gift when He washes His elect by regeneration is abundantly sufficient. And when regeneration or the new birth comes to one of Christ's lost sheep, that sheep is taught by the Word that there is nothing good or worthy of this new birth. How can such a regenerated sheep pray such a prayer as the one above?

In the days of the apostles there

were many Jews who perverted the gospel of Jesus Christ. They said, 'It is fine to believe in Christ, but you must also keep the law (do good works) in order to stay saved.' Paul wrote to counteract this by saying that such men were not true or spiritual Jews – that they lacked spiritual or inner circumcision of the heart. He wrote instead, **"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh"** (Phil. 3:3). Whenever you find someone who is content to worship with outward show, whether stilted rituals and ceremonies or other outward, perhaps spontaneous physical activities and bodily show, they are not worshipping God in the Spirit. When you find folk whose rejoicing is in worldly activities which have been brought into the churches in order to keep attendance high, neither are these rejoicing in Christ Jesus. And whenever anyone has **"confidence in the flesh"** neither have these experienced this spiritual "circumcision" about which Paul wrote. Those who think themselves able to take the first step in coming to Christ – whatever they think that step may be – have confidence in the flesh. Therefore fear for those who pray according to the belief-system of the prayer above!

In the matter of salvation, confidence in the flesh is an acid-test as to whether or not a person has been regenerated. People who are confident of salvation because they prayed a prayer, made a decision, accepted the Lord, went down to the front, joined the church, were baptized to wash away their sins or whatever else that may have been required by some religious group, have confidence in the flesh. Regenerated sons of God **"have no confidence in the flesh."** Like Paul, they say, **"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing"** (Rom. 7:18). This because when the Holy Spirit regenerates a person they see themselves, not in contrast with other people, but in contrast with the Holy One, the God revealed in the Bible. They cry out, like did Isaiah, **"...Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts"** (Isa. 6:5). Having godly sorrow worked in them, they cry out like Job, **"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"** (Job 42:5-6). Have you experienced this godly sorrow? This godly sorrow cannot be manufactured by a preacher telling sad stories or by a sinner wanting to go to heaven. You cannot break your own heart over your sin nature and your acts of sin! The Bible says, **"The**

LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Ps. 34:18). Again the Psalmist wrote, **"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise"** (Ps. 51:17). God says in Isaiah 66:2 **"...but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."** Do you abhor yourself? Do you have a broken heart and a contrite spirit over your sin and before God? Have you been brought to see that you deserve eternal punishment because of your sin? Do you see that if you receive justice you would be cast into the lake of fire? Only such God-wrought broken hearted sorrow will work repentance in anyone. Paul said so when he wrote, **"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death"** (II Cor. 7:10). Do not be fooled into thinking that temporary emotions stirred up by some preacher, the death of a loved one, or some other catastrophe is godly sorrow! Broken heartedness and awareness that you cannot please God in your flesh are the mainsprings by which God works repentance and then gives faith to His elect. Have you sorrowed after a godly sort? Has this caused you to turn to God in unfeigned repentance and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you still experiencing repentance daily as God makes you aware of your sins even as a regenerated child of God? Do you continue walking humbly before the Lord knowing that if He should withdraw His hand of grace you would plunge into the depths of sin? Or, do you have confidence in your flesh thinking that you can continue living for the Lord on your own?

Earlier in this piece it was pointed out that the mouth speaks what is in the heart. Because of and in connection with that, Jesus stated, **"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"** (Matt. 12:37). What do the words you speak in prayer reveal about your heart? Do you have confidence in the flesh? Are you trusting in having gone down to an altar or having made a public profession? Do you think you are regenerate because you made a decision for Christ? Are you able to pray the prayer that composes the first paragraph of this article? May God give you grace to see the utter foolish wickedness of that prayer. May He show you that without Christ's imputed righteousness you are a stench in the nostrils of our Holy God! May godly sorrow be your experience and may you be given **"repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Acts 20:21).



A Dose of Reality

"Common Sense Comments"

by Joseph Harris

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Illegal Means Illegal

Notice the emphasis on one word used twice in the title of this commentary: ILLEGAL. There is a current real problem and threat to America's financial well-being and cultural stability. This invasion from Mexico has reached epidemic proportions and no one in power seems to even notice there is a problem.

Don't be fooled by all the media hype. Border crashers are ILLEGAL and they are ALIENS to this country. A few years back, political correctness tried to tone down the harshness and began calling them illegal immigrants. Now they even resent this label. Well, either they are illegal or they are not. The next step is to call them unauthorized immigrants which eventually will be followed by the title unauthorized Americans or Americans without citizenship. They are already referred to as undocumented workers.

I for one am sick and tired of Mexico sending troops in to take over. Notice, I did not say I was sick of Mexicans. I am tired of the ILLEGAL (there's that word again) ones. I am tired of them breaking the law and bypassing the legal steps to become citizens. I am tired of them demanding amnesty or immediate citizenship, as if it is their right by virtue of their presence in this country. It is a slap in the face to those who obey the law and earn legitimate citizenship. People who become Americans are supposed to learn the language, pass tests, and have a knowledge of our history and political system so they can appreciate and respect this country and be assimilated into American culture. In years past, during the time of real immigration at Ellis Island, America was known as the melting pot. If immigrants do not melt into the pot, then the pot ceases to be one pot of unity, creating many pots of individual cultures of division. America has ceased to be unique and is losing her identity.

I am tired of real, genuine, bona fide Americans being called racist when they speak the truth on this issue. More and more ILLEGALS are attending the Jackson/Sharpton race card playing school and learning the lingo. I wish they would spend as much time learning English.....and abiding by the law.

I am tired of the law not being

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A Dose of Reality

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enforced. Call me crazy, but shouldn't illegals be arrested and deported?

I am tired of Republicans and Democrats selling us down the river as they flip and flop around with spines of jelly. It has always amazed me how most politicians can stand erect on two legs without falling. It takes a spine, so how do they even walk upright?

I'm tired of the accusation of not acting like a Christian about the situation. Being Christian means following the law. Why is it Christians are always supposed to do the right thing, but lawbreakers are exempt?

I am tired of being told by computers, when making a phone call, to press "one" to continue in English. EVERYTHING should automatically be in English, with an option to press "one" if Spanish is needed.

I am tired of illegals having access to government services funded by Americans.

Basically, I am tired of being told I am the bad guy and America is the problem. As I read somewhere recently, America is a private country with borders and laws, not a public park with open access.

The Purpose of Government

Government does have a purpose, but it is limited. A proper understanding of the purpose, role and scope of government as envisioned and established by our founding fathers is essential to the future well-being of this country. America is not a pure democracy, but a republic under democratic rule by representation. The founding fathers envisioned government as a protector of the people, in times of war and in protecting the individual liberty of people, and specifically their inalienable rights. The role of government is not to provide healthcare, jobs, education and the overabundance of what it has been providing for decades. Government is simply not supposed to be providing the majority of programs it provides. In order for the government to provide anything to anyone, it must first take from someone else. Government is an empty entity that does not produce or generate anything in and of itself independently.

The average high school student will probably struggle to name the three branches of government, their responsibilities, and how they relate to the Constitution. The Constitution is supposed to be the standard which guides elected officials (Legislative Branch-Congress) as they make laws. The Constitution is supposed to be the rule of law for the Executive Branch

(President) as he governs. The Judicial Branch (Supreme Court) exists for the purpose of reaching decisions in court cases to determine whether or not a matter is Constitutional. The Judicial branch is not supposed to make laws; that's the job of the Legislative Branch. The Judicial Branch is supposed to rule on whether or not the Constitution has been upheld or violated.

It has been said that at the close of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, upon leaving the building, Benjamin Franklin was asked by a woman on the street, "Well what do we have Mr. Franklin, a republic or a monarchy?" Benjamin Franklin replied, "A republic, Madam, if you can keep it." Are we still the same republic today in 2012 that Benjamin Franklin had in mind? As government expands and continues in an unprecedented takeover of private businesses and corporations, we are quickly becoming a monarchy of tyranny. Elected officials no longer care about the desire of their constituents. They vote their own agenda with an arrogant "We know more than you little people" and "This is for your own good" attitude. It is time to clean house....and the senate, and replace every official who goes against the will of the people who elected them. When a rule "of the people, by the people and for the people" ceases, then rule by an elite few is inevitable and that day has come. It has been in the making for many years as both Democrats and Republicans in power have facilitated its progress.

When taxes are extracted (like a tooth, but more painful) from the people and they have no control on how the revenue is spent, this is equivalent to taxation without representation. Frederic Bastiat, a French economist of the 1800's right before the French Revolution, called taxation legalized plunder. President Calvin Coolidge called excessive taxation legalized larceny. The nature of government, left unchecked is to grow, consume and engulf, characterized by massive fraud, thievery and corruption. An all-powerful government has historically been the tool of fascists, tyrants and dictators who enriched themselves and their cronies at the expense of the common people. While promising liberty, fairness and equality for all, liberty and fairness disappear, but equality shines as all suffer equally in misery. Socialism does not work and it has been proven repeatedly to be a failure. It denies the existence of individuality and human depravity and kills any incentive for creation and innovation. When government takes from those who have, to give to those who have not, the cycle has to continue. If wealth could be distributed equally among all tomorrow, some would be broke the next day.....and need more again from those who have. The have-

nots have not because they keep not. Once again, the Bible rings true: the poor we will have always.

As we look to government to provide our all, such as medicine, food, shelter, etc. we need to be reminded that in order for government to provide for all, it must be big enough to do so. What most do not seem to realize is that a government big enough to give everything to everyone is also big enough to take it all away. That includes liberty as well as material goods and services. In order for government to provide anything at all, we the people must first give. The more government provides, the more we give..... and give up. Lyndon Johnson's Great Society

pales in comparison when measured up against this Frankenstein socialist state built by our law makers and the current president and administration. It's not so obvious now, but the years will reveal the truth when pay day arrives.

Thomas Jefferson said, "My reading of history convinces me that most bad government results from too much government."

We can blame Obama 'til the cows come home, but congress is supporting the current massive growth of government. It's time to clean house. IS ANYONE LISTENING?



- A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS -

By Timothy Hille
of Ashland, Illinois

Chapter Fifteen – The Law of Bodily Issues

Bodily diseases or infirmities are spiritual types of sin and the effects of sin. All disease and infirmity, though not always the result of some particular sin, are the result of sin in general. When the children of God enter into eternity upon the new earth wherein dwelleth only righteousness, then **"there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain"** (Rev. 21:4). **"And there shall be no more curse"** (Rev. 22:3). Concerning the eternal city of God, it is written, **"And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity"** (Isa. 33:24). The forgiveness of sins is likened to the healing of disease and infirmity (Matt. 9:1-7). The teachings of this chapter are that sin has affected the very source of life in both men and women, and that sin is a barrier to worship and fellowship with God which only the sacrifice of Christ can remove.

Chapter Outline

- i. A running issue in a man: vs. 1-3
- ii. Defilement caused by an issue: vs. 4-12
- iii. The cleansing for a man with an issue: vs. 13-15
- iv. A man's seed going from him: vs. 16-18
- v. An issue in a woman: vs. 19-27
- vi. The cleansing for a woman with an issue: vs. 28-30
- vii. Separation from spiritual uncleanness the purpose of these laws: vs. 31-33

I. VERSES ONE THROUGH THREE.

God now gives a law to the children of Israel regarding bodily issues. These were infirmities which involved the reproductive systems. Any man who had such an issue was unclean thereby. He could not, so long as he had the issue, participate in the services of the



tabernacle (Num. 5:1-3). The source of this illness was the flesh: **"When any man hath a running issue out of his flesh, because of his issue he is unclean."** The flesh,

spiritually speaking, is the old nature, the nature with which we are born as the children of fallen and sinful parents (Ps. 51:5; Eph. 2:3; Rom. 8:7-8). The fountain of sin is within a person (Matt. 15:18-20). The sin which makes a man spiritually unclean is the sin which comes forth of his own flesh, proceeding from the sinful desires of a sin-darkened heart and a mind alienated from God through wicked works.

The manifestation of one man's sin is different from the manifestation of another man's sin. **"And this shall be his uncleanness in his issue: whether his flesh run with his issue, or his flesh be stopped from his issue, it is his uncleanness."** One man's sin is outwardly manifested in the pursuit of outright wickedness, while another man's sin is in his abstaining to perform those duties which are good and right before God and men. One man sins in doing that which is manifestly evil, his heart running to wicked and ungodly deeds, be they fornication, adultery, murder, theft, idolatry, sorcery, extortion, and such like (I Cor. 6:9-10). Another man sins in not doing that which is right, being stopped by the opposition to true righteousness in his sin-darkened heart (John 12:42-43; James 4:17).

II. VERSES FOUR THROUGH TWELVE.

God now describes the defiling nature of this ailment with regard to ceremonial cleanliness and sanctification. Any object or person with whom the man who had the issue came into contact was to be considered unclean. People who came into contact with the man who had the issue, or with objects upon which

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the afflicted man sat or lay, must wash their clothes, bathe themselves, and be ceremonially unclean until the evening. Earthen vessels, or household pottery used as in the preparation of food, when touched by the afflicted person were to be destroyed, while wooden vessels were to be **“rinsed in water.”** This pictures the defiling nature of sin. Sin defiles all that it touches.

We have a very light opinion of sin in this hour; but God's Word reveals the deadly and serious truth concerning sin. We are not to have a part in sin. Sin ought not to be condoned, encouraged, or practiced by children of God. We ought not to participate in other men's sins (I Cor. 5:6-11; II Cor. 6:14-18; Lev. 19:17). The actions of the flesh, the old sinful nature, are to be put to death in the life of a believer. Sin in the life of a believer is a barrier to fellowship with God. Those who came into contact with the afflicted person, or with items which were ceremonially defiled by the afflicted person, were themselves unclean as far as partaking of holy things was concerned. **“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”** (Ps. 66:18) (John 13:3-11). If a saved person sins, then that person, while still having a relationship with God, is no longer in fellowship with God, and is in need of cleansing. **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”** (I John 1:9).

III. VERSES THIRTEEN THROUGH FIFTEEN.

A similar procedure was prescribed for the ceremonial cleansing of a man who was healed of his bodily issue as was given for a person healed of leprosy. There can be no relationship or fellowship with God apart from cleansing from sin and the defilement caused by sin. **“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”** (Acts 22:16). Baptism symbolizes the washing away of sins, which can only actually and effectually be accomplished by being washed in the blood of Jesus Christ through faith in His death for sin and His resurrection. **“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood”** (Rev. 1:5). The washing of this man whose issue was healed symbolizes

God's cleansing of the believing sinner.

“and wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water;” typical of the fountain opened in Christ to wash in for sin and uncleanness, even the fountain of his blood, which cleanses from all sin; and in which both the persons and garments of the saints are washed and made white:

‘and shall be clean;’ in a ceremonial sense; as all that are washed from their sins in the blood of Christ are clean in a spiritual and evangelical sense.”¹

The type required a cleansing and an atoning sacrifice to show the saving and sanctifying work of Christ for and upon the sinner who is saved by God's grace.

“On the eighth day” the man who was healed of his issue brought either **“two turtledoves, or two young pigeons,”** and came **“before the LORD unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”** These were offered, **“one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering,”** through which the priest made an atonement for the healed man **“before the LORD for his issue.”** “The ceremony indicated that whatever our moral and spiritual infirmity may be, an atoning sacrifice and a cleansing is required.”² (I John 2:2; Heb. 9:22).

IV. VERSES SIXTEEN THROUGH EIGHTEEN.

Here mention is made of a man whose reproductive seed should unnaturally **“go out from him,”** which was to be considered as a case of uncleanness. He, like a man with a running issue, was ceremonially unclean, and must **“must wash all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the even.”** Personal articles and people with whom any such discharge came into contact were likewise ceremonially unclean (Deut. 32:10-11). This was to teach the nature of sin, that sin originates in man, comes forth of his fleshly nature without provocation or inducement, and causes a breach between God and all who are polluted by it.

V. VERSES NINETEEN THROUGH THIRTY.

Next the case is given of a woman who was ceremonially unclean because of her issue, speaking particularly of her menstrual discharge. Her case being somewhat different, the prescribed course of action is also somewhat different, in that she was to **“be put apart seven days.”** During this time the woman was not to enter the tabernacle or to come together to her husband. Persons and objects with which she came into contact during the time of her separation incurred defilement (Mark 5:25-34). Only Jesus can heal a person of the uncleanness of sin (I Pet. 2:24; Ps. 41:4).

When the woman's issue was ceased, then, following seven days – a figure of complete cleansing – she was to bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons,

“the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering.” These would be brought to the priest who would offer them and **“make an atonement for her before the LORD for the issue of her uncleanness.”** The way to reconciliation and fellowship with God is the same for all, faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. “If these ceremonial pollutions could not be done away but by sacrifice and offering, something greater and much more valuable must be expected and depended upon for the purifying of the soul from the uncleanness of sin.”³ Through Jesus' death for sin we are brought nigh to God.

VI. VERSES THIRTY-ONE THROUGH THIRTY-THREE.

“Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is among them.” The purpose of all of these regulations and ceremonies was to teach the awfulness of sin and the complete and perfect opposition of God's righteous character toward sin. By these physical infirmities and corruptions they, in a ceremonial way, would defile the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God in their midst. Any who so defiled God's tabernacle would die **“in their uncleanness.”** We see again that holiness is an absolute necessity in order for man to have fellowship with God; and that the true character of holiness is that which God reveals (Heb. 12:14; I Cor. 3:16-17). None can worship God before being made clean of their sins through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. We who are saved are to be careful to maintain holiness in our daily lives (I Thess. 4:3-8).

FOOTNOTES

1. Gill, John. *Exposition of the Old Testament* (“The Online Bible,” Larry Pierce, 1994-95).
2. Hille, Harry J. “Outlines on Leviticus,” 1979.
3. Matthew Henry's Commentary.

Chapter Sixteen – The Great Day of Atonement

This portion of Scripture treats the subject of the highest and most solemn of all the sacred institutions which God delivered to the children of Israel under the law, the day of atonement. This hallowed day combined the various holy things which have been before us up to now, the divinely ordained sacrifices and the divinely appointed priesthood, as well as the subject of holiness, especially as requisite to fellowship with God and enjoyment of God's presence and blessings. The atonement speaks of that which provides for three things, (1) reconciliation, (2) cleansing, and (3) covering. This special day, with all its attending ceremonies and regulations, was to be observed once annually, and serves as a type of that which Christ did

once for all when He offered Himself to God as a propitiation for the sins of His people, that they might be holy and without blame before God.

Chapter Outline

- i. The restriction against entering the most holy place at all times: vs. 1, 2
- ii. The divine order for entering the most holy place: vs. 3-10
 - (a) The high priest only, with offerings for himself: vs. 3
 - (b) The garments to be worn: vs. 4
 - (c) The offerings required for the people: vs. 5
 - (d) The order and manner of the sin offerings: vs. 6-10
- iii. The high priest offers for himself: vs. 11-14
 - iv. The high priest offers for the people and makes atonement for them: vs. 15-19
 - v. The scapegoat: vs. 20-22
 - vi. The burnt offerings, and burning of the sin offerings: vs. 23-28
 - vii. The divine schedule and purpose: vs. 29-34
 - (a) The appointed yearly time: vs. 29
 - (b) The appointed purpose: vs. 30, 34
 - (c) The appointed manner – as regards the people: vs. 31
 - (d) The appointed manner – as regards the priest: vs. 32, 33

I. VERSES ONE AND TWO.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron.” The time of these divine commands is here given. This is significant because before now Aaron had not entered into the holy of holies, no great Day of Atonement having been observed before this time. Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, had died in connection with the dedication of the tabernacle and induction of the levitical priests into their sacred offices (see Lev. 9-10). They had **“offered before the LORD, and died.”** These instructions are now given in order that (1) Aaron and any serving in the office of high priest after him might not also die in approaching to God in a way not ordained by God; and (2) to remind us of the death of Aaron's two sons, and teach us that the only way in which any can approach God and live is through the One who is typified by the atonement here being instituted, Jesus Christ.

God gave these instructions to Moses, who was to impart them unto Aaron, **“that he die not.”** If not for the atoning work of Jesus Christ, all would die and perish eternally. Fellowship and communion with God is barred because of sin; and the way of access to God is only through Jesus Christ, by faith in His death for sin and His shed blood which cleanses from all unrighteousness. This truth is signified by the fact that Aaron could not come **“at all times into the**

♦ (Continued on page 107)

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holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark." This was the place of God's presence: **"for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat"** (Ex. 25:21-22; Heb. 9:2-3, 6-9).

II. VERSES THREE THROUGH TEN.

Some preliminary instructions and a summary of the major parts of the atonement service are here given. Aaron was to come, at the appointed time, bringing first of all the designated offerings for himself and his house, **"a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering."** He was to have on the holy linen garments, namely **"the holy linen coat, . . . the linen breeches . . . a linen girdle, and . . . the linen mitre . . ."** The priestly garments not mentioned are the robe of blue with the bells and pomegranates upon the hem, the ephod with the breastplate, and the curiously wrought girdle of the ephod. The most glorious of the garments which were **"for glory and for beauty"** (Ex. 28:2), were temporarily relinquished for only the linen garments. This speaks of how Christ, to accomplish His atoning work at Calvary, left the glory of His Father above and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, being yet without sin (Phil. 2:5-8; Rom. 8:3). The linen garments denote the righteousness and holiness of Jesus, **"who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth"** (1 Pet. 2:22). Aaron was also to bring **"two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering,"** to be offered for **"the congregation of the children of Israel."**

Aaron would first offer for himself, **"and make atonement for himself, and for his house;"** and then he would make atonement for the people as God prescribed. Aaron and those who served in the office of high priest after him required an atonement for their own sins; but Christ, being perfect, required no sacrifice for Himself (Heb. 7:26-28). The two goats which constituted the sin offering for the people together point to Christ as (1) the One who bore the sins of His people on the cross, and (2) the One who takes their sins away (Ps. 103:12; 1 Pet. 2:24). One goat was for the Lord, and the other was for a scapegoat. Of Jesus the Scriptures state, **"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29). Both types are fulfilled in Him.

III. VERSES ELEVEN THROUGH NINETEEN.

A detailed description is now given as to the killing of the sin offerings and the taking of the blood within the veil. Aaron was to first make an atonement for himself, and then to make an atonement for the people. The sin offering was to be

killed, and with the blood the sins of the priest and the people would be purged. Jesus **"was delivered for our offences"** (Rom. 4:25), and **"hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh"** (1 Pet. 3:18). The death of Jesus Christ was that by which an atonement for our sins was accomplished, resulting in our being reconciled to God through Him (Rom. 5:8-10).

The procedure for entering within the veil on this solemn occasion is described by God. Aaron was to **"take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail."** The incense was placed upon the fire when within the sacred apartment where the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat were located, so that **"the cloud of the incense"** would cover the mercy seat. This was necessary because of the mercy seat being **"upon the testimony,"** or over the tables of the broken law which were stored inside the ark of the covenant. To enter the holy of holies in any other fashion would result in death because the sins of the priest would provoke the righteous indignation of God. The cloud of incense points to the intercession of Jesus Christ, and the praise, honor, and glory which is given to God through the office work of Jesus Christ. Every aspect of the plan of redemption has this end, the glory of God (Eph. 1:3-6, 12). The only way to approach God is through Jesus Christ. Only with Jesus as Mediator does the throne of God become the throne of grace where mercy is obtained (1 Tim. 2:5-6).

Being now within the vail in the most holy place, the high priest was to **"take of the blood . . . and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat . . . seven times."** The two main features of this day of atonement were the shed blood and the entering within the veil. The blood being sprinkled **"upon the mercy seat eastward"** signified acceptance of the people for whom atonement was being made. The blood being sprinkled seven times before the mercy seat signified a secure standing before God based upon the complete atonement that was made. The blood of Jesus is that which makes atonement for the soul (Heb. 9:13-14, 22-26; Matt. 26:28). Jesus presented His blood unto God as the once-for-all atoning sacrifice for all who will believe in Him.

The blood of the sin offerings for both the priest and the people being presented within the veil, Aaron was now to **"make an atonement for the holy place"** and **"for the tabernacle of the congregation."** The meeting place of God with the people and the place of worship and fellowship with God was contaminated and defiled

by their sins. The atonement was necessary **"because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins."** Despite all the daily sacrifices, and all the services of the tabernacle, this yearly atonement must be made to purge the sins of the people. Again we see that sin is characterized as that which defiles and destroys fellowship with God. Men can deny sin, but that does not change the reality of sin and the necessity of an atonement to purge men of sins. The golden altar of incense is specifically noted as one of the objects which required cleansing with the blood (Ex. 30:10). This points to the fact that no worship is acceptable which is not presented by those who are cleansed from their sins through the shed blood of Jesus and represented in Heaven by Him who died for sinners.

"The object of this solemn ceremonial was to impress the minds of the Israelites with the conviction that the whole tabernacle was stained by the sins of a guilty people, that by their sins they had forfeited the privileges of the divine presence and worship, and that an atonement had to be made as the condition of God's remaining with them."¹

IV. VERSES TWENTY THROUGH TWENTY-TWO.

When once the work of **"reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation"** was done, then Aaron was to **"bring the live goat"** for a scapegoat. The atonement resulted in reconciliation; but there can be no reconciliation to God where sin remains. This live goat, which was also part of the sin offering for the congregation, became the sin-bearer in a type. Aaron would put both of his hands upon the head of the live goat **"and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins."** This was said to be **"putting them [their sins] upon the head of the goat."** Their sins were imputed to the goat, which was sent **"away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness"** (II Cor. 5:21). The sins of every believer were imputed to Christ at the cross. He removes our sins, such that God says, **"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more"** (Heb. 10:17), (Mic. 7:19; Jer. 50:20). This goat speaks of Christ as our sin-bearing, sin-removing substitute. **"And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited"** (Isa. 53:4-6, 11-12).

V. VERSES TWENTY-THREE THROUGH TWENTY-FIVE.

After the scapegoat was released into the wilderness, then Aaron was to **"come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and . . . put off the linen garments . . . and leave them there."** The **"holy linen coat . . . the linen breeches . . . linen girdle, and . . . the linen mitre"** which Aaron had

put on to begin this solemn proceeding were now laid aside inside the tabernacle. Aaron was then commanded to **"wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments,"** the beautiful and glorious garments which pertained to his service as high priest, as the robe of blue, the ephod with the breastplate, and the curious girdle of the ephod. The humble righteousness which Christ put on to offer Himself as the sacrifice for sin He has put off forever, and He has now put on the glorified righteousness of His Heavenly Father (Heb. 2:9).

Having on the beautiful and glorious garments, Aaron would **"come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people."** Now was he to offer the burnt offerings and burn the fat of the sin offerings upon the altar. This was the final task of the high priest as far as making the annual atonement for the sins of Israel was concerned. This points to the resurrection of Christ, which signifies God's acceptance of His atoning sacrifice, and of Him as our great High Priest; and now through Him all who believe receive the blessings of the atonement, justification from sin, reconciliation to God, and peace with God, whereby our worship is acceptable in Christ by faith. Aaron came out of the tabernacle again, arrayed in glorious garments, and appeared before the expectant people. This speaks also of His coming again to bring complete salvation to all who trust in Him (Heb. 9:28). The bells on the hem of Aaron's robe would now be heard as he ministered at the altar; and now the sound of the gospel can be heard with the believing ear that is opened by the grace and power of God.

VI. VERSES TWENTY-SIX THROUGH TWENTY-EIGHT.

The man employed in letting go the scapegoat was to **"wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh,"** before reentering the camp. Likewise, the man who burnt the carcasses of the sin offerings without the camp was required to **"wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water"** ere he came back into the camp. Only one person was ever involved with the putting away of sin who remained undefiled, the man Christ Jesus, **"who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens"** (Heb. 7:26) (Heb. 13:11-12).

VII. VERSES TWENTY-NINE THROUGH THIRTY-FOUR.

God now prescribes the day on which this solemn ceremony was to be performed, and the manner in which it was to be observed by the people. This was to be regarded by Israel as binding and unchangeable so far as they were concerned: **"this shall be a statute for ever unto you."**

♦ (Continued on page 108)

A Study in Leviticus

(Continued from page 107) ♦

"As long as the Aaronic priesthood was in being, and the Levitical dispensation lasted, until: the true Messiah came and put an end to all these rites and ceremonies; until that time this service was to be performed by the high priest in succession every year."²

"In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month," was the divinely appointed time; and the manner in which this was to be observed by the people was in affliction of soul, observed outwardly by fasting, and ceasing from labor. **"It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever."** No work was to be done, and they were to mourn over their sins. This points to salvation being experienced when a person ceases from working to establish his or her own righteousness and exercises repentance toward God in acknowledging, grieving over, and turning from his or her sins and to God's mercy provided in Christ Jesus and His atoning blood. "This was a day of affliction, also a day of rest: **'ye shall . . . do no work at all.'** It was a day of blessed experience. They would **'be clean from all your sins before the LORD.'**"³

These regulations applied to every person in Israel: **"whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you."** The presence of strangers, or people of other nations, living amidst the Israelites (who are taken to be proselytes to Israel's religion) was not to be any hindrance to any person in the observance of this holy day. All were under the same rule. This should be true in our homes and lives. Let friends, relatives, and acquaintance join us in the services of God's house; but let nothing cause us to leave God and God's services for them. Avoid fellowship with those who hinder your fellowship with God (Ps. 119:63, 115; 26:4-5).

This ceremony was to be performed by every successive priest who would occupy the office after Aaron. This statute was to be observed **"once a year"** (Heb. 10:1-4). Despite Aaron's obedience at this time (for we read, **"And he did as the LORD commanded Moses"**), and the obedience of those who followed after him (though their obedience was short-lived and Israel soon went astray – Isa. 1:11-15; 58:3-5), these sacrifices could never atone for sin. This was the type of Him who would once for all put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 10:10-14; 7:23-25). The obedience of Aaron at this time in things imperfect and temporary pointed to the perfect obedience of the eternal and unchanging Son of God, whose blood was taken within the veil in Heaven and made atonement for all the sins of every believer. **"Wherefore, holy**

brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him" (Heb. 3:1-2). Have you considered Christ today as your only Saviour? Has your soul been afflicted with godly sorrow for sin and led to repentance, to turn from sin and turn to God in faith? Only through the blood of Jesus can you **"be clean from all your sins before the LORD."**

FOOTNOTES

1. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown. *Commentary on the Whole Bible* ("The Online Bible," 1995-1997).

2. Gill, John. *Exposition of the Old Testament* ("The Online Bible," Larry Pierce, 1994-95).

3. Hille, Harry J. "Outlines on Leviticus," 1979.



From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



The Nature and Necessity of Regeneration

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee; Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

My subject today is one of supreme importance. As can be seen by the words of our Savior just read, regeneration lies at the foundation of our Christian hopes here and hereafter. It is absolutely essential that man experience a spiritual re-birth. An internal, spiritual change is indispensable as a qualification for entrance into the kingdom of God. Without the washing of regeneration there is no future happiness.

REGENERATION DEFINED

Regeneration is an instantaneous act of the Holy Spirit whereby the soul of man is changed from love of sin to love of holiness. It is an internal renovation, a change of mind and heart, taking effect on the understanding, when it is enlightened, on conscience, when it is convicted, on the will, when it is liberated, on the affections, when they are purified, and on the whole man, when he becomes a new creature.

Regeneration is distinct from repentance and conversion, which are the continued development of what is begun in regeneration. Repentance is a change of mind which results in a change of conduct. Conversion is a changed life which grows out of this change of mind in repentance and the change of disposition in the soul in regeneration by the Spirit.

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of spiritual life to the soul, man may be said to be passive, but when it is viewed as upon the soul, it involves an activity of the soul. It cannot be said that man is passive in the change, because if there is a change it implies an activity. Nevertheless, in the origination of the change, or as to its efficient cause, man is not the agent. The Holy Spirit is the agent, but as soon as the Spirit quickens, there must be activity in the soul. This activity is repentance and conversion. These two things involve the use of means, for there is no repentance and conversion without the preaching of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. There is a connection between the Divine and human agency, and we cannot separate the two by some indefinite time lapse. When the soul is changed it immediately begins to act in the spiritual realm and engage in spiritual activity.

SOME DENY THE NEED OF REGENERATION

Liberal theologians, secular humanists, evolutionists, and globalists deny that man needs to be born again by the Holy Spirit. They believe that man by nature is good. Any radical change in the life of man who is essentially good, would be a change for the worse. They teach salvation by character. To them, regeneration is merely a natural forward step in man's development in the evolutionary process. Man does not need a radical change, as they see it, but he needs only to be trained to move upward. They have no concept of inborn sin and guilt as the Bible teaches.

I personally feel that Arminians are guilty of denying to a very large degree that man needs regeneration. If I understand their teaching, they are saying that man is sick and needs help. If man has the free will to choose holiness and the Lord as his portion, then he has no need of the grace of God or the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that man is spiritually dead and that he must be given spiritual life by God.

A MORAL CHANGE

The change in regeneration is of a moral nature. It is not a change in the substance of the mind, but in its disposition, its exercises and affections. First, it is a change in connection with seeing and entering the kingdom of God: **"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"** (John 3:5). The unregenerate man cannot understand, or enjoy, or enter into, or partake of the kingdom of God. No person can belong to the spiritual kingdom of God, or be one of His subjects, without a new birth. The kingdom of God is the setting up of God's throne in the sinner's heart, subduing his will to God's authority, and winning his affections to God's service. The term **"the kingdom of God"** implies a system of

♦ (Continued on page 109)

The Nature and

(Continued from page 108) ♦

moral government administered by God according to laws consistent with His nature and will.

Fallen man **"is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"** (Rom. 8:7). He is at enmity with God and cannot please God (Rom. 8:8). He cannot be an alien and a citizen at the same time. He cannot be an enemy and a friend at the same time. It would be impossible for God to admit an unregenerate person to His kingdom, for if He did so, He would be compelled to alter the whole character of His kingdom and rescind His moral law. This, God will never do. He will not deny Himself.

Second, regeneration is a change with respect to loving God. It is a transition from loving self and the world supremely to loving God and His kingdom and service supremely: **"...for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God"** (I John 4:7). The love of God was lost in the fall, but it is regained in regeneration. To repair the ruin of the fall, the Holy Spirit reproduces in the soul what was lost in the apostasy. Born-again Christians have no need to be ashamed, for **"the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost"** (Rom. 5:5). The existence of love in the heart is evidence of being born again by the Holy Spirit.

Holy love is what a sinner needs to qualify him for the exercise of every Christian grace and the performance of every Christian duty. From this reinspiring of holy affection in the soul proceeds repentance of sin, faith in Christ, joy in the Lord, and obedience to every Divine requirement. Supreme affection for God is the root from which all right feeling and conduct naturally spring. It expels selfishness and sin from the bosom, lifts the thoughts and desires of God and His kingdom, and leads to the cultivation of all the Christian graces and virtues.

Third, regeneration is a change with respect to overcoming the world: **"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"** (I John 5:4). The new birth imparts a new nature with a conquering principle. Any difficulty in obedience caused by the world--worldly feelings within or worldly opposition without--will be swept out of the way. The regenerate man goes on to victory and overcomes wholly in the end. The true believer is not overcome by the world. Instead, his faith in God makes him more than a conqueror through Christ.

Fourth, it is a change in doing righteousness: **"If we know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him"** (I

John 2:29). Every person regenerated by the Spirit goes about doing as Christ the righteous One does. He is acting out of his regenerate nature and new spiritual life. There can be no doing of righteousness until one receives a righteous nature which comes only in regeneration.

WHY THE CHANGE IS NEEDED

1. The character of man demands it: **"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"** (John 3:3). The need lies in man's natural degeneration. Jesus Christ said: **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"** (John 3:6). By **"flesh"** Christ meant the unrenewed nature of man, or man in his natural state, fallen, depraved, and selfish, or man subject to corrupt appetites and evil passions. That produced by natural generation is flesh, lacking holiness and spiritual life. The new birth is a necessity growing out of the sinful, depraved character of man. This is true of all men of every age and rank, of all born only of flesh or natural generation.

Man is conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5), he is **"a transgressor from the womb"** (Isa. 48:8), and he goes **"astray as soon as"** he is born, **"speaking lies"** (Ps. 58:3). **"...the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth"** (Gen. 8:21, and his heart is incurably wicked (Jer. 17:9). He is a corrupt tree which cannot bring forth good fruit (Matt. 7:18). Until he is quickened by the Holy Spirit, he is **"unto every good work reprobate"** (Tit. 1:16). Therefore, there is no cause of

wonder that fallen, sinful man must be regenerated before he can enter Heaven and dwell in God's holy presence.

2. The character of God demands it. Isaiah heard the seraphims around God's throne crying to each other: **"Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts"** (Isa. 6:3). The Prophet Habakkuk declared of God: **"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity"** (Hab. 1:13). How can two walk together except they be agreed? God is holy, so without holiness **"no man shall see the Lord"** (Heb. 12:14). Jesus Christ taught that only the pure in heart can see God (Matt. 5:8). How can man see God when his heart is desperately wicked?

Fallen man loves sin and hates holiness. God loves holiness and hates sin. How can persons of such contrary nature meet in friendship and fellowship? Is there not in truth no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness, no communion between light and darkness, no concord between the living God and a spiritually dead sinner? How can Heaven and Hell meet together on friendly terms? Has not sin alienated man from the life of God (Eph. 4:18)?

Man must undergo a radical change in his nature before he can be suitable for friendship and fellowship with God. He cannot be pure in heart until God gives him a new heart. He cannot be holy until he is quickened by the Holy Spirit and made a partaker of a new and holy nature. The new nature produced by the Spirit is **"created in righteousness**

and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). A fallen creature like man cannot perform good works until he is **"created in Christ Jesus unto good works"** (Eph. 2:10).

The natural man is not pleased with the character of God. He is too holy, too just, too righteous to satisfy the feelings of the human heart. Man does not like to retain God in his knowledge. God's commandments put a painful restraint upon him. Man naturally says unto God: **"Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of your ways."** By nature man has a strong aversion to the character and ways of God. He does not love to think of Him, nor pray to Him, nor submit to His authority, nor to obey His commandments. Such a person could not be happy in a kingdom where God reigns supreme. This is why man must be born again!

3. The work of Christ demands it. Jesus Christ came forth into human history that men might have spiritual life. In John 10:10 He said: **"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."** Christ laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:15) that they might have eternal life (John 10:28). There was no need for Christ to give His life unless man was without spiritual life. The advent of Christ was unnecessary unless man needed regeneration. The very voice of Christ's blood cries out for a change in man's nature.

4. The work of the Holy Spirit demands it: **"...what which is born of the Spirit is spirit...so is every one that is born of the Spirit"** (John 3:6, 8). **"It is the spirit that quickeneth"** (John 6:63). **"...for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life"** (II Cor. 3:6). **"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death"** (Rom. 8:2).

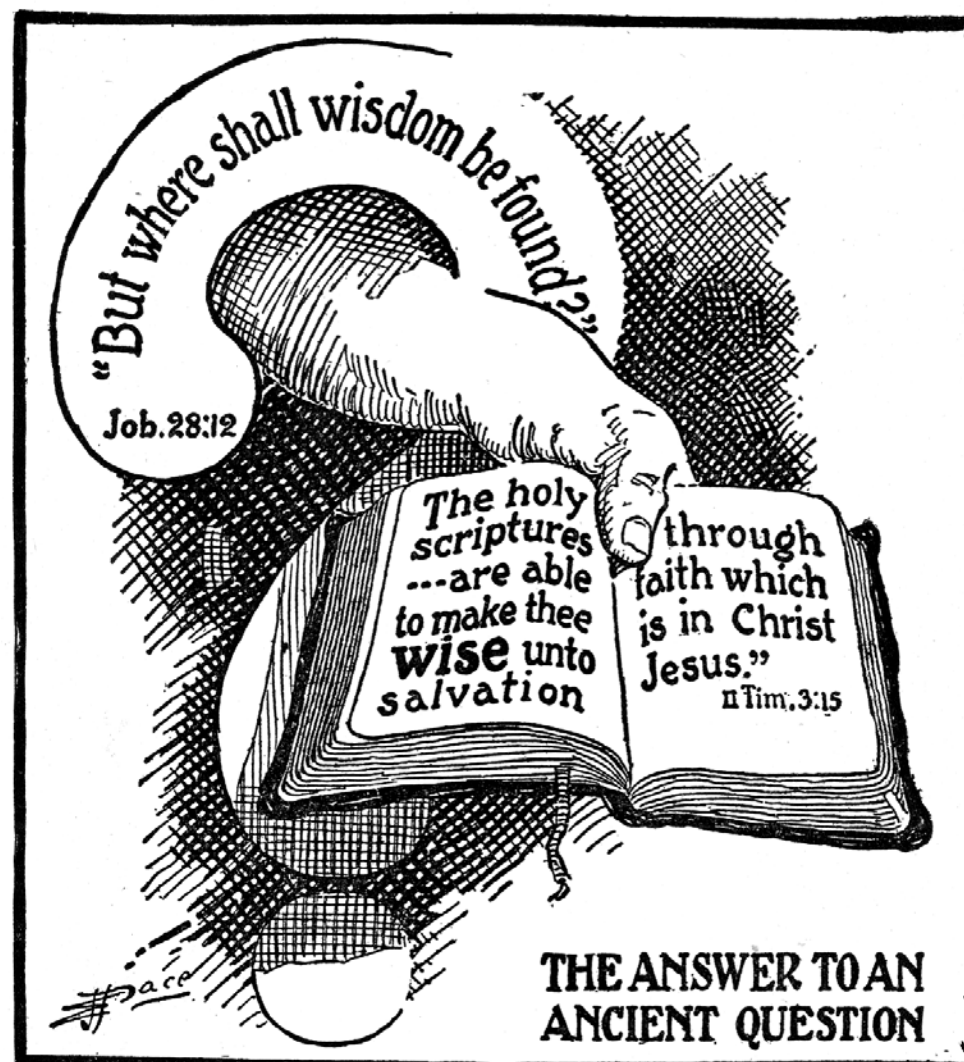
If man is not dead, cold, lifeless, motionless in respect to all spiritual realities of true religion and interest of eternity, why does the Spirit need to give him spiritual life? There would be no need for the Spirit to quicken a man if he already had spiritual life. Man must be born of the Spirit because he cannot enter into God's kingdom without a second birth!

5. The Word of God demands it: **"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again"** (John 3:7). The Spirit does not leave us in doubt as to the necessity of regeneration. John 3:7 leaves no room for exceptions. No matter what you are, or what you have, if you do not experience this change, you will be excluded from Heaven. You must be born again is the solemn, emphatic language of the Holy Scriptures. Better to never be born, than to live and die without being born again!

CONCLUSION

Don't be deceived by the Devil.

♦ (Continued on page 112)



The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. What is the armour of God spoken of in Ephesians 6:11?

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“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:13).

Stand for something or you will fall for anything. I have been instructed this all my life, from my parents to coaches, and most importantly my Bible. Strong doctrine is not bad, in fact it is very much the opposite. Strong doctrine saves you from many problems in your daily walk. Standing for these doctrines of grace will in fact strengthen your resolve to not only study but to defend them.

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3). Contending for the faith the elect of God are in need of the Gospel, the armour of God, to not only protect them but to be a weapon against attacks for the glory of God. **“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus”** (II Tim. 1:13).

To sum it all up, the gospel is the armour, our faith is the armour, and our prayers strengthen us to bear this armour because Jesus is our righteousness so therefore take unto you the whole armour and apply it to your everyday life child of God.

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“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words defines armour as translated from the Greek word *panoplia* describing “the spiritual helps supplied by God for overcoming the temptations of the Devil. Among the Greeks the *panoplia* was the complete equipment

used by heavily armed infantry.

God’s elect are likened metaphorically to soldiers who are called to serve the Captain of their salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. As soldiers they were chosen by the Father in electing grace before the world began (II Tim. 2:4; Eph. 1:4). They are effectually called and enlisted into service by the power of the Holy Spirit (II Thess. 2:13). The very moment they were called out of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ they were given the gifts of repentance and faith. Through the exercise of saving faith, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the righteousness of God is imputed to them. It is the eternal righteousness of Christ that is their essential armour that can never be abolished or taken away (Isa. 51:6, 8; Rom. 13:12, 14; II Cor. 6:7).

The *panoplia* or armour of God mentioned in our text are the spiritual weapons and graces employed by the saint of God to stand against the wiles of the devil. The battle we are engaged in is not physical, but spiritual as we war against principalities and powers in high places. Therefore the weapons of our warfare are spiritual. In order to stand against the wiles of the devil and his temptations we must daily employ the whole armour of God.

Our loins are to be girt about with **“truth”**, both doctrinally (as it relates to the faith once delivered) as well as personal practical honesty exercised daily as we walk before God and men. We must love the truth and walk honestly in the truth before God and man if we are to be effective soldiers (John 17:17; Rom. 13:13; I Thess. 4:12). We also must put on the **“breastplate of righteousness”** which is positional as well as practical. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ protects us from Satan’s attacks and the wrath of God. By virtue of imputed righteousness we are to practice sanctified righteousness from the heart demonstrated by good works as we serve the Lord (Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 2:7-15). Our feet are to be shod **“with the preparation of the gospel of peace”**, meaning that all of God’s children must take the message of grace with us wherever we go. Every good soldier is charged with sharing the Gospel with everybody within their sphere of influence (Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:16-18; I Cor. 1:17-21; 9:16). We are also to use the **“shield of faith”** to quench the fiery darts and assaults of Satan. To do this we must know and believe the essential doctrines of the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). We must also walk in personal faith as we embrace

the promises of God (I John 5:1-4). We are to daily put on the **“helmet of salvation”** which is the assurance of grace, as well as the hope of Christ’s coming to keep our minds from doubts and fears (I Thess. 5:8; Titus 2:11-15). We are to skillfully use the **“sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”** In order to be good soldiers we must read, study, memorize, meditate, and apply the principles of the inspired, inerrant Word if we are to gain victory over the enemy (Psa. 119:9-11; II Tim. 2:15; Col. 3:6). Finally, we must be fully engaged in communion with God **“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”** We must pray as we fight the forces of evil depending upon the power of God. We must pray for one another consistently if we are going to be strong collectively (Heb. 4:16).

Soldiers, there is much at stake! Let us awake from our slumber and be up and doing for the glory of the Captain of our salvation (Rom. 13:11-14). May God enable us to stand in the gap, enduring hardness as good soldiers, and courageously taking the message of the Gospel everywhere. We must be on the offensive! There are no back parts in the armour of God because we are to be pressing toward the mark, not retreating! May God stir us to a life of holy boldness in the service of our King!

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I believe the **“armor of God”** the **“whole armor”** (as stated in verses 14-17) is the divine and spiritual garment that God has given every Christian to put on to be able to stand **“in the evil day”** or days that are yet to come. If the reader would take notice Paul states in verse 12, **“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.”** Then in verse 13 he says, **“Wherefore”** (because; a reason or purpose for something) **“take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”**

The **“armor”** is for our protection as we **“stand against the wiles of the devil”** (v. 11). It is interesting to note that Paul doesn’t use the words, fight or battle but **“stand”**. So that tells me when coming up against the evil and wickedness of this world it is all we can do to **“stand”**...not

go backward, not go forward, but **“stand”**. It would be like being on a battlefield and set up a perimeter, and then stand and protect it. They used to build forts in a strategic area and stand and protect all four sides. Many forts were built on a sea cliff or rock side so they would only have to protect the front and not have to divide their forces to protect all four sides.

We won’t take the time here but I would encourage the reader to study the different parts of **“armor”** Paul advises us to put on:

1. Loins girt about with truth.
2. Breastplate of righteousness.
3. Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.
4. The shield of faith.
5. The helmet of salvation.
6. Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

7. And don’t forget the last one; **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”**

Many seem to forget prayer as being part of the **“armor”**, it is probably the most important, I believe.

I have always viewed the Christian as having four sides, the front, back, and the right and left side. And when we think we have everything protected we tend to get lax and drop our guard, and that’s when Satan fires the darts (v. 16). Notice **“darts”** is plural, it’s not just one dart, but many. God has given us all the tools we need, let us strive to **“stand”** for His honor and glory. May God give us all the grace to **“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”** God Bless!

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The armour of God is really a nifty picture of the enabling power of God. Very different from the hedge put around Job, **“Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land”** (Job 1:10). Selah! Think about it!

IF a Christian puts on the armour of God, then three times in this passage in Ephesians 6, it tells us that they will be ABLE to withstand or quench the attacks of the Devil, the evil days and wicked darts! (vs. 11, 13, 16) Thusly, the armour of God is a defensive mechanism from God that protects the Christian

◊ (Continued on page 112)

The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Why are pastors sometimes referred to as an undershepherd?

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The simplest answer is because God's churches are referred to as flocks and the collective saints are referred to as sheep! And sheep need shepherds! But why then is the pastor of a church referred to as an undershepherd? Because of 1 Peter 5:4! **"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."** Our LORD Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd and all the men of God who are called as bishops (or pastors) and elders are merely appointed keepers or overseers of the flock until the appearance of the Chief Shepherd to claim His sheep for eternity in glory! Wow! Selah! Think about it!

The fact that the pastors are called undershepherds is significant to me. It means that we are "under" someone else's Authority! **"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"** (Acts 20:28). We take note from this passage that the elders of the church are put into a position of authority by the Holy Ghost! God calls men to preach and ordains them to particular ministries, doesn't He? Let's illustrate this point a little...

Sometimes we make reference to the Johnstown Baptist Church in Kitts Hill, OH being Elder Pete Horn's church. Is that really true, in light of the fact that each and every local 'ekklesia' (the Greek word for assembly used in the NT) belongs to Jesus Christ? Matthew 16:18, **"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build MY CHURCH (mou ekklesia); and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"** (Matt. 16:18) (emphasis & Greek insert- TMS) So, it is IMPERATIVE for the beloved reader to understand that the Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Ceredo, WV is actually Jesus Christ's church! BUT, He has delegated the responsibility to shepherd that church to Elder John Fry. Elder Rex Smith is NOT the chief shepherd, but rather he is the undershepherd (a lesser shepherd) under the authority of Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd of the Midland Missionary Baptist Church in Franklin Furnace, OH!

So, what is the undershepherd ALLOWED to do? They do what regular shepherds do- feed the flock and lead the flock in safety, protecting them from the thieves and wolves. Selah! Think about it!

"The elders which are among you I exhort, ...Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. ...Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:7, 17).

"And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. ...The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:4, 13-15).

The last passage in John, is clearly the words of the Saviour, our Chief Shepherd, but we as undershepherds are to pattern our lives after Him. We ought to love and protect the sheep delegated unto our care with every fiber of our being! Joyfully giving our lives to His service and submitting to His will no matter where it takes us! "Preach the truth and love your people..." (that's from Elder Tom Ross!)

MATTHEW STEPP

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I don't believe anyone will argue Who our Shepherd is! Scriptures say He is my Shepherd, the good Shepherd, the one Shepherd, the great Shepherd, and the chief Shepherd.

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1).

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:14).

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. 13:20).

"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 5:4).

So without a doubt we can see that as the head of the church Jesus Christ is our one and only Shepherd. So by many, pastors are considered the undershepherd of the flock in the church. We would not presume to put ourselves equal to Him. However I have heard it preached both ways, and I believe that taking into consideration the words of Paul and Peter I can see that the pastor of churches could be considered shepherds or undershepherds of God's flock.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

"Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock" (1 Cor. 9:7)?

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (1 Pet. 5:2).

"Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3).

Pastors are to be overseers, examples, and to feed the flock...is that not a shepherd's responsibility? We have consulted several commentators for some clarification on these verses and they refer to the bishop or pastor as doing the work of a shepherd with Christ being the Chief Shepherd. Also we can find no account in all of Holy Writ the word undershepherd. Most of all the Old Testament Scriptures that have the word shepherd makes reference to the Lord as that shepherd except Zechariah who gives a warning for the shepherds of God's flock:

"Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened" (Zech. 11:17).

"Awake, O sword, against my

shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones" (Zech 13:7).

Here is W.E. Vine's definition of a pastor: "a shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks (not merely one who feeds them), is used metaphorically of Christian "pastors," Eph. 4:11. Pastors guide as well as feed the flock; cp. Acts 20:28, which, with ver. 17, indicates that this was the service committed to elders (overseers or bishops); so also in I Peter 5:1, 2, "tend the flock...exercising the oversight," R.V.; this involves tender care and vigilant superintendence."

It has only been recent that we heard one preach that pastors are undershepherds, until then I'd never heard that term. So I guess it is how a pastor views himself as an overseer of the Lord's flock, which we have no problem. For myself, I give God all the glory anyway for everything and the Lord Jesus Christ is my Shepherd and I have no problem being referred to as the undershepherd of His flock. God Bless!

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The word undershepherd is never used in Scripture, however it is implied in the pastoral work of Christ's ministers. Jesus Christ is referred to as the **"good Shepherd"** who gave His life for the sheep and called them by His grace (John 10:11, 14, 27). The Lord Jesus is also referred to as the **"great shepherd"** of the sheep who shed the blood of the everlasting covenant and raised from the dead on behalf of His elect (Heb. 13:20). Jesus is also referred to as **"the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls...the chief Shepherd"** (1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4). The term Shepherd as it relates to Christ refers to His care, compassion, love, protection, provision, and preservation of the elect.

Pastors are sometimes referred to as undershepherds because they have been called by Christ to care for, lead, and feed the flock of God. They are called undershepherds because they are under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to minister in His name. Thus, they are not to act on their own authority, but always under the authority and direction of Christ and His Church. Christ's ministers are Divinely called and appointed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). They have been set apart by the call of the Spirit and ordained by the church to do the work of the Lord (Acts

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Forum #1

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from evil. But, the Apostle Paul is careful to tell us that this armour does not come standard, or built in... We MUST appropriate this armour and claim it for ourselves! Selah! Think about it!

Let's look at this armour to see of what it is constructed...

1) The belt of truth- What does truth protect us from? Why, it protects us from lies and the deceitful words and actions of men. If we have the truth clasped close to our bosom, we will have protection from being deceived and ensnared by the Devil's wiles. Truth keeps us rooted in the reality of our spiritual warfare and thereby not be sidetracked by the temporal things of this life that seem so real to the carnal mind.

2) The breastplate of righteousness- What does righteousness protect us from? Unrighteousness involves iniquity and sins, both committed or omitted. Having this rigid plate of righteousness covering our heart's desires will keep us always right, or correct; always morally God-like (godly). We will have no worries and none of that plaguing guilt in a world of Godly order and holy stability!

3) The boots of the preparation of the gospel- I like the word shod, as used here. It reminds me of the blacksmith as he puts horseshoes on the hooves of the horse, because you know that he's going to have to leave the soft, green pasture and go out into the hard, rocky world- and he's going to need protection! So, what does the readiness of the Gospel protect us from? If we put on the zeal and diligence of the burden of the Gospel, it will protect us from cold hearts and slothful, indifferent souls! It will give a purpose to our feet and direct our souls into the realm of hope and ardor for lost and foundering souls! Selah! Think about it!

4) The shield of faith- What does faith protect us from? **"Above all"** says the Apostle! Certainly we need protections from the **"fiery darts of the wicked"**, but we need to know those deadly barbs are shafts of unbelief, fear, and insecurity! Faith will give us trust in God, obedience to His Holy Word and submission to His will in our daily walk. What lies ahead of each Christian? I don't know, but God surely does! So let's hold our shield in front of us and labor on!

5) The Helmet of Salvation- That's an interesting thought, isn't it? Salvation as a protective mechanism? We usually think of salvation as the work of God to deliver us from Hell on the cross of Calvary. But, what does salvation protect us from? Well, firstly it keeps judgment from coming down on our head! "Not that one," Christ will intercede, "that's my helmet of salvation upon her head!" Salvation CONTINUES to turn us into

new creatures with new desires and actions, and so the helmet of salvation also protects us from ourselves and the pride that might surge into our minds as God enables success in our lives.

6) The sword of the Spirit- Many times we comment that this is the Christian's only offensive piece of armour. And rightly so, but it is also a defensive instrument as the Word of God protects us from ignorance and temptations in times of trials. It beautifully accentuates each of the other segments of armour by strengthening our faith, edifying our salvation, empowering the Gospel and rightly dividing the truth!

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand... ..Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:10-11, 18).

MATTHEW STEPP



Forum #2

(Continued from page 111) ♦

13:1-3). Christ's ministers are to prove their love by faithfully feeding the sheep the pure Word of God (John 21:15-17). If they are faithful in declaring the whole counsel of God and preaching the Gospel they will be rewarded by the Lord for their pastoral work (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

May God help every God called pastor to follow the holy example of the Great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. May God burden our hearts for the lost and share the Gospel with them with the same evangelistic zeal our Savior displayed during His earthly ministry. May God help us to care for, love, lead, and feed the Lord's elect with a renewed passion and zeal.

TOM ROSS

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Good question. I have only heard this description once or twice, or it may just be I never really paid attention to it before. I can only surmise that it means one who feeds the sheep in the churches such as the pastors of churches.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Overseers may be a more Biblical name, or pastor is

a good one, too. Looking at the definition of bishop, overseer, and pastor reveals they have the same meaning and that is to tend to the flock which they have been made to be over.

MIKE DEWITT



The Nature and

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Being baptized in water by authorized hands by some preacher or priest is not regeneration. Regeneration is an internal change in the soul of man. What can water on the outside do to cleanse the soul on the inside? Absolutely nothing whatever! Judas and Simon Magus were both baptized and both went to Hell. If baptism did not keep these two out of Hell, how can it keep you out? Multitudes have been baptized and are still irreligious, prayerless persons. Thousands of baptized church members remain strangers to regenerating grace; they are unrenewed, they are unpardoned enemies of God and Christ!

Have you been born again? Have you undergone a radical change necessary to entering Heaven? A change by which the whole disposition of the soul is altered? Have you experienced the washing of regeneration, the renewing of the Holy Spirit? Have you the love of God dwelling in your heart, so that you are pleased with God's character and delight in His ways? Without this, all other advantages are nothing; all other recommendations are of no avail. Without regeneration you must be separated forever from the kingdom of Heaven.

No one is exempt from this great change. People, preachers, priests, and popes must experience it. There is no substitute for this change of heart. This alone can bring repentance of sin, faith in Christ, delight in God, joy in Christian service, and preparation for the holy kingdom above. Have you been born again? Your eternity turns on this single point, for except you are regenerated by the Spirit of God, you can never behold His face in righteousness.



And They Preached

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families. Don't misunderstand what I am saying, these churches were not perfect, but I do believe they, at least, had this much right, they knew the Gospel and what they were to do with it. Normally when I take a text I like to give the historical, geographical, and theological background, but, for the purpose of this article I want to just focus on what this verse says, and apply it to us.

I. **"...there"** Where are we to minister the Gospel of Christ? **"There"** (in the

community) where God has placed us. I am thankful for missionaries, and I am thankful for the churches that support them. As a matter of fact, most of my ministry I have done missionary work (including where I am now). What I am getting ready to state is not meant to sound arrogant, and I hope it does not come off that way, but too many churches are carrying out the great commission by proxy. They think that if they send hundreds, or even thousands of dollars to missionaries, then their obligation has been met. It is this attitude that is responsible for many churches perishing and no longer existing. Please dear pastor and church, read carefully what I am saying, if you don't reach your community right **"there"** where God has placed you, then eventually your church will die and that will be one place less for a missionary to receive support from. It will be one place less where the saints can be instructed and edified, and it will be one less place where God will receive glory on this sin cursed earth! Am I saying drop all your missionaries and focus only where you are at? No, but I am saying preach the Gospel every opportunity you have to friends, family, coworkers, class mates, team mates, neighbors, etc, etc. Remember Acts 1:8, **"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."** The Scripture states we will be **"witnesses unto me BOTH (emphasis T.M.) in Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth."** So while we do help and send missionaries to other places don't neglect home.

II. **"They"** Who are they? Obviously this was Paul and those with him, but they were sent by the church at Antioch to start a church, so I do not believe that we are doing an injustice by making application to the local church. The Lord's churches were commissioned in Mark 16:15, To **"preach the gospel to every creature."** We have already seen the Lord commanded them to preach the Gospel everywhere (Acts 1:8). You know what I find in the Scriptures, and in particular the book of Acts, that the early church and God's people were doing a lot of? They were passionately preaching the Gospel of Christ; this is paramount to understanding the priority of the early church. Consider this, the Gospel was so important Christ preached it (Matthew 9:35), He commissioned His New Testament churches to preach it (Matthew 28:16-20), and the act of baptism pictures it (Romans 6). The Lord's churches were not concerned with preaching to the heathen church truth, Lord's Supper, baptism or even election. Not at all, they were focused on preaching

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And They Preached

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the Gospel of Christ to the lost, and after people were saved, they taught them the meatier doctrines of God's Word. I find it disturbing when I read a mission report from amongst our brethren and they talk about teaching every doctrine under the sun except for the doctrine of the Gospel of Christ! This is a perversion of God's order. Folks, many of our churches, and dare I say even some missionaries, would be rather upset if someone called them a hardshell, and if you read their doctrinal statements they would not be hardshell, but these same folks will not go to their surrounding community, family, friends, or coworkers and at the very least invite them to church. If that is not a practicing hardshell, then please tell me what is.

III. **"The gospel"** What is the Gospel? First of all the word "gospel" is defined as "good news," or "glad tidings." When we say we are to preach the Gospel what we mean is we are to tell others the "good news" that Christ came to save sinners. How many times do we preach that **"... all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,"** and we leave it there? We can't just give the lost the bad news only of their depravity, we must follow up with the "good news" of Christ's sacrifice. This brings us to something else to consider. What is the good news about?

To understand what the good news is about let's consider a few things. First of all, let's consider this negatively (what it's not) and then positively (what it is). Now consider this negatively, what it is not. The Gospel is not baptism. As we stated earlier in this article under point two that baptism does picture the Gospel but it is not the Gospel. For further proof we need go no farther than I Corinthians 1:17, **"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."** Paul's statement was not that baptism is not important; it was that baptism was not his emphasis.

This brings us to another thought, the Gospel is not election. Nowhere in God's Word do we see that election saves us, but we see that election is unto salvation. Acts 13:48 can be used to explain this, **"...as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."** The Gentiles spoken of here were ordained to eternal life, this literally means they were assigned, designated, arranged in an orderly manner to be saved. Notice they did believe, but they were ordained (appointed, designated) to believe. You can be the elect and not be saved yet, but you can't be saved and not been elected. I am going to state my opinion based on a relatively short ministry. In my ministry (17 years preaching), I have noticed that so many people are trying to figure out

who the elect of God are, they forget about what God has told them to do. Spurgeon put it best when he said, "If all the elect of God had a yellow stripe down their back all we would need to do is go around lifting shirt tails." God's elect does not have an "E" branded on their foreheads nor do they have a yellow stripe down their back. We best remember the Old Testament Scripture, **"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law"** (Deut. 29:29). I will leave who God is going to save to God; I am only responsible to proclaim the Gospel to anyone that I have opportunity to.

So this now brings us to the positive aspect of this, what is the Gospel of Christ? We need to look no farther than I Corinthians 15:1-4, **"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."** Things are so much simpler to understand when we let God's Word speak for itself. The Gospel of Christ is His finished work! Christ does not need to do anything else, it is finished, it is complete! What Paul is saying can be summed up like this. Jesus' death, His burial and His coming forth from the grave is the Gospel. You see, if all we had was Christ born, and He never died, then we don't have the blood atonement. If we don't have Christ shedding His blood on the cross, being placed in a borrowed tomb, and victoriously coming out of His tomb, then we have the exact same kind of religion as Buddhism, Islam or any number of other religions that worship a dead leader. However, we as God's people have a resurrected Saviour that has overcome death, Hell, and the grave!

Dear friends, as we bring this to a close, please don't misunderstand why I write this. Our desire is not to diminish the great doctrines of God's Word such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, church authority, or the blessed truth of God's sovereignty in salvation. No, it is to remind us of the preeminence of Christ in our preaching, and in particular, His Gospel. Remember, brethren, that while we are Baptist preachers by conviction that we are gospel preachers by necessity. **"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"** (I Cor. 9:16).



THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

WHO'S THE BULLY?

(WNS)--Gay anti-bullying and anti-hate speech activist Dan Savage delivered remarks to a national journalism conference in Seattle when he launched into some hate speech of his own, against Christianity. Savage said "people [use] the Bible as an excuse for gay bullying." When a group of high school students walked out on the speech, Savage engaged in a bit of bullying of his own: he singled them out and called them "pansies." Savage is no stranger to controversy. When conservative activist Gary Bauer ran for president, he licked the door handles of Bauer's campaign headquarters in an effort to give Bauer and his staff the flu.

GAY AND STRAIGHT VOICES IN THE MEDIA

(WNS)-- The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) released a study last month saying that pro-homosexual voices are "under-represented in the mainstream media. The study says that "national television and print news media [display] a disproportionate reliance on anti-LGBT religious voices commenting on LGBT people and issues. Three out of four religious messages came from people whose religions have formal policies opposing LGBT equality." This study, however, doesn't take into account that almost all religious traditions say homosexual behavior is immoral, so 25 percent of "religious messages" being pro-homosexual is actually a dramatic over-representation of this viewpoint. The report is particularly hard on evangelicals: "Whenever LGBT issues are discussed by religious voices in national media," the report says, "outlets disproportionately quote or interview Evangelical Christian individuals (34 percent) and organizations (50 percent) and the messages from those sources were overwhelmingly negative (76 percent)."

FAITH A FACTOR IN STUDENT SUCCESS

(WNS)--William Jaynes, a professor at California State University, discovered two common denominators for academic success among minority students -- an active personal faith and a strong family unit. Because of the importance faith plays in minority communities, taking the Bible out of the classroom actually makes it harder for minority students to succeed. "African American and Latino children are the most disadvantaged by the absence of the Bible in public schools," said Jaynes, a professor at California State University. Why do an active

faith and a strong family make a difference? The effect is due in part to the strength the children draw from religion and in part to parental involvement, Jaynes said.

GEORGIA PASSES TWO PRO-LIFE LAWS

(WNS)--Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal signed into law bills banning late-term abortions and making it a felony to assist in suicides. Perhaps the most significant of the new laws is The Pain-Capable Unborn Child Act, which takes effect on Jan. 1, 2013. It will move Georgia from having one of the most liberal abortion policies nationwide to becoming a state with one of the strictest. Currently, abortions may be obtained in the state for almost any reason throughout the entire pregnancy. Under the new law, abortions cannot be performed after the twentieth week of pregnancy. The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) estimates that change will save as many as 1,500 babies annually.

MR. MOM MORE PREVALENT

(WNS)--More fathers are becoming their children's primary caregiver. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 32 percent of fathers who have a wife in the workforce took care of their kids at least one day a week in 2010. That's up from 26 percent in 2002. CNN Money reported: "Of those with kids under the age of 5, 20 percent of dads in 2010 were the primary caretaker." One of the reasons for the increase is the recession. "It's a combination of mothers going to work and fathers being out of work as a result of the recession," said Lynda Laughlin, a family demographer at the Census Bureau. Another reason for the increase in fathers as primary caregivers is the closing of the wage gap between the genders. CNN Money: "In 2008, 26 percent of women living in dual-income households had annual earnings that were at least 10 percentage points higher than their spouse."

AIR FORCE GROUNDS BIBLES

(WNS)--The National Prayer Caucus says that the Air Force will no longer require Air Force Inns to have Bibles in their rooms. According to a statement released by the group, "After receiving a complaint by the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers (MAAF), the Air Force will remove "Is a Bible provided?" from the checklist that staff at Air Force Inns use when ensuring that rooms comply with lodging

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Bible & the Newspaper

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standards.” Air Force Inns are temporary lodging facilities found at most major Air Force installations. An Air Force official said, “After a legal review, the Air Force Services Agency determined that there was no legal reason to have the question on the lodging checklist.” Bibles are placed in Air Force Inn rooms by the Gideons, at no cost to the government.

MINNESOTA SENATE MOVES TO LICENSE ABORTION CENTERS

(WNS)--On Apr. 18, the Minnesota Senate passed a bill on a 43-23 vote, requiring centers that conduct 10 or more abortions per month to be licensed and inspected by the state. “We haven’t had a good vote in the Minnesota Senate like this in a long time on an issue like abortion,” said Sen. Claire Robling, the bill’s sponsor. “I worked very hard to make this a reasonable bill. I think when the public realizes that we have no health department inspection or licensing of abortion clinics, they are shocked. They just assume that they would be. It’s an invasive procedure, and there are so many risks.” Senate File 1921 was written in response to an egregious situation drug-enforcement officers found in Pennsylvania in 2011. Kermit Gosnell’s Philadelphia abortion clinic had gone uninspected for years — but when officers investigating him for illegally distributing prescription drugs finally entered his building, they found fetal remains in trash bags, unsanitary equipment, and a facility that reeked of cat urine. SF 1921 is on its way to the House of Representatives.

MISSISSIPPI GOVERNOR SIGNS ABORTIONIST-CERTIFICATION BILL

(WNS)--Gov. Phil Bryant signed a bill Apr. 16 making Mississippi the first state to require abortionists to be board-certified obstetrician-gynecologists with admitting privileges at hospitals close to their clinics. The state has only one abortion clinic — the Jackson Women’s Health Organization, where only one of the four doctors on staff has admitting privileges at a local hospital. It could be forced to close under the new law. “I believe that all human life is precious, and as governor, I will work to ensure that the lives of the born and unborn are protected in Mississippi,” Bryant said when signing the bill, HB 1390. The law takes effect July 1.

ARIZONA GOVERNOR SIGNS MORE PRO-FAMILY LEGISLATION

(WNS)--Family advocates had a lot to celebrate on Apr. 18, when Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer signed into law three pieces of legislation protecting life, religious freedom and taxpayer funding of arts programs. Under an amendment attached to HB 2265, no state dollars will go toward funding obscene art. HB 2627 decrees that abortion providers cannot qualify for a tax credit

given to the working poor, and SB 1359 bans anyone in the state from filing a “wrongful cause of life” lawsuit against doctors who fail to diagnose birth defects in preborn children that might lead parents to have abortions. Brewer also signed a bill allowing schools to offer an elective course on the Bible as literature.

IS DEATH PENALTY DYING?

(WNS)--The campaign to abolish the death penalty is getting new life. On Apr. 25, Gov. Dannel Malloy, a Democrat, signed a bill repealing the death penalty in Connecticut. A separate proposal has qualified for the November ballot in California that would shut down the largest death row in the country and convert inmates’ sentences to life without parole. A new study by the National Research Council said there have been no reliable studies to show that capital punishment is a deterrent to homicide. And last fall a Gallup Poll found support for the death penalty had slipped to 61 percent nationally, the lowest level in 39 years. Even Texas is having second thoughts: the state’s 13 executions in 2011 marked the lowest number in 15 years. Among the reasons for the shift in attitude is cost. According to Los Angeles District Attorney Gil Garcetti, the current system is “obscenely expensive.” According to USA Today, “In the past 34 years in California, just 13 people have been executed as part of a system that costs \$184 million per year to maintain.”

“He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death” (Ex. 21:12).

PRESIDENT OBAMA ANNOUNCES SUPPORT FOR SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

(WNS)--On the heels of a landslide victory for a traditional marriage amendment in North Carolina, President Obama announced in a May 9 interview with ABC News that he now personally supports same-sex marriage. The announcement was practically forced upon the president a few days after Vice President Joe Biden said that he supported gay marriage. Biden’s comments made the question of the president’s position on the issue perennial in White House press briefings. “I’d hesitated on gay marriage in part because I thought civil unions would be sufficient,” Obama said. “And I was sensitive to the fact that for a lot of people the word ‘marriage’ was something that invokes very powerful traditions, religious beliefs, and so forth.” Obama cited his and his wife Michelle’s Christian faith as his reason for personally supporting same-sex marriage.

“The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves” (Isa. 3:9).

BLACK PASTORS SPEAK.

(WNS)--The Coalition of African-American Pastors (CAAP) wrote President Obama a letter last week asking him to

reconsider his stand on same-sex marriage. “We cannot and will not remain silent while marriage, the most fundamental institution in our—and any—nation, is undermined by our own president while using Christian language and relating it to civil rights,” they wrote. The CAAP also is taking issue with the “unacceptable” way gay activists continually link their issues with the civil-rights movement. “For activists, politicians—and now the highest office in the nation to link sexual behavior God calls sin to the righteous cause Martin Luther King gave his life for is abominable in and of itself,” the Rev. William Owens Sr., CAAP’s founder and president, wrote in a statement. “There is no civil right to do what God calls wrong.”

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS UNITED METHODISTS UNITED ON ISRAEL

(WNS)--Delegates to the governing body of the global 12 million-member United Methodist Church this week voted 685 to 246 to reject divestment from three companies doing business with Israel. The move follows a high profile lobbying campaign by pro-divestment activists. United Methodist Kairos Response (UMKR) argued that the United Methodist General Conference should instruct the denomination’s pension board to sell investments in Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard and Motorola Solutions. UMKR argued that the three companies profit from Israel’s military presence in the West Bank. Mark Tooley of the Institute for Religion and Democracy praised the Methodists, calling divestment “simplistic” and “anti-Israel.” The Presbyterian Church (USA) plan a similar vote in June. Referring to that vote, Tooley said, “Hopefully other churches will follow United Methodists in resisting calls to pressure Israel alone into making concessions.”

“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3).

GLOBAL WARMING? POLAR BEARS SAY BRING IT ON

(WNS)--You may have heard that global warming is destroying polar bear habitat and the population of the bears is falling

dramatically. Only problem is: It’s not true, at least the polar bear part of that equation. According to an article in the “Globe and Mail,” a recent study has produced a “healthy polar bear count [that] confounds doomsayers.” According to the article, “The number of bears along the western shore of Hudson Bay, believed to be among the most threatened bear subpopulations, stands at 1,013 and could be even higher. That’s 66 per cent higher than estimates by other researchers who forecasted the numbers would fall to as low as 610 because of warming temperatures that melt ice faster and ruin bears’ ability to hunt. The Hudson Bay region, which straddles Nunavut and Manitoba, is critical because it’s considered a bellwether for how polar bears are doing elsewhere in the Arctic.”

“...that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth” (Gen. 8:17).

JORDAN BANS ISLAMIST POLITICAL PARTIES

(WNS)--Jordan’s lower house of parliament has voted to ban the Muslim Brotherhood, voting 83-46 to prevent the establishment of any political party on a “religious basis.” The move would block Islamist parties from running in upcoming elections. If the measure wins expected upper house approval, it would disqualify the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the Muslim Brotherhood’s political party, from taking part in parliamentary elections. Libya’s National Transitional Council also took steps in April to ban religious parties, ahead of June elections, and Egypt has disqualified some religious candidates in upcoming elections.

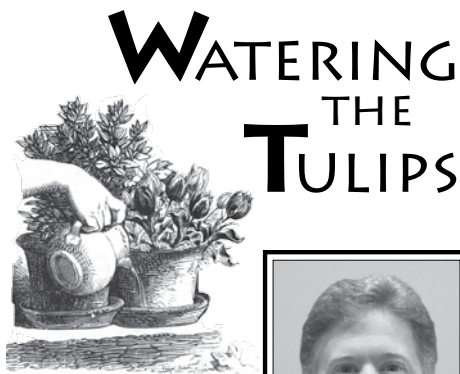
BEWARE BLASPHEMY IN KUWAIT

(WNS)--Kuwait’s parliament on May 3 passed a law making blasphemy punishable by death and broadening the definition for the offense. Under it, cursing Allah, the prophet Muhammad, his wives, other key Islamic figures, or the Quran became capital offenses. The Gulf nation and U.S. ally has a majority Muslim population, with about 14 percent Christians—many of them expatriate workers.



DID YOU KNOW?

The O’Kasional family said they would be back sometime next month. Mr. And Mrs. Faint Hearted have given up again. They come and go, but mostly go. The Plez R. Seekers were at the park on the picnic and got home just too late to come to church last Sunday evening. Mrs. N. O. Excuse didn’t have a thing to wear to Sunday school, but she made it to work Monday. The Spineless sisters had someone to drop in at 6:00 p.m. and they didn’t want to tell them that they were on the way to evening services. Mr. And Mrs. T. V. Addick and children couldn’t miss the special program Sunday evening. Mr. Spas Modic didn’t feel like coming to prayer meeting Wednesday night. Of course, the D. E. Pendable family was in all the services.



By Todd Bryant
of
Northport, Alabama



Plumb Line

“Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the LORD, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more” (Amos 7:7-8).

The picture painted here is simple enough for us. God’s standard does not waver to the right or left. He is righteous and always will be. He doesn’t change (Mal. 3:6) because He has no need to change. God’s standard for man remains consistent. Whether men believe it or not, all will be judged by God and the standard will be a righteous one.

Those familiar with carpentry know the importance of a plumb line. Carpenters use the plumb line to make sure that walls and foundations are even and right. Without the plumb, a building may not have right angles in the corners. The use of a plumb line makes sure that the building is quality. God’s use of a plumb line shows how perfect God’s judgment is.

By what standard will man be judged? Simply, we will be judged by God’s righteous standard. Many wrongly believe that they are working themselves into favor with God by keeping the 10 commandments, in their mind. However, Galatians 3:10 says, **“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.”**

Judgment is not about your good outweighing your bad. James 2:10 says, **“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”** If you have broken the law once, you are condemned. If we are honest, we know we have all broken it numerous times. But, once makes you guilty. So, nobody reading this will make it into Heaven based on your works. It’s impossible. The Law is too strict. The plumb line does not waver!

So, what are we, as humans, to do? Certainly, God’s standard is not changing. It is as consistent today as it has always been. The world’s standards may have dropped, but God’s have not. Wonderfully, God **“hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead”** (Acts 17:31). Simply enough, the lost will be judged by the Law and will be condemned to eternal punishment. Believer’s sins were paid for by Jesus at Calvary. Therefore, we will be declared righteous at the judgment.

Do you trust in Christ alone today? He is certainly man’s only hope because the plumb line still describes the standard! If you are trusting in your works, you are not plumb.



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thou have me to do?”

Good question that Saul asks, eh? In the future, he’ll become the Apostle Paul, but he is saved at this point---just a new convert named Saul of Tarsus. His acknowledgement of Jesus as God and Sovereign is evidence of that radical conversion from persecutor to believer and adherent. Does he know everything? No. Certainly not. What he needs is the same thing Peter preached at Pentecost. **“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”** (Acts 2:38). Okay, Saul has repented and believed, now where is he going to go to get that baptism? Where is he going to get the gift of the Holy Ghost? To be added to the Lord’s church? Well, that is what verse 6 is all about. **“And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”**

I like that verse! It’s the most important verse that could have followed. . . 1) Saul was saved and going to Heaven! But. . . 2) He’d just been drawn by the irresistible grace of God---imparted with life everlasting and the joy to go with it! But. . . 3) He loved the Lord and wanted to serve Him and Him alone! But, **“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”** was his first words as a saved Christian! And glory be to God, he’s not left in the dark (spiritually, because he was struck blind physically!) **“And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”**

God was working on both ends, wasn’t He? He was actually the One that had ordained from before the foundation of the world that Saul would head toward Damascus, looking for Christians to

persecute! And now, after He’s saved this miserable wretch, He has the pastor of the church at Damascus at the ready! Let’s keep reading, **“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized”** (Acts 9:10-12, 17-18).

Marvelous, marvelous story! One that I will enjoy for all of eternity! It’s a story of salvation, and that is wondrous enough in itself, but the Lord never saves anyone, just for the sake of rescuing them from Hell. He saves us to live for Him! And that phrase in verse six that struck me **“And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do”** ---is not the only time it is used! In fact, it will be used in the very next chapter as God continues to work among His elect people! Let’s look at it.

Speaking to Cornelius, an angel proclaims the Word of God! Acts 10:5-6: **“And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.”** Just as Saul was sent to Ananias to be told **“what thou must do”**, so, too, was Cornelius to send men to the Apostle Peter to be told **“what thou oughtest to do.”**

So who is this Cornelius? And why was God going to send an apostle unto him? What great portentous message was going to be delivered? Well let’s study this together and find out!

Acts 10:1-4: **“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth our of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before**

God.” Okay, as we examine Cornelius in these verses, I believe we must come to the conclusion that he knew God. Not that he knew about God, but that he had a saving knowledge of God!

I know a lot of folks, either by assumption or conviction, believe that Cornelius was saved here in this chapter by the witness of God’s apostle, so I’m not going to be dogmatic or anything. But, I will say, one has to do a lot of backtracking to get around these verses. And I mean A LOT! I mean, he is called a devout man! He feared God! He lived a life of charity and vision and told him that He (God) was going to “reward” the prayers and alms that had been coming from this transformed fellow. Beloved reader, I don’t have a problem at all with him being a saved Jew.

Actually, go back with me 50-100 years before the time of Christ, Cornelius and the Apostle Peter, and that’s all you’ve got---saved Jews! God’s always got a people! And really, probably the majority of Jews didn’t live in Judea, or even Palestine. Esther 8:17: **“And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.”** Even in the time of Esther, Jews were everywhere and in every province of the secular nations of this world and time.

Further, as you come into the first century AD, it’s the same scenario. Acts 2:5-11: **“And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.”** These scattered Jews had come from these many diverse places to worship God properly at Jerusalem! Some from desires to follow tradition, but many also came (like Joseph and Mary), to fulfill their obligations as disciples of the Hebrew God! As saved members of the children of Israel! Beloved, there was not a time of such terrible darkness that the light had completely gone out! Zacharias and Elizabeth **“...were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments**

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and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Luke 1:6).

This would fulfill God’s promise to preserve His people around the world in Ezekiel 11:16-20: **“Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, . . . And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.”**

As the early missionaries went out from the churches in that first century, they went (as the Apostle Paul was wont) to Jewish synagogues and preached unto them Jesus. Some were certainly already saved (like Lydia and the women praying in Philippi in Acts 16, but they were saved OT-wise, looking forward to the Messiah (like Adam and Abram). To these folk, the missionaries revealed that the Messiah had come (Jesus) and they believed! And were baptized into His churches. Acts 16:12-15: **“And from thence to Philippi. . . And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”** Most of the time when we read that God is working on hearts, we automatically think of salvation by grace! But if you carefully read the passage, you’ll note that just like Cornelius, Lydia (and the other ladies) were already worshipping God the only way they knew how! I’ve been told that Philippi, being a Roman colony in that part of Grecian Macedonia, didn’t have, or even allow synagogues for God’s people (the Jews). So that would explain both the meeting on the river and the focus of the Apostle Paul’s first contact.

How marvelous that the Apostle Paul and his co-laborers were sent by God to this little sanctuary in Macedonia to

gather His elect people into His precious church! And touched Lydia’s heart as He did so many on this missionary journey of the Apostle Paul and Silas! **“That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God”** (Ezek. 11:20).

But notice further that when Lydia’s heart was opened, the Scriptures do not quote any confession of salvation, but they do say **“that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And. . . she was baptized, and her household”!** She then claims merit based upon her faithful works to constrain them to stay with her hospitality! Baptism and church membership are the obedient works of a servant that seeks her Master’s will!

Obviously, from the context of the book of Acts, many of the Jewish synagogues were just as certainly filled with lost Jews (Thessalonica, for example). These rebellious Jews were the crucifiers of Christ and the constant persecutors of the early churches and saints. Fearlessly, the apostles and saints proclaimed the Gospel unto every synagogue, and some of these lost Jews were converted at this time and then they were baptized also into the church. Acts 17:1-5: **“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them; and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.”**

So, if such was the case of Cornelius, that’s fine with me. A saved “Jew.” But Scripture says even more, that he already knew about Jesus. After all, Paul before Festus and Agrippa said, **“For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner”** (Acts 26:26). I think everybody in Palestine had heard of Jesus Christ. Some to the saving of their souls; some just as a news feature. (Just like here in America! Everybody knows about Jesus, but very few KNOW Jesus!)

But Peter goes beyond that and says that Cornelius knew Christ and the Gospel. Acts 10:34-37: **“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter**

of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) THAT WORD, I say, ye know. . .” (Emphasis TMS). Cornelius already knew the Gospel of the reconciliation of Jesus Christ! Peter knew he was familiar with that. That much is made clear in our text.

But what to do with it now? Why did God send an apostle to Cornelius? This is where the 10th chapter of Acts becomes a powerful text for the Lord’s church. That’s the whole focus of the chapter. Not that “Gentiles can be saved.” But that “Gentiles can become church members!” That’s why you have the third instance of Holy Spirit baptism. Not because of salvation, but to again put His mark of validation on His church. That’s why the Apostle Peter commanded Scriptural water baptism for them. And he didn’t do it himself, he had the brethren from the First Baptist Church of Joppa do it. This was going to be their home mission to teach and take care of.

Let’s look at the evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:11: **“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.”** Okay, John the Baptist’s prophecy was that Jesus Christ would be doing the baptizing (not the Holy Spirit, as so many Charismatics have heretically claimed! The Holy Spirit is the element of the baptism, not the administrator). So when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, what was the purpose of the Holy Spirit baptism? Why, it was to validate this assembly as Christ’s ekklesia! (Greek for church or called-out congregation). Just as the Shekinah Glory of God had marked the Jews as God’s people since the time of the fiery pillow and mighty cloud of the Exodus, so, too, did God mark His place of habitation where men were to come and worship! (see Exodus 40:34 for the tabernacle and I Kings 8:10 for the temple.)

The second Holy Spirit baptism in the New Testament is found in Acts 8. Again, it is clear that the Samaritans were already believers and Philip had even baptized them with water into the church he had authority from---Jerusalem (Acts 8:12). But the Holy Spirit came upon the believers as they were organized into an Independent Baptist church by the authority of the two men sent from the mother church (vs. 14-17). WHAT? Samaritan churches? YES! That is the purpose of the Holy Spirit baptism! To validate this church here in Samaria! “It’s as much My church as Jerusalem is!” is the emphatic sign coming from Jesus Christ, the Head of His churches!

And now here in Acts 10, we go beyond

Jewish churches. We go even further than Samaritan churches---that mixed Jewish lot! Now we see the sign from God that validates even Gentile congregations! “Wow! Wait till the Jews in Jerusalem hear this!” Uh-huh! Read chapter 11 for their reaction. It really does take this final sign of Holy Spirit baptism to convince them of this radical event! Listen in as the Apostle Peter relates the episode in Acts 11:15-18: **“And as I began to speak, the Holy ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”** Salvation and commissioning! Grace and ministry! God has given the Gentiles the Key of Life! And the authority to proclaim and perpetuate the Gospel! No wonder the text proclaims salvation to the Gentiles---of Cornelius’ household and beyond! Acts 11:13-14: **“And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”** The word “saved” here is speaking (as always) of deliverance and liberty! Surely now, God has liberated the Gentiles to serve Him in the fullest capacity! In the church, praise God!

I’m not going to be inflexible and say that you can’t believe and preach that Cornelius was saved here in Acts 10. That’s always a wonderful story, too. But if you do, you de-emphasize the importance of God’s church and diminish a valuable text for the importance (to God) of sending an apostle to these believers for the sole purpose of baptism into His precious church. Why did God send an apostle to Cornelius? Just read the words God sent beforehand. **“And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do”** (Acts 10:5-6). “. . . he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.” Cornelius, I’ve heard your prayers and seen your alms. You need to be added to My church! I know you’re saved---that’s great! But it’s not enough! What you ought to do is submit to water baptism and become a vital member of a church carrying out My great commission!

Read the rest of the text. After the Apostle Peter preaches to them the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, just as

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importantly, he preaches the necessity to be a witness of the Gospel. How they ought to be about the business of the commission given unto the church. It never says in the text of chapter ten that Cornelius and his household came to believe on Jesus Christ as the Son of God like other great salvation texts require and do! Already being saved, Cornelius and his house are just soaking up the Word of God. They don't say a thing! And as Peter preaches, the Holy Ghost falls upon them! Can't fall on lost people, can it? Then they speak! In tongues, magnifying their God! Acts 10:34-48: **"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses (You can be too, Cornelius! TMS insert) of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged**

on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. (And this is what you ought to be doing, too, Cornelius! TMS insert) To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter (from Joppa TMS insert), because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days."

I like the way it ends. They asked him to stick around. They wanted to learn more. And it's going to be in church capacity, isn't it! Now they will have the authority to go out and preach the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ! Praise God! And that's why God sent an apostle to Cornelius!



(VERSE 22).

A. It says that she cried unto Jesus.

She was sincere in coming to Jesus. Her plea to Jesus was genuine and sincere. Her heart was deeply affected, and so moved that she cried unto Jesus. The Bible says that a broken and contrite spirit the Lord will not despise. This is what is wanting in lost sinners today. There is a great need today for more genuine repentance. There is a great need for more sincerity and truth in the inward parts.

B. She cried for mercy.

She didn't cry for justice. She didn't cry for what she deserved. She didn't cry for what she was worthy. But she cried for what she was undeserving. She cried for what she was unworthy. She cried for mercy! She cried for compassion on a helpless, miserable sinner. Yes, beloved, mercy is the sinners only plea! Have mercy on me a sinner!

C. She recognized Jesus as Lord.

She recognized Him as Lord over all things. Whether they be human, or spirit, or sickness or disease. She believed that all things are subject to His authority and power. But perhaps most importantly of all, she recognized Jesus as her Lord. She called Him Lord, as if to say "my Lord". Beloved, sinners won't see Jesus as Saviour, until they see Him as their Lord.

D. She also recognized Jesus as the Son of David.

This was one of the Jewish titles for their Messiah. She had heard that the Jews expected a Saviour, who would come out of David. And from what she had heard about Jesus, she believed He was that Messiah. That in itself showed remarkable faith. The world is full of skeptics, but she simply believed without a question. May God give us souls with this kind of simple, childlike faith in Jesus!

E. Next, we see that she had a need.

You see, her daughter was possessed with a demon spirit. We see that this woman made her daughter's problem her problem. Her daughter's need for mercy was her need for mercy. May God give us this kind of compassion for souls!

Beloved, people won't come to Jesus until they have a need to come. Most people in the world don't think they need Jesus. They think they are getting along just fine without Him. The sense of one's need for Jesus only comes from Holy Spirit conviction. Therefore, we know the Holy Spirit was working in this woman's life. May the Holy Spirit show lost sinners their need to come to Jesus for His mercy and grace. This is their only hope!

F. She believed that Jesus was able and willing to cast the demon out of her daughter.

She believed that Jesus had the power and was able to cast the demon out. Not only that, but she also believed that Jesus would come to her daughter's aid. She believed that Jesus was the merciful and

compassionate Saviour. Even in spite of the way Jesus responded to her, she still believed in Him. Yes, beloved, her cry was a cry of great faith!

3. THIRDLY, WE WANT TO SEE THE PERSEVERANCE OF GREAT FAITH (VERSES 23-25).

A. Jesus seemed to ignore her cry.

Doesn't this seem like a peculiar response from our Lord to a needy sinner? We think of Jesus as the meek and lowly, and compassionate Saviour. The One who stands ready to save. The One who is quick to help needy sinners! But here Jesus answered her heart's cry **"not a word"**. Don't think that just because Jesus doesn't answer your first cry, that He doesn't care about you, or that He doesn't hear. He may be putting your faith to the test, to see what sort it is!

I wonder how many people today would take such treatment from the Lord? Most people would give up and look for help else where. Ah, but there are great blessings for those who persevere in faith!

B. The disciples bid Jesus to send her away, because she cried after them.

Now, that's the spirit of Christianity! I'm telling you! The disciples sounded like some of the hard hearted Baptists of our day. Sometimes we're like the disciples, aren't we? Sometimes we don't want to be troubled with sinners either. I can't say that I'm not guilty of this. But perhaps we miss some great opportunities to witness the mighty works of God, because, like the disciples, we don't want to be troubled with sinners!

C. When Jesus finally did answer her, He said He was only come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Now, we understand that as Saviour and Redeemer Jesus was sent for all of God's elect for whom He would die on the cross. But His earthly ministry was directed unto His own nation of Israel. There He was to do mighty works among them to prove His messiahship. In Israel He was to fulfill all righteousness that was prophesied of Him.

After Israel rejected Him, His disciples would then turn to the Gentiles. Through the apostles, especially Paul, and the Lord's churches, the Gospel would be preached throughout all the world. But at this time, Jesus was come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel!

Today, when we say that God has an elect people that He chose unto salvation in Christ, people get very offended at us! Yet, we never say that they are not among the elect. And we don't say that you must be a Baptist to be one of the elect. We believe that all sinners who are saved by the grace of God are God's elect. We don't try to single out the elect, but we preach the gospel to every creature. But, beloved, the natural man doesn't like to hear that God saves whom He will, and

♦ (Continued on page 118)

A Woman with Great Faith

By Christopher W. Burke, Sr.
of Catlettsburg, Kentucky

Matthew 15:21-28

In our text, Jesus had sought to get a short rest for Himself and His disciples, especially after His recent confrontations with the Pharisees earlier in this chapter, and so He left the country for the only time during His ministry. The word **"coasts"** in verse 21 means "parts" or "regions", which would signify that Jesus actually left the borders of Palestine.

But, as always, it wasn't long before Jesus was discovered by some needy sinner. His fame had even spread into the land of Phoenicia, to the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Someone so wonderful as Jesus, and His power to heal and to save sinners, just couldn't be concealed within the narrow borders of Palestine. This was world news beloved!

This morning we want to see the faith of one woman, of whom our Lord said had great faith. It wasn't very often that the Lord paid anyone such a complement, so it behooves us to look into her faith



more closely.

1. FIRST, WE WANT TO SEE THE WOMAN OF GREAT FAITH (VERSE 22).

A. She was not of the seed of Israel.

But she was a Syrophenician woman (or a Syrian of Phoenicia) (Mark 7:26). She was a Canaanite, or a descendant of Canaan from before the conquest by Joshua. She was also a Greek and a Gentile. Therefore, she was considered by the Jews to be a heathen and a dog. Beloved, that is all of us here this morning.

Not only was she a Gentile, but she wasn't of noble blood or worldly greatness. The best we can tell, she was just a common sinner woman. So then, it wouldn't appear that she was a very good prospect for Christianity. And yet, she turns out to be a woman of great faith!

2. SECONDLY, WE WANT TO SEE THE CRY OF GREAT FAITH

A Woman with

(Continued from page 117) ♦

that whom He will, He hardens. The natural man insists that salvation must be all up to him and his free choice to accept or reject Jesus and His salvation. Beloved, that is the way of the old proud and haughty sinful heart!

D. This heathen Gentile woman had the right spirit.

She didn't pronounce judgment on Jesus for coming unto His own sheep, but she believed that His mercy was big enough to reach out to her also. She wasn't offended because God had an elect people, but she just hoped that she was included in that number.

This is the kind of spirit that sinners need when they come to Jesus. We don't come to Jesus as His Lord and judge, but we come to Jesus as wretched sinners in need of His mercy, love, and grace.

How about you this morning? Aren't you just glad that His grace was big enough to reach down to you? Let us never judge the Lord because He is God, and because He doeth whatsoever He pleases with His own. Rather, let us be thankful that He included you and me in His salvation!!!

E. What did she do when she heard this "bad news" about her non-Jewish descent?

She fell on her face and worshipped Jesus! She didn't say, "Well, if you feel that way about it Lord, then I don't want your salvation or your help for my daughter." No, beloved, she worshipped Jesus. Now, don't tell me the Holy Spirit wasn't at work in this woman's heart! Not only that, but she said "Lord, help me!!!" "Lord, I understand what you're saying, but still I know you can help me." Now, beloved, that is great faith!

Thus, we see that this woman had great perseverance of faith in Jesus.

4. THE WISDOM OF GREAT FAITH (VERSES 26-27).

Let's notice the wisdom in this woman's response to Jesus.

A. She said "**Truth, Lord.**"

She acknowledged that what Jesus said was true. She believed that Jesus was speaking the truth. True wisdom will believe and acknowledge that the words of Jesus are true. Whether those words seem favorable to our natural man or not. No doubt Jesus' words to this woman would have been very grievous. But she said "**Truth, Lord.**" We may not understand Jesus' words, or they might be hard sayings to hear, but may the Lord help us to say with this woman, "**Truth, Lord.**" Yes, it takes the wisdom of faith to believe and to receive the truth as it is in Jesus.

In wisdom she also recognized Jesus as Lord, even after He spoke unfavorably to her. True wisdom will perceive that Jesus is no ordinary man. True spiritual

wisdom will perceive that Jesus is God in the flesh. Therefore, true wisdom will bow before the Lord of glory and worship Him, regardless of how He responds to our prayers and petitions.

B. Perhaps her greatest show of wisdom was her faith in the boundless grace of God.

She knew that Jesus, the bread of Heaven, was intended for the Jew first. She knew that! But she also perceived that the grace of Jesus was much too great to be contained within those narrow boundaries of Palestine. She seemed to understand the purpose of God, that the grace of God would also fall out to the dogs, or that is, to the Gentiles of which she was one.

She also believed that God's grace was great and powerful. She believed that even the "crumbs" of grace that fell from her Master's table, were sufficient to save her soul, and to heal her daughter.

And finally, she believed that the grace of Jesus could not refuse a humble and contrite spirit, who earnestly sought after His mercies. I believe in a limited atonement, but God sets those limits, and not men. Mark it down, anyone who will come to Jesus as this woman came to Him, they will surely find His saving grace and mercy.

5. FIFTHLY, WE WANT TO NOTICE THE BLESSINGS OF GREAT FAITH (VERSE 28).

Few people ever received such great recognition from the Lord as this woman received.

A. The Lord was moved by her sincere and humble cry of faith.

The Lord won't refuse the sincere and humble cry of contrite hearts who come unto Him by faith, seeking His mercy and grace. All who come unto Him, He will in no wise cast out!

B. The Lord admired the perseverance of her faith.

I don't understand all about it, but it seems to me that this woman was a lost sinner woman before she met Jesus in our text, and she went away a woman of great faith, which could only be said of a saved sinner.

We can't fully explain all the events that brought about her salvation. But beloved, I believe we can safely say that she was saved. Sometimes we Baptists get too hung up on the mechanics of salvation. The blind man in John 9 didn't know all the answers to what happened to Him, but all he knew was, once he was blind but now he could see. And this woman, through all the discouragements that the Lord threw at her, she persevered in faith until the Lord blessed her.

C. Jesus also honored and blessed the wisdom of her faith.

This woman could not have answered with more wisdom than she did. Her answers showed that the Holy Spirit was working in her heart. Her answers showed that she was a humble and

penitent sinner. Her answers showed that she had true faith that was according to knowledge. Her answers showed that she had faith in Jesus as her Lord and Saviour.

As a result, Jesus gave this woman her petition. Great faith will receive great things from the Lord. Faith receives Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Great faith receives great miracles and blessings from the Lord in answered petitions! And great faith will receive the Lord's recognition and praise.

CONCLUSION

How is our faith this morning?

Have we come to Jesus as penitent sinners, crying, as it were, for mercy? Do we recognize Him as our Lord? Do we have saving faith to believe that He is the Son of David?

Do we have great faith that cries unto the Lord out of a sincere heart, that perseveres in prayer, and that has great wisdom to believe and receive our Lord's word?

May the Lord increase our faith this morning, so that we will be able to serve the Lord mightily, and see His great miracles of salvation and the healing of sin sick souls.



Things to Be Mindful Of

By Philip C. Parks
of Flint, Texas

II Peter 3:1-12

Many people have lived in their ungodly lusts for so long they no longer have a reverence or respect for God, His Son Jesus Christ, God's Word, God's people, or Godly matters. They've in fact become scoffers of all that is holy. But God's sovereignty has not been affected and His patience is not yet expended. He is waiting for the "**fullness of time**" before He executes His righteous and irreparable anger. Until He does come again, it is our duty to witness for the Gospel by telling the ungodly that He will come. We must also be a comfort to our believing brethren by reminding them that God's Word is sure and that all He has spoken will surely come to pass. Peter was our example by his own preaching when he said, "**I will not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things**" (II Pet. 1:12). We will begin with Peter's reminder:

I. BE MINDFUL OF THE WORDS OF THE APOSTLES AND HOLY PROPHETS (VV. 1-2).

Peter wrote this reminder to "**stir up your pure minds**" (v. 1). He was compelled to write "**this second epistle**" to the "**scattered strangers and those elect**" (I Pet. 1:1, 2) as well as the "**beloved**" (II Pet. 3:1) because they were persecuted, driven out, and desperately needed spiritual support and hope. Nothing inspires more brightness and confidence in the believer's soul than the expectation of the rewards at the end of his earthly journey as recorded in the promises of God's holy writers of days gone by. Paul, when writing of the Lord's return, wrote, "**Wherefore comfort one another with these words**" (I Thess. 4:18). These holy orators and writers have long since passed from this mortal side of eternity, yet their words are guaranteed by God's eternalness.

Life's suppressive conditions brought on by ungodly men tends to produce righteous stirrings in God's people. Reading the Bible's ancient, yet unfulfilled prophecies of Jesus' return, and His judgment of the heavens, the earth, and rebellious people makes us prepare for the last days. We must activate, "**stir up**," our thinking on these serious matters. Pondering these prophecies cultivates "**pure minds**" (v. 1) in the believer because "**every word of God is pure**" (Prov. 30:5). But the surety of God's Word has not positively affected many. We are reminded that there will be many who make light of Biblical prophecies.

II. BE MINDFUL OF SCOFFERS (VV. 3-5).

With the words, "**knowing this first**..." (v. 3), Peter instructed the believers of the existence of people who hate God. There is no excuse for ignorance of this fact in the Christian individual or Church. People have always mocked God. This is especially true today because of the proliferation of God haters on every hand. These days must surely be the "**last days**" Peter spoke of when he said, "**There shall come in the last days scoffers**."

A scoffer is one who maliciously mocks something or someone for the purpose of bringing disgrace and contempt to the object of his mockery. There are those who hate Jesus Christ as much as we love Him. There are those who deride Jesus Christ as much as we praise Him. Scoffers will not escape their condemnation because their scoffing confirms this prediction. Be sure that God is mindful of these scoffers whose words agree with their conduct as they "**walk after their own lusts**."

There are two points to their scoffing. First, they scoff, saying, Jesus is not coming again because He has not yet come. "**Where is the promise [fulfillment] of his coming?**" they ask. Secondly, they scoff, saying, Jesus is not coming again because nothing unusual has ever happened to prompt them to believe He is able to perform His second coming. "**All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation**," they say.

♦ (Continued on page 119)



Things to Be

(Continued from page 118) ♦

But God's patience far exceeds the human, unbelieving patience of natural man. Peter explains God's unerring time table in verse nine with this exclamation, **"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise."** We may paraphrase this statement like this: "The Lord will not delay His promised coming but will return precisely when the appointed moment arrives." Peter repeats this statement by rephrasing it in verse 10: **"The day of the Lord will come. . ."**

Scoffers reveal their natural tendencies by believing what their senses prove beyond doubt, but deny that which their senses cannot comprehend. They believe some higher power brought the creation into existence because they behold the creation through their natural senses. Yet they do not have the ability to believe **"the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"** (I Cor. 2:14).

They also scoff because they reject God's past judgments. Their irreverent behavior is due to self-imposed ignorance. They are ignorant, not because these judgments aren't recorded for their enlightenment, but because they choose not to read the records. These records of past judgments were recorded to warn all unbelievers and scoffers that the same Lord who punished the wicked with unprecedented methods of judgments (viz. the flood of verse six) is also capable of returning with His unprecedented second coming which the prophets and apostles called the **"Day of the Lord"** (vv. 1, 10).

Realizing that there are future judgments to come raises our third point: **BE MINDFUL OF FUTURE JUDGMENTS (vv. 7-10).**

We must warn the unbelievers that they will realize these two future judgments if they continue in their irreverent ways. These judgments are: First, the demise of the creation which they have substituted as the object of their adoration which rightfully belongs to God alone; and second, the judgment upon themselves personally. The reminder of these two judgments is why believers must be committed to warn the wicked that their ways are not pleasing to God.

God will judge the heavens and the earth because wicked man has corrupted it. One can hardly leave his home without realizing the creation's physical, moral, and spiritual pollution as a result of man's fallen nature. Crime is out of control. The ground reeks of the blood of murder victims. The air is filled with the cries of the victims of rapes, robberies, and beatings. Our air is permeated with radio waves which carries the cursing and the filthy immoral language of commentators

♦ (Continued on page 120)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Grace Baptist Bible Church of Denham Springs, LA and Pastor Jerry Dodson would like to announce their Bible conference which is scheduled June 8th thru 10th.

Scheduled speakers are Elders Tom Horn, Larry Wilson, Ted Tweet, Doyal Thomas.

A meal will be served at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, the 8th, followed by services at 6:30 p.m. There will be a noon meal on both Saturday and Sunday. There will also be an evening meal at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday. The conference will conclude at noon on Sunday. Everyone is welcome.

For more information please call Pastor Dodson at (225) 664-3223.

The Philadelphia Baptist Church and Pastor Ted Tweet would like to announce their Summer Bible Meeting and also the Quarterly Fellowship.

The Summer Bible Meeting will begin Wednesday July 18th and continue thru Sunday July 22nd. Elder Jerry Asbury will be speaking.

On Saturday morning July 21st will be the regular Quarterly Fellowship. Services begin at 10:00 a.m. Scheduled speakers are Elders Jerry Asbury and Shawn Berry.

There will be a noon meal after service on Saturday.

All are invited to attend.

For additional information contact Pastor Ted Tweet: (256) 686-1307 or cell phone (256) 698-2365 or Email: tltweet5555@aol.com.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Northport, AL and Pastor Todd Bryant would like to announce their Summer Bible Conference July 19th thru 22nd.

Scheduled speakers are Elders Troy McGahan, Paul Stepp, Philip Potter and Bobby Amos.

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

For additional information contact Pastor Bryant at toddbryant@charter.net or visit www.sovereigngrace.net.

The Mt. Zion Baptist Church of Whitestown Indiana would like to announce special service July 6th thru 8th. Elder Steve Raines, Pastor of the East Side Baptist Church of Benton, Arkansas will be speaking.

Friday service begins at 7:00 p.m., Saturday will be a Fellowship Meeting starting at 10:00 a.m., Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

The church is located at 301 Linville in Whitestown.

For Information Call (317) 769-3247

or (317) 769-2998.

The Landmark Baptist Church of Collinsville, IL is in need of a pastor. Any interested Elders may call (618) 288-4236 for more information.

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 Amazing Grace Baptist Church of Stockdale, Texas is in need of a pastor. The church believes in preaching and teaching the doctrines of grace and the Lord's church. Any interested brother my contact Bro. Alvin Schuetz at (830) 534-1918 or Bro. Keith Schuetz at (830) 789-2101.

The Liverpool Independent Baptist Church of Liverpool, New York (north of Syracuse) is searching for a sovereign grace pastor. The church believes in the doctrines of grace, the local church, and is pre-trib and pre-mil. Interested brethren should contact Bro. Greg Sigworth at (315) 677-3819.

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

The Bethel Bible Baptist Church, PO Box 85, Mansfield, LA is in need of a pastor. Any interested Elder should call Connie McMellon at 318-872-1647.

The Windsor Baptist Church at Windsor, IL is searching for a Sovereign Grace pastor. Any one interested may contact Larry Rawlings at (217) 665-3643, or cell (217) 620-4675, or by mail at PO Box 194, Bethany, IL 61914.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Northport, AL and Pastor Todd Bryant would like to announce a new mission work located in Vernon, AL.

Service time is at 8:00 a.m. each Sunday morning.

For additional information contact Pastor Bryant at toddbryant@charter.net or visit www.hightogy.com.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 4-1-2012 to 4-30-2012

Beginning Balance\$4,085.67

RECEIPTS:

Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY100.00
Calvary B. C., Everson, WA100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY100.00
..... 525.00
TOTAL4,610.67

EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time (US) 360.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES\$360.00
..... \$4,250.67
Interest + .08
.....4,250.75
Less Corbin, KY des.-1,923.72
ENDING BALANCE\$2,327.03

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance\$2,083.72

RECEIPTS:

TOTAL2,083.72

EXPENDITURES:

WCTT160.00
ENDING BALANCE\$1,923.72



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 4-1-2012 to 4-30-2012

Beginning Balance\$1,237.36

RECEIPTS:

Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX125.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX 50.00
Bible Believer's B.C., Naples, ID50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV313.45
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY150.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL 25.00
Faith M. B. C., Lynn, AR 25.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY100.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK35.00
Harold Flynn, Craigsville, WV 50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV 100.00
Landmark M. B. C., Moncks Corner, SC 50.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM100.00
Leston Farrell, Des Allemands, LA 100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC 50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY 20.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH100.00
New Testament B. C., Bristol, TN 10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN50.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR50.00
Southside B.C., Fulton, MS 25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Burghill, OH 75.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX60.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA25.00
Willie Schiefer, Exchange, WV 50.00
Subscriptions146.00
Dividing checks150.00
Anonymous \$2,250.00
Sub Total\$4,994.45
TOTAL\$6,231.81

EXPENDITURES:

Printing 581.00
Postage 946.72
Wages 2,300.00
FICA 175.90
Dividing checks 150.00
Supplies81.32
Total Expenditures \$4,234.94
ENDING BALANCE \$1,996.87

Hymn Histories and Scriptures #1 Things to Be

By Nathaniel Hille
of Caldwell, Kansas

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16).

Hymns have played a significant part in the lives of God’s people. The largest book in the Bible is the Holy Spirit’s hymnal. Hymns have been a significant part of worshipping God down through the ages. So often we sing the ‘hymns of Zion’ and I wonder if we know what we are really singing. Let us take a look at our hymns and take notice of the words we actually are singing and, as well, the history of that hymn.

The very first hymn I want to deal with is *“It Is Well With My Soul”* by Horatio Gates Spafford. I have no doubt that this is a familiar title, words, and melody to us all, but are you aware of the history behind this hymn?

Horatio G. Spafford was a lawyer, invested in real estate, a faithful member of the Presbyterian church, and an avid supporter of D.L. Moody and other evangelical leaders of that era. Bro. Spafford also had four daughters and one son.

In 1871, a fire swept through Chicago leaving some 300 people dead and over 100,000 homeless. Spafford, who had invested much in the downtown Chicago real estate had lost much, if not all, of his investment. It was around this time that his son had died also. For two years Spafford and his family labored in the Chicago area helping those who had suffered greater loss than his family had. In 1873, Horatio sought to take his family on a European vacation and assist friends Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey on an evangelistic crusade in Europe. Spafford was detained in Chicago with some business concerns, but sent his wife and daughters ahead on schedule to England. Off New Foundland, the ship carrying Spafford’s wife and daughters collided with another ship and within a half-hour sank. Spafford’s wife, Anna, sent her husband a telegram of only two words: “saved alone.” She was one of only forty-seven survivors on a ship carrying hundreds of passengers. All four of Spafford’s daughters perished and he was now left without children. I am told that the loss of a child is one of the hardest things to suffer, yet Mr. and Mrs. Spafford suffered the loss of all of their children (as far as my research went) in a period of around two years.

Spafford sailed for England to be with his grieving wife. It is told that Horatio asked the Captain of his ship to stop at the

approximate spot of where his daughters drowned and there he wrote the hymn: *“It Is Well With My Soul.”* Others, state that it was not until he arrived in England and had met his wife that he spoke to Eld. Moody saying, “It is well. The will of God be done.” Either way, it was under these trying circumstances that Bro. Spafford penned one of the greatest hymns there ever was. Does this story not give more creditable weight to the first verse:

*“When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.”*

Many of us will never have to deal with the providential circumstances that Bro. Spafford endured and was still able to say, “It is well with my soul.” Many folks have endured less, far less, and have forsaken the Lord, cursing His name. The Lord saw fit for these happenstances to take place in the life of His servant, and Bro. Spafford abided faithfully. What if Spafford had been on that first boat and drowned among the others, if he had not been providentially delayed with business affairs...we would not have this hymn today. Spafford stands before us as a testament to God’s enduring grace and mercy; that by the power of God we are able to remain faithful to Him during trials and temptations. Spafford lived and experienced, **“and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”** (Rom. 8:28). H.G. Spafford was one who experienced the trial of his faith and rejoiced, knowing that God’s will was done (I Pet.1:7; I Pet.4:12-13). May this hymn be one that causes us to trust in the Lord at all times, knowing His ways are not our ways, but higher and better (Isa. 55:8-9). Let this hymn dwell in our hearts, teaching and admonishing one another that we may glorify our God in trials and tribulations, proving Him to be our All in All.



(Continued from page 119) ♦

and the lyrics of entertainers. Billboards, newsstands, and printed material is saturated with nudity and all manner of verbiage which promotes sensuousness and promiscuity. The ungodliness depicted on television and cyberspace cannot be described for its prevalence and boldness. Our once pristine great outdoors is so littered with the materials of man’s revelings and industries that they cannot be enjoyed. Even outer space is grossly littered with man’s efforts to prove evolution and other theories which contradicts holy doctrinal truths.

It is no small wonder that **“the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store reserved unto fire”** (v. 7). God will cleanse the creation of man’s pollution the same way He created it: **“by the same word.”** He shall speak and the **“heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat”** (v. 12). This earth and the heavens will not be destroyed by man’s atomic weapons or by some natural catastrophe as some would have us believe. God has reserved this destruction for Himself. He alone, will perform it. John confirmed this event when he foresaw God manifest Himself at the last judgment: **“I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them”** (Rev. 20:11).

The second future judgment will occur in quick succession with the first, namely the “Great White Throne Judgment” of all the wicked dead. Peter referred to this judgment as the **“day of judgment and perdition [eternal ruin and loss] of ungodly [irreverent; wicked] men”** (v. 7). John also prophesied this event in the same twentieth chapter of Revelation. **“I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened. . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their words.”**

The World War II Nazi concentration camp at Dachau, Germany, illustrates the

perdition of sinful men at this judgment. The unfortunate inmates entered this dark camp through a gate with the words “Arbeit Macht Frei,” written above it. The English translation is, “Work Makes You Free.” These words mocked the inmate as he entered the camp for he knew he would never leave it alive. The common inmate translation of this infamous slogan was, “Give up all hope, you who enter here!” The inmates that were not literally worked to death were murdered in some other hideous fashion. This is a perfect illustration of the **“perdition”** of the great populace facing trial at Jesus’ Supreme Court. At the Great White Throne, Jesus will announce that good deeds, regardless of their numbers or impact, are not worthy to exempt sin’s prisoner from Jesus’ dreaded sentence: **“I never knew you: Depart from me, ye that work iniquity”** (Matt. 7:23). Immediately after their sentence is read, these unbelieving dead will be **“cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death”** (Rev. 20:14).

The knowledge of the words of holy prophets and apostles, of the coming of scoffers, and of the judgment of sinful men demands our last point:

BE MINDFUL OF OUR CHRISTIAN CONDUCT (VV. 11-12).

We should not want men to be sentenced to perdition because we failed to be God’s witness to them. If they must be sentenced, it must be because we witnessed to them and they rejected our witness of their own volition. Peter exhorts us in verse 11: **“What manner of persons ought ye to be?”**

Peter answers his own question in verse 11: **“. . . in all holy conversation and godliness.”** The word **“conversation”** is another term for our daily behavior and conduct. Does it agree with spiritual morality as described and commanded to us in God’s Holy Word? Our behavior, a result of our salvation experience, must be Christ-like so that we can demonstrate to our unbelieving associates and personal contacts how one must live to be accepted worthy before God. The term **“godliness”** is the term Peter used to describe the purpose for our behavior which is to glorify God. God should be and must be the object of our glory if God is to use us to reach the lost.

The best motivation we can use to prompt our holy conversation and Godliness is the promise of Jesus’ return. Peter described how we are to anticipate His return as **“looking for and hasting [eagerly awaiting] unto the coming of the day of God”** (v. 12). Knowing the Day of the Lord is fast approaching, we must be conscious of the plight of the wicked and be available for God to use us as He convicts and saves them through His Word and our testimony.

“To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.”



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