

The Berea Baptist Banner

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

All Men Have Not Faith

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma

Most professing Christians today assume that man has the ability within himself to savingly believe on Christ. Others insist that God has actually placed within all men a "grain" of faith. To be saved, they say, a person has only to put his natural inborn faith in Christ. One Scripture that seems at first glance to prove this is Romans 12:3 which says: "For I say, through the grace given unto me,

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Knowing Christ

By Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 – 2002)

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church: touching the

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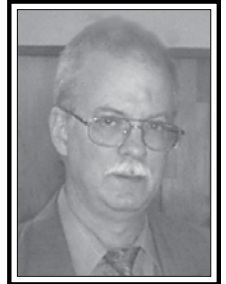
When We Were Enemies

By Lucien J. LeSage Jr.
of Pride, Louisiana

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10).

This is a great truth that most religious people fail to consider. They usually think that they were reconciled when they believed, or did enough good works to cancel out their sins,

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Jael - The Christ-like Slayer of the Enemy of God's People

By Timothy J. Hille
of Ashland, Illinois

Judges 4:1-24
text: vs. 17-24

There are many commentators who think that the woman Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, behaved wickedly in the slaying of Sisera, the captain of the army of the Canaanites, though she



with a dangerous, vile,
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was perhaps motivated by patriotic passions. I disagree. I believe she acted as a person ought to act when confronted

Let These Sayings Sink Down Into Your Ears

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

"Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men" (Luke 9:44).

In our text verse, the Lord Jesus Christ exhorts His disciples to pay attention to the words which He has spoken, and to remember the



sayings of the Lord. I think the Lord, in this instance, has in special view the words which He speaks in our text verse. These words and "these sayings," concern the
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In a calm sea we are all good sailors.

We suppose that we can endure trouble with great equanimity; but when it really comes, we are as much vexed by it as others are.

"But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble" (Psalm 37:39).

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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 strength-en His churches in the most holy faith.
5. To motivate God's children to a closer fellow-ship around His Word.
6. To inform people of world events in light of Bible prophecy.
7. To condemn and expose error wherever it may rear its ugly head.
8. To stimulate Christian growth in grace.
9. To make the Devil and his demons as mad as possible.

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All Men Have Not

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to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." The last phrase in this verse, they say, proves that God has given a bit of faith to every human being. And so sinners are assured that all they need do to make sure of Heaven is put their little speck of human faith in Christ.

Believing that every Word of God is pure and true, this preacher certainly believes the above quoted verse. But this verse, like all the Bible, must be properly handled. Paul wrote of the possibility of **"...handling the word of God deceitfully..."** (II Cor. 4:2). Any handling of the Word of God that corrupts its meaning is sinful and dishonest. The problem with understanding the Bible is with man: not with the Bible. Instructions given by Paul have to do with **"...rightly dividing the word of truth"** (II Tim. 2:15). It can be wrongly divided!

In A.D. 1535, more than 75 years before the King James Bible was translated, Miles Coverdale produced the first complete printed translation of the Bible into English. Coverdale gave the best succinct advice we have ever heard for understanding the Bible. He said: "It shall greatly help ye to understand the Scriptures if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth after." What misunderstanding and error would be avoided if readers of the Bible followed the advice Coverdale gave. God's Word must

be rightly divided!

If Paul's words in Romans 12:3 quoted above really do mean that every child of Adam has been given a **"measure of faith"** then we do indeed have a contradiction in the Bible as the following verses show. For instance Paul's request for prayer in II Thessalonians 3:2 is contrary to the idea that all men have a grain of faith. He wrote: **"And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith."** He did not say that some men have only a small grain of faith. He said that **"all men have not faith."** There was a time in Paul's life when he had no faith. He may have believed a lot of things and most certainly did, but he did not then have **"...the faith of God's elect..."** (Titus 1:1). Lots of folk believe many things but do not have the faith that God gives to His chosen ones. Paul admitted to his former unbelief when he wrote concerning his early life saying, **"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief"** (I Tim. 1:13). Paul did not say he only had a grain of faith, but that he acted **"in unbelief."**

In the Old Testament God spoke of sinners in the Nation of Israel saying, **"...for they are a very froward [contrary or perverse] generation, children in whom is no faith"** (Deut. 32:20) [Brackets added throughout for clarity]. Moses wrote that there **"is no faith"** in such people. He did not even hint that they only had a little grain of faith! The Lord Jesus plainly said in John 6:64, **"But there are some of you that believe not..."** Merriam-Webster gives the primary definition of "believe" as "to have a firm religious faith." So then what the Lord was saying

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was that there were some Jews of His day who did not have faith. He made no mention of them having some small grain or **"measure of faith"** that required them to build it up, exercise it, put it in Him or do anything with it in order to be saved. The Lord Jesus explained who has faith and who does not when He said, **"But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you"** (John 10:26). Those who do not belong to Christ **"believe not"** - they have no faith! The Bible is true: **"all men have not faith!"**

Again Paul wrote: **"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect"** (Rom. 3:3)? He did not say that some did not put their inborn faith in Christ. He wrote that **"some did not believe."**

Someone cries out that God is unfair unless He has given to all men a little grain of faith or at least the ability to believe. Men who object to plain Bible statements by saying that this or that is not fair make themselves the judges of what is right and what is wrong. God and His works are subject to their inspection. Think of that! Men so highly esteemed in their own eyes as to presume to tell God what is right and wrong. Do not judge God based upon your partial information and your own depraved heart! After all, **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it"** (Jer. 17:9)? No man is qualified to judge God or His actions!

God does command both repentance and faith - twin gifts and twin requirements. Someone questions why God would command men and women to repent and believe if they are

unable to do so - if they do not have an inborn grain of faith? Would He require of lost men what they cannot do? The answer is an emphatic yes! God has repeatedly commanded people to do what they cannot do. He gave the Old Testament Law to Israel knowing full well they could not keep it. Peter spoke of his generation of Jews and all their forefathers' lack of ability to keep the Old Testament Law. He said to those who wanted Christians to be subject to the Old Testament Law, **"Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear"** (Acts 15:10)? The Law is an unbearable yoke of bondage! God knew no man would ever be able to keep the Law, and no man ever did, but He not only commanded the keeping of the Law, He went further than that. He said, **"Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy"** (I Pet. 1:16). In fact the Lord Himself said, **"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"** (Matt. 5:48). Sometimes the word "perfect" means "complete," but here it speaks of the sinless perfection of God the Father.

Can humans attain to these highest of standards? Of course they cannot! Neither can men and women repent and believe apart from the working of God in them. Paul wrote of this inner work of God saying: **"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"** (Phil. 2:13). Why would God need to work in sinners if they have some kind of inborn ability to repent and believe? God by His commandments not only reveals what is right and what He requires, but He by those same commandments shows man his complete sinfulness and

Little Hills

By Nathaniel Hille of
Caldwell, Kansas



The New Birth #4 Marvel Not - Part 2

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). Let us not be stupefied by the statement of the Lord. The Scriptures declare that man is TOTALLY DEPRAVED. One hundred percent wicked in the eyes of God. Take note of what God has said in various Scriptures concerning man:

Man's heart: You have heard people say of one: "he has a good heart;" yet the Lord declares, **"The heart is deceitful above all things, desperately wicked: who can know it"** (Jer. 17:9)?

Man's will: Man's will, too, has been defiled by sin: **"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life"** (John 5:40).

Man's love: **"...men loved**

darkness rather than light" (John 3:19).

Man's ability: **"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him..."** (John 6:44).

In every way, the heart, the will, the love, the ability of man is corrupt and filled with sin. Truly did the Holy Spirit state, **"There is none righteous, no, not one"** (Rom. 3:10).

Man's first birth is filled with sin. In fact, the very best that any man can do is filthy rags, **"but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"** (Isa. 64:6). No wonder Christ told us not to be in amazement that we must be born again to enter the kingdom of Heaven. Have you been born again?

helplessness. By His Spirit He breaks the hearts of elect sinners with a sorrow that is called "godly sorrow." Paul 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). The Lord Jesus referred to that when He said, **"And whosoever shall fall on this stone [Christ] shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder"** (Matt. 21:44). The commands of God to which men cannot attain are given to bring men up short and show them their inborn inability because of their depraved hearts. Apart from the gift of faith which God gives, no man would have faith: no man would be saved. The inborn

grain-of-faith theory denies the total depravity / total inability of sinners. It deceives sinners into thinking that their eternal destiny is in their own hands. In effect it says that sinners can save themselves by doing something.

The Bible clearly states that faith is a gift. In Ephesians 2:8-9 we are told, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that [faith] not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** In God's plan of salvation He in His predetermined time gives faith to those whom He has **"...chosen...in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world..."** for He has determined that they **"...should be holy and without blame before him..."**

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(Eph. 1:4). This faith is bestowed along with its precedent twin, repentance, at the moment of regeneration for God's elect shall all be **"... born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"** (John 1:13). We know this because the Lord Jesus said, **"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"** (John 6:37). They shall come because in drawing them to Christ, God breaks the elect sinner's heart and works repentance and faith in him – in those who before had neither. This is all necessary because, as the Lord 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). But of course this last verse seems to be conveniently denied or ignored by the grain-of-faith folk. They say men can come: men have the ability to come in faith to Christ. Jesus said men cannot. Whom will you believe?

Our beginning text was **"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."** Following sound reasoning and the advice of old Miles Coverdale we look at these words in their context. The basic rule of understanding any document is this: context, context, context! We must take the words of Scripture at face value and keep them in their proper context!

First of all we note that Paul's words in this last quoted verse were addressed to Christians – to a particular congregation of them located in Rome. Second, notice

that Paul addressed his words to **"every man that is among you"** – i.e. among the church to whom he wrote! He did not write to or about unbelievers! He is addressing the saints of God: members of one of Christ's true assemblies. It is to them and about them he wrote! It is to these Christians that he wrote **"according as God hath dealt to every man [each man or individual men] the measure of faith."**

The words **"every man"** do not always mean all men. Again it is the context that determines the meaning of words. For example: if my family and I are going somewhere and I ask, "Is everybody ready?" I do not mean is every person in the world ready. I mean every person to whom I am addressing the question. So it is in our text: **"every man"** means each individual person addressed. That **"every man"** does not always mean every person is proven by the words of Jesus in Luke 16:16 where He said, **"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."** If **"every man"** in this verse means all men then the verse is a lie and Jesus is found to be a liar. All men do not press into the kingdom. In fact a very few men do! But individuals do press into Christ's kingdom and that is the meaning of **"every man."**

The same thing is evident in John 1:9 which says of Christ: **"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."** If Christ enlightens all men then all men are saved! He does not enlighten all men and all men are not saved, but He does enlighten individual men. One more instance of the phrase **"every man"** surely shall suffice: I Corinthians 12:7 says: **"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit**

withal." All men do not and did not have the Spirit nor did they have the **"manifestation of the Spirit"** when Paul wrote those words. But certain individuals did and that is the meaning of **"every man"** in that verse: the manifestation of the Spirit is given to individuals.

Neither can the words **"every man"** be rightly applied to all men everywhere in the phrase **"as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."** These words cannot be honestly applied to the unsaved for they were not addressed to them in any way whatsoever. Paul is writing to and dealing with saints: the members of one of the Lord's true churches; and is not speaking of all men everywhere. To include all men everywhere in the words **"as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith"** is unreasonable and dishonest with the Scriptures. And it produces a supposed Bible contradiction!

But there is no real contradiction. Only if Paul's words are taken out of context and twisted so as to mean that all men have a "grain" of faith as many of today's Arminians theorize is there a contradiction. Surely to any honest and candid reader we have supplied sufficient evidence to prove that men do not have some kind of inborn grain of faith. Shall the words of this brief article change the minds or clarify the understanding of those who are quite sure that all men have a tiny bit of faith? It is doubtful, for men do love their traditions. Their own doctrines are the dearest things to them. Men have both lived and died for false doctrine, as well as for true, and continue to do so. But if God be pleased to somehow use this poor effort, it shall be enough.

In conclusion we say again that there are no real contradictions in the Bible. There are only seeming ones: i.e. passages that

are not properly understood or are interpreted without regard for their context. Peter warned of men in his own time who tortured the Scriptures, especially twisting the epistles of Paul. He wrote, **"As also in all his [Paul's] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction"** (II Pet. 3:16). We must all beware! There are also such people in our day as were in his! According to the Holy Ghost such people are **"unlearned and unstable"** as stated in this last verse. Especially do such people hate and distort the plain meaning of Paul in his various epistles! Those who **"wrest"** the Scriptures work toward their own destruction!

To those who think all men have an inborn "grain" of faith our reply is this. Have you faith? Do not boast that you have either produced it or have somehow nurtured and grown it or are worthy of it. God says, **"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it"** (I Cor. 4:7)? Are you different from the worldlings around you? Everything you have is a gift! Have you "the faith of God's elect"? If you have this kind of faith, you received it as you have all things. And if God gave faith to you, why do you boast and glory in your thoughts as if you had anything to do with getting it or growing it? You are not worthy of it and cannot ever be worthy of it. It is a matter of grace. Give God the glory! **"Salvation is of the LORD"** (Jonah 2:9).



WATERING THE TULIPS



By Todd Bryant
of
Northport, Alabama



The Time Is Here

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4).

We have really come a long way. I mean, consider the advances we have made in just the last few generations – automobiles, airplanes, communication, Internet, medical advances, etc. Our generation is daily using a hand held device to run their lives that is far more advanced than computers used by NASA on the rockets in the Apollo missions! With the touch of our finger to the face of our "phones," we can call, text, private message or even post on social media to friends around the globe. The communication that used to take weeks or months to complete now takes seconds... literally! We have certainly come a long way.

But things are not always as they appear, are they? **"...for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart"** (I Sam. 16:7). To our society, things look fine so we assume they are. Even churches have a tendency to

become complacent in a society where there are so many of the finer things in life. As "blessings" take over the lives of Christians in a prosperous society, the Word of God often takes a back seat. As if it is not enough that the Bible told us it would happen, we are now witnessing it with our own eyes.

"Sound teaching" seems to be a thing of the past in many instances. Today, the average church attender nearly yawns if a sermon begins with "open up your Bibles to..." Yet, a man (or woman, for that matter) can begin his "sermon" with "God spoke to me on the way to church this morning and said..." and ears perk up. "Thus says the Lord" doesn't seem to matter so much any more. Many messages today are devoid of any real exposition of Scripture. And even when Scripture is quoted, it is often used in such a way that negates the context in which it is written – and this in a generation that has more access to the Bible than we have ever had. Has our generation forgotten that multitudes have been martyred for merely attempting to own a copy of the Bible...or even a portion of it? It appears we have.

It is saddening with the access our generation has to the Word of God that so few professing believers today see any benefit in daily Bible study – not a devotional book where an author quotes one verse and then extrapolates "truths" from it, but actually studying the Word of God itself. The Scripture should be our starting place because only it can be said to be, **"...given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"** (II Tim.

3:16-17). What other book can complete the child of God like the Bible? There is not one.

Does it really matter? Without a doubt it does. Biblical illiteracy has spawned the generation spoken of in our text verse. When believers do not know what the Bible says, they turn to "myths." When "teachers" replace the foundational truths of Christianity, these "myths" are no more factual than ancient Roman and Greek polytheism. Illiterate men who have no regard for the truth are leading multitudes of Biblically illiterate Christians into all kinds of these "myths."

Child of God, do not be surprised. God's Word said this would occur. We are seeing our text verse fulfilled before our eyes. But the light at the end of the tunnel is that Jesus' coming is soon, and these events give us hope that we will soon hear the trumpet sound when we will be called up in the air to see our Savior with our own eyes.



Knowing Christ

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righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made

conformable unto his death" (Phil. 3:3-10).

Many people know about Christ, but most of them do not know Christ. A person can know a great deal historically about Christ without much knowledge of Him. A person may know a great deal about the Christian life without knowing Him Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). The difference between knowing about Christ and knowing Christ is the difference between being lost or saved.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

In verses 5 and 6 the Apostle Paul lists some of the things he refused compared with the knowledge of Christ. He uses what we call the power of contrast. First, he contrasted the knowledge of Christ with religious rites and ceremonies: **"Circumcised the eighth day. ."** (v. 5). When he was eight-days-old he received the badge of a Jew, the seal of the covenant. He was not a proselyte or an Ishmaelite. But when compared to the knowledge of Christ he concluded that circumcision availed him nothing (Gal. 6:15).

Second, he contrasted the knowledge of Christ with the pride of ancestry: **"...of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of Hebrews. ."** (v. 5). Paul was by descent an Israelite. His family had come from Jacob, the prince with God. His family descended from the tribe of Benjamin which gave Israel her first king and never swerved in its allegiance to the royal family of David. No Gentile blood flowed in his veins. His family had retained the Hebrew language and customs. But he counted this dog's dung in comparison to

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Knowing Christ

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knowing Christ and being a part of God's family.

Third, he contrasted the knowledge of Christ with membership in a religious order: “. . . **as touching the law, a Pharisee**” (v. 5). Paul held membership in the Pharisees, the sect of Judaism which took the strictest view of the law of Moses. He had no connection with the rationalistic Sadducees, or the political Herodians, or the fanatical Zealots. But membership in the order of the Pharisees meant nothing in comparison to knowing Christ. Paul traded his religion for Christ.

Fourth, he contrasted the knowledge of Christ with religious zeal: “**Concerning zeal, persecuting the church. . .**” (v. 6). Paul took his religion seriously, and he measured his religion by his hatred for Christianity. He thought he was doing God a service by uprooting heretics. But all such labors were a lost cause. After coming to know Christ this persecutor of the church became a preacher in the church.

Fifth, he contrasted a knowledge of Christ with personal righteousness: “. . . **touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless**” (v. 6). Here Paul is not claiming perfect moral fulfillment of the law, but the observance of its external requirements. As far as the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees went, he was found blameless. But on the Damascus road he met Christ, and all of his self-righteousness vanished. He realized that his self-righteousness had been a loss, for it kept his soul from knowing Christ. From that day on he desired not to be found in his righteousness, but in the righteousness which was of the

faith of Christ.

Sixth, he contrasted the knowledge of Christ with all things: “**Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**” (v. 8). “**All things**” include worldly substances, the comforts of life, and life itself. Paul would part with a sky of stars for one Sun of Righteousness. To him, the knowledge of Christ is a blessing so surpassing and transcendent that nothing is worthy to be called good in comparison to this highest good. He believed that the knowledge of Christ was the one thing needful for a man.

Let men learn a lesson from Paul. All confidence in the flesh is to be renounced. Religious rituals such as baptism and the Lord's Supper without a knowledge of Christ are nothing. They are but the empty grave from which Christ has gone forth. A noble pedigree of royal blood without the knowledge of Christ is nothing. It is not the blood of our ancestors which saves us; it is the blood of Christ. A good education without a knowledge of Christ is nothing but dog's dung. Knowing Christ is the beginning of all wisdom and all knowledge. Church membership without a knowledge of Christ is dung. Many church members are headed to Hell. Knowing Christ is more important than being a Baptist, or a Methodist, or a Presbyterian, or a Pentecostal.

WHAT IT IS TO KNOW CHRIST

First, to know Christ is to know Him personally. It is more than to have an intellectual knowledge of Him. Many unconverted people have this. It means to know Him in experience personally by heart-knowledge. We must know Him as one person knows another. This knowledge is common to

all believers. Jesus Christ said: “**I know my own, and my own know me**” (John 10:14 ABUV). The sheep know the Shepherd, and the Shepherd knows the sheep.

Second, to know Christ is to know Him as God. It is to see in Him the glory of God (II Cor. 4:6). The One Who is the express image of the Father's Person is Himself a Divine Person (Heb. 1:3). Christ Who “**is the image of the invisible God**” (Col. 1:15) is God “**manifest in the flesh**” (I Tim. 3:16). The One Who was in the beginning with God “**was God**” (John 1:1-3) and “**equal with God**” (Phil. 2:6). Christ is God, and to know Him is to know God. The denial of Christ as God is a soul-destroying sin (I John 2:23; II John 9).

Third, to know Christ is to know Him in His office work. It is to know Him as the Mediator of the covenant, the Bread of Life to hungry souls, the Redeemer of the lost, and the Savior of sinners. To know Christ is to know Him as our great High Priest Who appears in the presence of God for us (Heb. 9:24), and Who makes intercession for us (Rom. 8:34). It is to know Him as “**the King of kings**” (I Tim. 6:15) Who is soon to return and be “**king over all the earth**” (Zech. 14:9).

Fourth, to know Christ is to know Him as Lord and Master. Paul said: “. . . **the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**” (v. 8). Some tell us that there are Christians who know Christ as Savior, but not as Lord. This idea was invented by heretics in an attempt to justify the ungodly lives of their unconverted church members. There is no way to know Christ in all His person, attributes, and office work without also knowing Him as Lord. To know Him is to love Him and to render a cheerful

obedience to Him (Acts 9:6).

A general knowledge of Christ is not sufficient. It misses the mark; it comes short of the goal. A person must have a special, spiritual, and saving knowledge of Christ. This knowledge is joined with faith in Christ. It involves a distrust in all self-righteousness and a trust only in Christ to be our righteousness (Phil. 3:9; I Cor. 1:30). To know Christ is to trust Him with the salvation of your soul which you commit to Him in faith. Paul wrote: “**For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day**” (II Tim. 1:12).

THE MEANS OF THIS

A saving knowledge of Christ is not obtained in schools of human learning, religious or otherwise. It is something a man must have by revelation from Heaven. This work is so great as to be the concern of all three Persons in the Godhead.

First, man knows Christ because God the Father reveals Him. Christ asked Simon Peter to tell Him what he thought of Him. Peter said: “**Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven**” (Matt. 16:16-17). Here the revealing of Christ is a distinguishing token of God's good will. The Father is eminently qualified to reveal the Son as they are of the same nature and attributes.

Second, a man knows Christ because Christ reveals Himself. The Samaritan woman told Christ: “**I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ:**

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when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:25-26). What a clear revelation Christ made here of Himself. Such a clear revelation never occurred unless it be on one other occasion (John 9:37). The Lord Jesus did not reveal Himself to the scribes and Pharisees (John 10:24). He did not even give John the Baptist such a clear revelation (Matt. 11:4-5) as He did this woman. Christ is sovereign in the revelation of Himself.

Third, a man knows Christ because the Holy Spirit reveals Him. In John 16:13-14 the Spirit of truth is said to glorify Christ and to reveal Him to men (See Eph. 1:17). The Spirit does not reveal Himself; He reveals Christ. The Holy Spirit gives the sinner a living knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord (II Cor. 3:17-18) and makes him a partaker of Christ's life and benefits. A knowledge of Christ is spiritual and must come from the Spirit of God (I Cor. 2:9-10).

THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS KNOWLEDGE

First, Paul shows its great worth by contrasting it with all things he classed as a loss: **"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"** (Phil. 3:8). All things conceivable and inconceivable are valueless under the sun when weighed against the knowledge of Christ. All things on earth are dog's dung when compared to knowing Christ. All things which would hinder us from obtaining this knowledge must be given up that we might win Christ.

Second, a knowledge of Christ is the means of our justification before God: **"...by his knowledge shall my righteous servant**

justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:11). **"By his knowledge"** means by the experimental knowledge of Christ a man sees himself justified because Christ bore away his sins. This knowledge of Christ is nothing less than faith in Christ as the source of our righteousness. Christ justifies on the ground of His righteousness (II Cor. 5:21; I John 2:1). This verse also proves that all He bore the sins of will be brought to a saving knowledge of Christ.

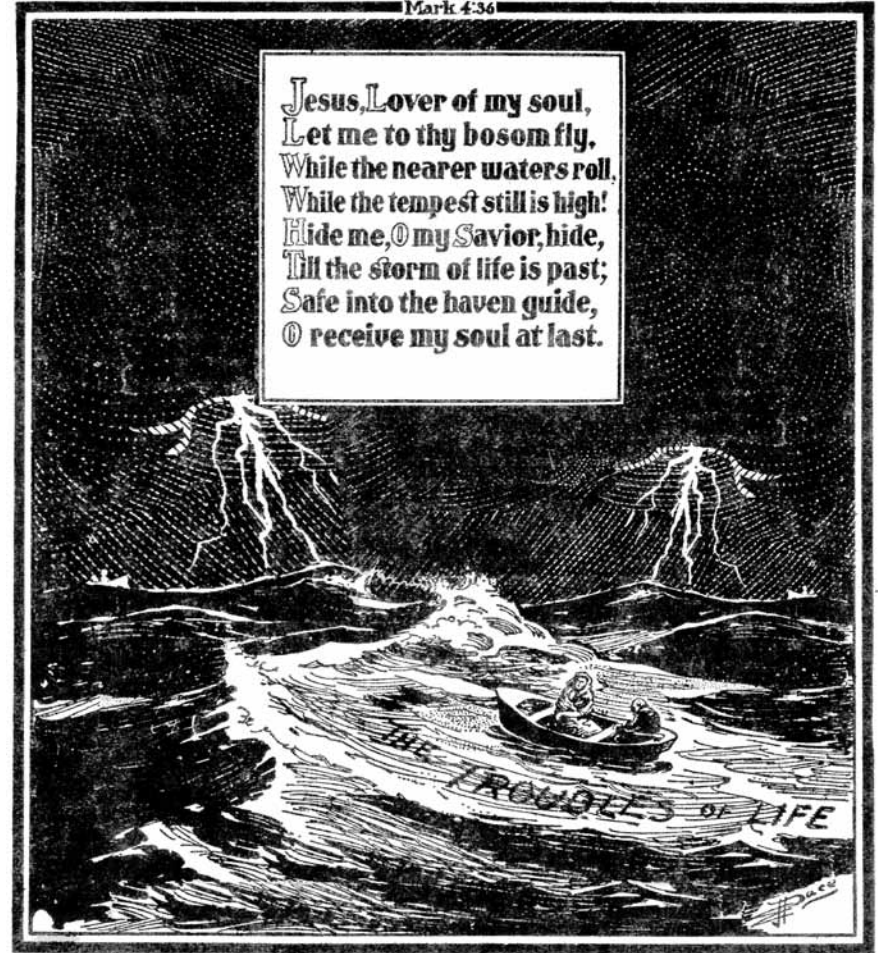
Third, the Bible proclaims the excellency of this knowledge: **"Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD"** (Jer. 9:23-24). All subjects of boasting are here seen to be unworthy of trust. Wisdom, riches, and valor are nothing compared to knowing the Lord. How excellent it is to have a right apprehension of God's nature and attributes! A converted man glories only in the Lord (I Cor. 1:31).

Fourth, a knowledge of Christ is excellent because it is the sphere of all spiritual blessing: **"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord"** (II Pet. 1:2). The Father has put all spiritual blessings in the hands of Christ (Eph. 1:3). There are no spiritual blessings apart from knowing Christ.

THE EVER-DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE

There is a great need for those

"AND THERE WERE ALSO WITH HIM OTHER LITTLE SHIPS"
Mark 4:36



Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high!
Hide me, O my Savior, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last.

who know Christ to **"follow on to know the LORD"** (Hosea 6:3). The Apostle Paul desired an ever-increasing knowledge of Christ: **"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death"** (Phil. 3:10). He especially wanted more knowledge of Christ's sufferings and exaltation. He sought this knowledge, not by hearing and reading, but by direct personal communion with His Lord.

Paul longed for more of the knowledge of **"the power of his resurrection."** There is spiritual power in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Its influence will lift us up into the new life hid with Christ in God. **"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where**

Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1-3).

The knowledge of Christ's resurrection raises our minds above the world and prompts us to subdue sin: **"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal**

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body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom. 6:8-11).

A knowledge of the resurrection of Christ is the pledge of our future resurrection. Jesus Christ said: **“Because I live, ye shall live also”** (John 14:19). Paul wrote: **“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you”** (II Cor. 4:14). As sure as Christ is risen, so sure shall we rise from the dead. Our bodies will be raised up and fashioned like His glorious body. This knowledge inspires to service and gives comfort in persecution.

To know the power of Christ’s resurrection, we must know **“the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death”** (Phil. 3:10). The sufferings of Christ included the temptation of Satan, denial of His friends, poverty and homelessness, hatred by the religious world of His day, and the agonies of a horrible death on a Roman cross. To have fellowship with His sufferings is to suffer as Christ did when He was on earth. We can have fellowship with His sufferings in a number of ways.

First, we have fellowship with Christ’s sufferings when we sympathize with His agony on the cross. How humiliating to realize that our sins added to His burden of woes. Those who truly know that Christ bore their **“sins in his own body on the tree”** are constrained to **“live unto righteousness”** (I Pet. 2:24). To

the Corinthians Paul said: **“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again”** (II Cor. 5:14-15).

Second, we have fellowship with Christ’s sufferings when we suffer persecution from the world as He did: **“But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy”** (I Pet. 4:13). Paul told the Colossians that he rejoiced in his sufferings in behalf of his brethren and desired to **“fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ”** in his flesh for Christ’s **“body’s sake, which is the church”** (Col. 1:24).

Third, we have fellowship with Christ’s sufferings as we become, little by little, conformed unto His death. As we consider His sufferings this gradually impresses a likeness of His death upon us which is deep and real. This has various degrees in different believers, but in all who are truly Christians it is real. Christ’s death upon the cross was slow and painful, and so is the crucifixion of the old man. The new man struggles a lifetime to be free from the body of sin and death that the life of Christ may be manifested in his mortal body.

CONCLUSION

1. It appears to me that modern-day professed Christians want nothing to do with the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. They want only the fellowship of His blessings. Many are willing to reign with Him, but they are unwilling to suffer with Him. Many are willing to wear a crown of glory, but they are unwilling to

wear a crown of thorns. Many are willing to put on the white robe of Heaven, but they are unwilling to put on the purple robe of mockery on earth. Some would be willing to live for Him, but they would be unwilling to die for Him. This must be so because they do not really know the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The desire of Paul was to be found in Christ on the great day: **“And he found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”** (Phil. 3:9). To be united to Christ by faith and depend solely on His merits for righteousness before God should be the great concern of all men. Those who trust in their own righteousness will be condemned. They will never win Christ.

3. Paul broke with his unconverted life; so must we. He experienced a complete change of thought, aims, and motives; so must we. Like Paul, we should desire to be like Christ in His sufferings and resurrection. We must live and die as He did in self-sacrifice.

4. Do you know Christ? Or, do you just know about Christ? To know Christ is to have eternal life. Jesus said: **“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”** (John 17:3). This knowledge of Christ is the one thing needful. To know Christ is to possess eternal life. To know only about Christ is eternal damnation.

5. Are you, like the Apostle Paul, ready to give up all things that you may win Christ? Will you surrender your pride of tradition, your pride of birth, your pride of character, your pride of religion and even all things that you might win Christ? Will you give up

your drinking? Your lying? Your stealing? Your promiscuous sex? Your drug abuse? God help you to say with the psalmist: **“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee”** (Ps. 73:25). Then **“Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee”** (Job 22:21).



When We Were

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or did this or did that. Our verse plainly tells us that the Christians that Paul was writing to at Rome, and he himself, were reconciled while they were yet the enemies of God. And may I ask, what was the ground of that reconciliation? Well it was the death of God’s Son and nothing else. And certainly this applies to all who will ever be saved. The word **“for”** in our text looks back to the fact that God had commended His love toward His people, and that while they were yet sinners He sent His Son into the world to die for them and that they would be justified by His blood.

Let us now examine what our Scripture text did not say. It did not say “when we believed we were reconciled to God by the death of his son.” Our faith had nothing to do with the reconciliation that was Godward, and besides we are told that when we were yet enemies of God that we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Dear reader, the Bible does say we are saved by faith, but nowhere will you find that we are reconciled to God by faith. Saved speaks of our deliverance from sin and takes in a lot under that umbrella. We are saved in a practical sense as well.

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Our lives are changed and we do things differently after we are saved and all of that through faith. For example, the Bible says that Noah prepared the ark by faith. That was a lot of work involved in that, was it not? But why did he do such a thing when it had never rained before? Well, the Book of Hebrews tells us plainly. **“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith”** (Heb. 11:7). Now, if you really believed what God says, and He told you that He was about to bring a flood on the world to destroy it and that you were to build an ark to save yourself and your family, what would you do if you really believed Him? Sit there? Why you would move with fear just as Noah did. So you see, dear reader, Noah built that ark because of faith. He believed God.

Now back to that word reconciliation that we read of in our opening verse. The word reconciliation there is from the Greek word *katallasso* which has to do with exchanging coins or things of equal value. Strong's says, “to compound a difference.” It means to exchange one thing for another. One lexicon had “exchange, as coins for others of equivalent value.” It also means “to reconcile those who are at variance.” Have you ever heard of reconciling your bank statement? That involves balancing it. So when we were yet enemies of God the Lord balanced the difference totally. This has to do with the legal aspect of our salvation. We had “ordinances” of God that were

“against us” that could not just be overlooked. We owed a debt to the law and it had to be settled. And Jesus Christ settled it all; every last bit of it for His people. Listen to Paul's words concerning this very thing. **“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross”** (Col. 2:14). Dear reader, Jesus blotted out the entire debt of all who will ever be saved. And he nailed that debt to his cross and took it ALL out of the way while they were yet in unbelief. And the sobering fact is that He did this before we ever knew anything about it or had any concern for it. The writer of Hebrews when speaking of the Son declares, **“when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”** (Heb. 1:3).

Let me give you an earthly analogy. Let me say that you owed a banker one million dollars and you had no means to pay the debt. Unknown to you someone who you did not even like went and paid the entire debt for you. Now, is the debt paid or is it not? Will the banker come to you and require anything of you concerning this debt? Not if he is a just man. That may not be the best analogy that could be used but it illustrates the point. Isaiah said, **“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities”** (Isa. 53:11). The Father and the Son both are completely satisfied with what Jesus did and all for whom He did that will be justified in time, for He bore their iniquities. Paul tells us that Jesus hath **“made peace through the blood of his cross”** (Col. 1:20).

Now with reconciliation there is that part that is God-ward but there is a part that is man-ward as well. The American Heritage Dictionary definition says “to settle or resolve, as a dispute; to establish friendship between.” John Gill says, “Reconciliation implies a former state of friendship, a breach of the friendship, and a making it up again.” Of course this former state of friendship was in Adam before the fall because we were born spiritually dead in trespasses in sin. So, Jesus Christ has reconciled the elect of God when they were enemies by His sacrifice on the cross. God had made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (see II Corinthians 5:21). But He did not leave us in that state of unbelief and being His enemies. As Paul said in our opening verse **“much more.”** We are told that since we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, while we were yet enemies, we shall receive that reconciliation and be saved by His life. It is a sure thing. Those that He reconciled will be saved and not one will be lost. The Lord will find all of His lost sheep and will not lose one of them. Now because we were still at enmity with God and that because we were dead in our sins, God was pleased to quicken us to life from that dead state, yea, and will quicken all His elect in time. You see, the carnal mind, which we all have being lost, is at enmity with God. There is a need of reconciliation on our end. Paul said, **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God”** (Rom. 8:7-8). Oh saved Christian, this is the way we were **“But God, who is**

rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)” (Eph. 2:4-5). At the moment of faith we who were at enmity with God became friends with God. Repentance and faith came by grace in regeneration and we were reconciled unto God in our minds and we are now His friend and now we had and do have the **“peace of God, which passeth all understanding”** (Phil. 4:7). **“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God** (James 2:23). But, dear reader, all of this has its foundation in the reconciliation that took place at the cross. Back in Romans we are told by Paul in the next verse, **“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement”** (Rom. 5:11). The word atonement is from the Greek word *katallage* which comes from the same Greek word translated **“reconciled”** in the previous verse. So Christ reconciled His sheep at the cross, and then in time they are quickened and receive the reconciling by what He has done in their stead, and that new nature that they are given in regeneration joys in God.

Let me ask a question at this point. Can a dead tree produce fruit? You say of course not. So what is faith? Well, Paul tells us in Galatians 5:22 that faith is the fruit of the Spirit. Philippians 1:29 tells us that it is a gift of God. So how can a sinner who is spiritually dead according to Ephesians 2:1, 5 have faith if it is the fruit of the Spirit? Dear reader, all of this (repentance and faith) is the result

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When We Were

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of the reconciliation that Christ would do for the Old Testament saints and has done for the New Testament saints. It is all because of Him and not of us. All we can do is praise Him for saving our old wretched souls. **"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"** (John 1:12-13). Jesus said, **"Ye must BE born again"** (John 3:7) (emph. LL).

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

To the lost the question becomes this. Are you in need of reconciliation? Have your sins separated you from a thrice holy God? Do you know that **"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"** (Heb. 10:31)? Are your sins so heavy upon your soul that you cannot bear the load any longer? Well, Jesus says this, **"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"** (Matt. 11:28). Paul said, **"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief"** (I Tim. 1:15). Do you see yourself as the "chief of sinners?" If so, then come to Christ. If you say, "No, I am not such a bad person," then the invitation is not for you. As one preacher said, "I am looking for sinners!"

May God have mercy on lost sinners!



Jael

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untrustworthy beast, as any poisonous serpent or snake. She not only kept herself safe, but she also saved the people by way of slaying their enemy; who had already oppressed them grievously by way of his tyranny, murder, and plunder. How would you treat a dangerous snake in the grass? Would you attempt to befriend it? How would you treat a dangerous lion? Would you serve it supper and hope it would not turn again and rend you to pieces? How would you treat a dragon? Would you hope that it was an honorable dragon, and that, contrary to its nature, it would not destroy you, but would be kind and gentle and only act in your best interests? You would be accounted a fool if you did so with any dangerous beast, or dangerous enemy who was bent on your destruction, ruin, and downfall. You would be a fool if you did so with regards to the devil, who is your sworn enemy, who is bent on your destruction, ruin, and downfall, and whose only satisfaction is in the complete and utter death and doom of every man, woman, boy, and girl. He is a prince, being **"...the prince of the power of the air. . ."** (Eph. 2:2); but he is without honor. He is a ruler, but his rule ends in death and destruction. He is as a god, being called **"...the god of this world. . ."** (II Cor. 4:4); but he does not enlighten souls, but rather blinds them to the truth, to their own eternal loss and doom.

We find in our text that God had raised up a deliverer for His people Israel, to deliver them from their enemies. Deborah and Barak were the judges, or deliverers, of Israel, who had been raised up at this time to deliver

Israel from the oppression of the Canaanites. Nevertheless, the highest glory and honor of victory were going to belong to a woman who was not a soldier, not a warrior, not a judge, and was not even accounted of Israel, for she was the wife of a Kenite, who were the in-laws of Moses, and had joined themselves in spiritual alliance to Israel (Num. 10:29, Judges 1:16). The prophecy had gone on before that **"...the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. . ."** The glory and honor of the slaying of the mighty captain of Israel's enemy belonged to a woman, namely Jael (Judges 5:24-31).

I believe in Jael, her bravery, her victory, and her honor, we may see a glimpse of our Deliverer, Who defeated our great enemy, the devil, though He did so by humbling Himself in weakness, meekness, and humility, even enduring the death of the cross, in order to save us from death and endless loss.

Jael – CHRIST-LIKE IN HER BRAVERY

"And Jael went out to meet Sisera" As a woman, Jael was unarmed. We do not read that her husband was home to defend her from enemies at this time, though a war was known to be raging. She was naturally weaker than any soldier or man of war. Nevertheless, she bravely went out to meet the captain of the host of the Canaanites, and to draw him to his death. We read that Sisera had headed in her direction in hopes of safe haven. **"Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite. . ."** He thought he would be safe in a woman's tent. How shameful did he act! Not only did he flee away in cowardice from the battle he had lost, though he had

superior forces and armament; but he went to hide in the tent of a woman. He had robbed, raped, and killed women, and taken women hostage as slaves as the spoils of war in times past; but now he goes to hiding in a woman's tent. To all those who want to accuse Jael, I say they ought to accuse Sisera of his cowardice, his self-serving shameful cowardice; as well as his crimes of war and inhumanity. Sad, is it not, that people today want to accuse God when things are not as they would have them; but they will not accuse the devil of all his wicked deeds which he hath done, and of his disturbing the nations of the world (Isa. 14:12-17). Give shame to whom shame is due! Give infamy to whom infamy is due! Cast not reproach upon God, but upon the wicked, upon the wicked one and those who walk in wickedness with him!

Beloved, I tell you that Christ was brave, for He took upon Himself our weakness, our frail frame and nature, was made like us of flesh and blood, even to the end that He might taste death for every man; and in being Man, He went out to face the devil, the dragon, the serpent, the accuser of the brethren, the slayer of men and nations, and he in whose hand was the power of death and who held all men in bondage through fear of death. Christ did not come with ten thousand angels and thus go to Calvary. Nay, He came lowly and meek and empty of His eternal glory. He came as One who could be wearied, as One who could hunger, as One who required sleep, as One who could thirst, as One who could bleed, and as One who would die. He came forth the seed of the woman, made in the likeness

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Jael

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of sinful flesh; and in constant and true bravery, fed by faith in God, He faced our adversary, the prince of this dark world and of the legions fallen into darkness. He faced him in the wilderness, having fasted for forty days, and being an hungered. He faced him in the resistance to God's will and preference for the ways of man present in the very apostles He had chosen, as when He said to Peter, **“. . . Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men”** (Matt. 16:23). He faced our enemy at the cross, knowing full well that it was the **“. . . hour, and power of darkness”** (Luke 22:53), (John 12:23-33).

JAEL – CHRIST-LIKE IN HER VICTORY

Not only did Jael face the enemy of God's people, but she obtained the victory over him. She did not do so by weapons of man's might. No warrior's sword or spear did she wield. Her weapons were a cup and saucer of milk and cream, a warm wooly blanket, and a tent peg and mallet. She used the things of her home to conquer the mighty captain of the host of the Canaanites. Some would say, “She beguiled him.” All praise, then, to the woman wise as a serpent, who beguiled the beguiler, who slew the slayer, and who defeated the divider of the prey! Dead is Sisera, and that by the hands of a woman!

Christ was like this in His victory. He triumphed over the devil and his legions, over the powers of darkness, and over death itself (Col. 2:13-15). It was in His cross that Christ had the victory. It was in laying

down His life that He died our shameful death. It was in the agonies and sufferings of the cross that He, as our substitute, faced and overcame all our foes. It was not an honorable fight. Was it honorable for Sisera to seek to save his own skin and hide in the tent of a woman whom he was sure would be too afraid of his warrior and princely personage to defy him? Was it honorable of the devil and the powers of darkness to range themselves against Christ the Son of man? Would they so range themselves against Him if He had come forth as God Almighty, rather than as the Word made flesh dwelling among us? Did He resist them? Did He summon twelve legions of angels? Did He cause Mount Calvary to quake and crumble in His victory? Nay rather, Mount Calvary and her surroundings quaked in response to the death of her Creator, as He laid down His life as our Redeemer and the Savior of His brethren and all the children which God had given Him! His victory was when He tasted death for every man; and because of that victory, He is crowned with glory and honor.

JAEL – CHRIST-LIKE IN HER HONOR

The honor of victory belonged to Jael, and her praise was sung in song. So, too, do we now give glory to God through Jesus Christ and sing the name of the Lamb of God, because He has redeemed us to God by His blood; and so shall we do forever (Rev. 15:1-4; 5:8-13). Beloved, it is the purpose, privilege, and praise of every Christian life to have Christ-like victory over the devil and every enemy of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:57-58; Rom. 16:17-20).



END

Let These Sayings

(Continued from page 1) ♦

fact that He must be given into the hands of wicked men. Also, there is reference to the fact that He must soon lay down His life.

Of course, it would do us all much good to pay heed to the words of Christ, and to pay special heed to the sacrifice and the death of Jesus Christ, and the accomplishment of our salvation. The disciples were afraid to consider such things. The disciples were not yet spiritual enough to properly contemplate such things. **“But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying”** (Luke 9:45)

Today, I want to take our text verse, and apply it in a general way to the words and the sayings of God, and remind each of us that we have a duty and a responsibility – really, a blessed privilege – to hear the Word of God, and to make it a part of our lives. **“Let these sayings sink down into your ears”** should be a phrase that both motivates and inspires each of us, as we seek to learn about Jesus Christ, and as we seek to serve Him properly in this world.

HEAR WITH SPIRITUAL EARS

The first thing that I want you to consider today, is this: In our natural condition, we cannot properly hear and understand the Word of God. There may be an outer effect. There may be a moral effect. But, we are not capable, nor able to **“let these sayings sink down into your ears,”** in our natural condition. In order for the sayings and the words of God to penetrate into our beings, we must have the spiritual ears – given to us by God – so that we

can properly hear the words and the sayings of God. We read in the book of Zechariah, **“But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:”** (Zech. 7:11-13). This is the response of natural man – we refuse to hear the Word of God. We have no desire to hear about Him and His ways. There is not just an inability, there is also a total lack of desire.

In order for us to hear with spiritual ears, it is certain that regenerated ears are required. Our ears are originally deaf and closed to the truths of God's Word. But, by the grace of God, some are granted spiritual ears that are capable and willing to hear spiritual things. The Lord Jesus Christ said, **“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear”** (Matt. 11:15). Most of the world is willfully ignorant of the sayings of God; but, the elect, the chosen, the called unto salvation, are granted a marvelous privilege to hear the sayings and the words of God. **“And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from**

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. What can you tell me about the laughter of God, i.e. Psalms 37:13, 59:8, Proverbs 1:26?

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Before I answer the question allow me to make a very stern statement. I hate (and I use the word hate to the highest definition of the word) when I hear anyone say (especially a Christian) "God must have a sense of humor"! And that the Lord is up in Heaven laughing with joy. It makes me want to vomit.

I assure you God is not laughing in the sense of finding something funny, unless you believe sin is funny and that sending His only begotten Son to die and shed His blood on the cross for sinners such as we are is funny. It is absolutely disgusting that anyone would believe anything that God laughs at is meant to be funny.

I am thankful for the question and the one who sent it; people need to understand the seriousness about these verses here concerning God's laughter.

The verb phrases "laugh at" and "laugh off" mean to make fun of; deride, ridicule, to be scornful of; reject. That is what God is doing. He is rejecting and ridiculing the wicked for their plot against the just in Psalms 37:13. The word deride means to laugh at in scorn or contempt; scoff or jeer at; mock. "Laugh off" means to dismiss as ridiculous, trivial, or hollow.

As a noun "laughter" can be an expression of derision as expressed in Psalms 59:8. Derision means ridicule; mockery; an object of ridicule. God is mocking the wicked when calamity and fear comes upon them as in Proverbs 1:26.

These three verses do not give even a hint that the meaning of God's laughter is something that is funny to Him and I would take issue with anyone who thinks differently, because they would be 100% wrong.

With that said, I believe God has been very gracious to us in that He has allowed us to find humor in things and given us the ability to laugh as a relief for stress. But again there is nothing funny about the sin in this world and God sees nothing funny about it.

Years ago I was emailed this picture of the so called Christ laughing and having a good time in Heaven. I ask you, dear reader, what is so funny that Jesus would be laughing about? I find this picture offensive and can only imagine what God thinks. But yet this is the thinking of the so called fundamental Christian today. The Bible says, **"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"** (Rom. 8:34). **"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them"** (Heb. 7:25). Why, dear reader, is He making intercession for us? Could it be, uh, maybe He

is making intercession for our sins when we repent? If anyone finds that funny and laughable then I would ask them to rethink their salvation. God Bless!

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In each of the passages cited above the context reveals that God will render a just recompense of reward against the wicked who rejected His warnings, laughed at the sincere outward manifestations of His goodness, mocked His truth, and derided the only way of salvation. The ungodly who have mocked the Almighty must reap what they have sown. God will laugh with delight as the severity of His justice is carried out against those who hate Him and His ways. Though it is hard for an unglorified and finite mind to comprehend this aspect of God's holiness and justice, it is clearly revealed in Holy Writ. I will not apologize for the unabated wrath of God against sin, nor will I condemn the Most High who knows and sees all as He satisfies the perfection of His justice. What a warning to all those who would dare to defy the Almighty, mock His threatenings, and reject the gracious proclamation of the Gospel! May God be pleased to open your blinded eyes and reveal the glory of the crucified, buried, and risen Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

I agree wholeheartedly with the comment of John Gill on Proverbs 1:26:

"By way of retaliation,

measuring measure for measure; even as they scorned Him, and delighted in their scorning, now He in His turn will laugh at them and their distress; which act is ascribed to the Lord by an anthropopathy (ascription of human passions or feelings to a being not human, especially to a deity TWR); see Psalm 2:4 and 37:13, signifying that He should not at all pity them, show no compassion to them, and have no mercy upon them; but rather express a pleasure and delight in displaying the glory of His justice in their destruction; the plain sense is that no favour would be shown them, Isaiah 27:11."

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"The wicked plotteth against the just...The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming ...He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps. 37:12-13, 2:4) **"But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision"** (Ps. 59:8).

While there are many references to "laughter" in the English Bible, the beloved reader may have noticed from reading the texts, whenever it mentions God as "laughing," it is a laughter of scorn and mocking. Certainly, this is an important doctrine to be aware of. The surety that God scorns wicked sinners and their wickedness. Selah! Think about it! **"But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my**

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. In Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26 we read: **"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."** Did Jesus sing with the apostles? Why, or why not?

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Yes, there is no doubt in my mind that Jesus sang with the apostles. What is even of greater significance is that He sang in the midst of His church, the apostles being the first members of the church that Jesus started during His earthly ministry. This was a fulfillment of a Messianic prophecy in Psalm 22:22 and quoted in Hebrews 2:12: **"Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."** This proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Lord's New Testament church was in existence before the Day of Pentecost, a heresy popularized by C. I. Scofield and other misguided Protestants. Jesus, the founder and foundation of His church, is found singing in the midst of this local assembly of saved and baptized believers before He went to the cross! I have no doubt in my mind that the church Jesus was singing in was what we would today identify as a Baptist church in faith, doctrine, and practice. The church that Jesus started during His earthly ministry and promised perpetuity to preached the Gospel, believed in sovereign grace, baptized only believers by immersion

in water, and recognized the Lord as the only Head of their congregation. It could not have been a Catholic or Protestant church because they recognize dead heads as their founders and representatives. Nor could it have been what many Protestants boast of, a mythical, universal, invisible, church that never really assembles, observes no ordinances, has no pastors or deacons, and sends no missionaries. Jesus, the literal Christ, sang in the midst of a real congregation of believers that all had Baptist baptism and assembled in a definite locality! Thank God for the blessed truths about the Lord's New Testament Baptist Church! Ephesians 3:21: **"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen."**

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Jesus is our example for everything, and it is obvious by Matthew 26:17-20, being a Jew (which for some reason, people forget that) He followed the law. Remember Christ came to fulfil the law not to destroy or change it. **"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil"** (Matt. 5:17). He kept the whole letter of the law, for He was

the only One who could.

With that said it brings us to the answer to the question, "Did Jesus sing with the apostles?" The Bible does not say, but if we believe Jesus has gone this far to keep the Passover then I see no reason why Jesus did not sing with the rest of those that were there. We could ask, why would He not sing? To me, if Jesus is keeping with the things pertaining to the Passover, He would do the singing as well.

This is a quote taken from the Ritchie New Testament Commentaries on Matthew and Mark: "In singing **"an hymn"**, they would have used part of the Jewish Hallel consisting of Psalms 113-118, being appropriate Passover Psalms. **"When they had sung an hymn"** is one word in Greek (also in Mark 14:26), being the aorist participle of humneo. Psalms 113-114 would be sung at the beginning of the Passover feast: Jehovah was **"high above all nations"** (113:4), enabling Him to bring Israel **"out of Egypt"** (114:1). Psalms 115 demonstrates a passion for the glory of God: **"not unto us, but unto thy name give glory"** (v. 1), while Psalms 116:8, 9 rehearses the deliverance from death to walk in the land of the living. Psalms 117 is a brief expression of universal praise, while Psalms 118 is a prophetic conversation between the Lord and His people, His death and resurrection being the subject (v. 22). As they sung some of these Psalms, only the Lord knew how they applied to Himself - that He was about to fulfil their prophetic forthtellings."

Gill's Commentary says close to the same. Even though Jesus was walking to the betrayal of Judas Iscariot, I believe He sang with the rest of them as they left for **"the mount of Olives."** Oh what a Saviour we have, if only we

would love Him as He loves us! God Bless!

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Absolutely, the Teacher sang with them. **"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives"** (Matt. 26:30). **"They...sung"** and **"they went."** Christ Jesus was leading them out, and therefore He led them in song, as well. Selah! Think about it!

Note a few verses with me. **"And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer"** (Luke 22:15). **"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. ...Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. ...Jesus wept"** (John 19:28, 4:6, 11:35). **"And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray..."** (Matt. 26:40-41). **"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit..."** (Luke 10:21). Jesus hungered and ate with the disciples; thirsted and drank with them; prayed with them; wept with them; and rejoiced with them. Yes, He most certainly sang with them, too. **"The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with**

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Forum #1

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reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (Prov. 1:25-26).

But to take from this brief study that the only laughter that God is capable of is this derisive mocking of the perverse would be one-sided. The several Hebrew words and their variations are much like the English equivalents, in that they can speak of "merriment" or "derision," depending on the context. Using the same word in referring to God's affinity with the traits of "wisdom" Proverbs 8:30-31 says, **"Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing (sachaq/laughing) always before him; Rejoicing (sachaq/laughing) in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men."** The same Hebrew word is used here to speak of God's delight and rejoicing in wisdom, **"Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice (laugh) in time to come"** (Prov. 31:25).

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: ...A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (Eccl. 3:1, 4). God has made man in His own image, and therefore we cannot try to force humanistic traits upon the Sovereign One, but we do have some of the "genetic" traits of our Heavenly Father. Selah! Think about it! Surely He is the One that taught us to love truly and properly, and He is the One that causes us to rejoice and laugh. **"And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with**

me" (Gen. 21:5-6). There is truly a joy about the people of God, that has its root in God's own joy and pleasure. The Bible is filled with the delight that God takes in His people. **"...the LORD was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me"** (Ps. 18:18-19). **"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way"** (Ps. 37:23). **"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles"** (Isa. 42:1).

"Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers: Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing" (Job 8:20-21).

"The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD" (Ps. 104:31-34).

I have a hard time separating the words "rejoicing" and "delight" from the word laughter. I think that the happiest times of our life will be when the sweet communion of our God and His children is restored to that of the Edenic, pre-fall relationship that our Lord had with Adam and Eve. In all of the Eternal Ages to come, will we hear God laugh any more with derision? I think not... But whether His voice will rumble with a throaty chuckle of pure joy or a laugh of pure delight as we rejoice together over the times of restoration, I do not really know.

God is a Spirit, but Jesus Christ is the manifest body of the Godhead that will be a joyous Bridegroom of His adoring Baptist Bride and there will be no trouble at all hearing the joy and delight that will be a permanent fixture in that eternal relationship. Praise God! May our joyous laughter fill the halls of Heaven, to His Glory and Honor! Selah! Think about it! **"Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. ...Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven..."** (Luke 6:21-23).

MATTHEW STEPP



Forum #2

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singing" (Zeph. 3:17). Even as our Heavenly Father will joy over us with singing.

Any attempt to remove emotions from God are ill-founded urges of Scriptural ignorance! Love, hatred, joy, sorrow, grieving, laughing, groaning, etc, are all notated of our Sovereign God in Holy Writ. He is zealous, diligent and longsuffering. **"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love"** (John 15:9). **"And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart"** (Gen. 6:6). **"For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man"** (Ps. 5:4-6). **"For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God"** (Deut. 4:24). **"For he put on righteousness**

as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke" (Isa. 59:17). **"Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them..."** (Deut. 10:15).

Singing is an integral part of the worship that the Lord instituted within His people, and particularly His church. **"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"** (Eph. 5:18-19). Worship to our almighty God should commence with singing that is bubbling out of our very souls! We should sing (with God) because of our merry hearts of joy. There will be times when only the solemn dirges of sorrow will be appropriate. There will be times the talents of God's people will manufacture Majestic chords of praise to echo out of our church buildings. Times when we sing expectant refrains of rejoicing at His blessings and particularly, His Second Coming, tempered at times with reciprocated melodies of love. Our children will learn more about God with repetitive choruses of instruction in wisdom. Everything about singing is tied to the hope of our Blessed Saviour. The world knows nothing of our singing. We will sing of our salvation. We will sing psalms in the lowest points of depression and in heights of glorious victory. Even as they take us to the stake or the chopping block, we will sing of our blessed Saviour's atoning blood and His eternal intercession on our part.

Yes, our Lord has taught us to sing, and sing we must. Singing is a release of the emotions of God

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Forum #2

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that He has imparted within our souls. **“And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets”** (I Chron. 13:8). **“Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel”** (Isa. 44:23). All of Creation is required to sing to God’s glory. Even the inanimate plants, mountains and waters shall sing His praises and echo His glory. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



Let These Sayings

(Continued from page 11) ♦

him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and

righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them” (Matt. 13:10-17). The words spoken, and the miracles performed may not matter much to those who are without the grace of God. But, to those upon whom the grace of God has been bestowed, these same words, and these same miracles, hold great meaning, and are of tremendous importance and value.

The process of sinking down into our ears implies that the Word of God – the “sayings” of Jesus Christ – will go further than just into our ears. The truth is, that the Word of God must sink down into our ears, and saturate our hearts and minds. And yet, in our natural state, we do not possess a heart that is soft enough, or a heart that is prepared to receive the “sayings” of Jesus Christ. A regenerated heart is required. Our hearts are originally hard and stony and impossible to be penetrated with the truth. **“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye”** (Acts 7:51).

The only hope of men is that the ears would be opened, the heart would be made tender, and the eyes would see the spiritual words and deeds of God. We read in the book of Ezekiel, **“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my**

judgments, and do them” (Ezek. 36:25-27).

Through the ears, and into the heart – this is the way that understanding is granted by God, and found by men. But, we often are kept from this wisdom because of the material world and because of our fallen and frail nature. Even after we are saved, just like the disciples of the Lord, we may allow some worldly reasoning, or some worldly distraction, to come between us and the purity of the understanding of God’s Word. **“But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying”** (Luke 9:45).

SOME SAYINGS ARE DIFFICULT

So, we need spiritual ears in order that the sayings and the words of God will sink down into our very beings. However, as we have just noticed with the disciples in the time of Christ’s earthly ministry, some sayings are very difficult to fathom, and, if our hearts and minds are properly in tune with God and His will, then we may struggle to comprehend, and we may struggle to grasp and believe the words and the teachings of God.

In a sense, humanly speaking, every word and saying of God is difficult for men to hear and understand. There is no possibility, as we have noticed, that natural men and women can have any true spiritual benefit from the Word of God unless God would intervene. However, I want you to also know that, even in the case of the saved, some “sayings” of Jesus Christ, and some portions of the Word of God, are more difficult than others. As we study the Scriptures we find that the sayings of God, which are necessary and good for every

child of God, are sometimes very difficult, and they do not sink down into our ears and hearts and minds as they should.

As we examine the lives of the Apostles, and their relationship with Jesus Christ, it is evident that even these disciples who were intimately associated with Jesus Christ sometimes struggled to understand the teachings of God. In some cases, we find that these sayings were difficult, because they were a rebuke to the disciples. **“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men”** (Matt. 16:21-23). In this case, Jesus Christ was saying something that Peter did not want to hear. Since he did not want to hear these words of Christ, they were difficult for him to believe and understand. In a sense, these words of Christ contain a rebuke to Peter and the other disciples because they did not want to believe and trust in the purposes and the will of God.

Sometimes, the same may be true for you and I. It could be that the sayings, the words, and the teachings of God may be difficult for us to fathom because we simply do not want to hear. Our own unwillingness to set aside our own desires, and to submit our will and our purpose to the purposes of God, will make these sayings very

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Let These Sayings

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difficult indeed. Though others may readily believe, trust, and adhere to a particular saying of God; we may struggle because of our own lack of desire to believe this particular saying of God.

Notice that our text passage uses the word “**let**.” There is a participation on the part of the listener, which is required. One speaks, but the words will do no good if another does not listen. You can hear, but not really listen. It is not that we are responsible for the softened heart and the opened ears that we receive at the time of regeneration. But, rather, that we are held responsible – once saved – to pay heed to the Word of God. To “**let**” the sayings of God sink down into our ears.

The reason for our lack of belief and trust might seem acceptable, or even noble at times. Maybe we just want to fit in. Maybe we just want to temper our beliefs so that we do not offend others. But, in the end, our lack of understanding will, many times, boil down to the simple fact that we do not want to listen to the Word of God, and we are purposely making the sayings of God difficult. These sayings of Christ, and the teachings of the Bible, may not sink down into our ears and into our hearts and into our beings, because the sayings may reprove us and our actions; or, there is something taught which we simply do not want to believe. The reasons for our lack of hearing may be (humanly speaking) noble or selfish. But, the results are the same: we have neglected the very Word of God, and put up a barrier to prevent these blessed sayings from sinking down into our ears.

Again, we may resist or reject some sayings, simply because they

are too difficult. We may not have learned enough. Or, maybe we do not want to learn anymore. Maybe we feel that it is too difficult to apply ourselves and learn and grow in the Scriptures so that we can understand, comprehend, and rejoice in the meanings of certain sayings of the Lord. The Apostle Peter said, “**And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen**” (II Pet. 3:15-18). The Apostle Peter knew that some would struggle to gain a proper understanding of the Word of God – he implicitly includes the God-inspired epistles of Paul with “**the other scriptures**” – but this does not excuse us from putting forth the effort to comprehend and apply the Word of God to our lives.

I know that the sayings of the Bible concerning salvation are not too difficult for men to understand; after all, the Holy Spirit will take this Gospel and use it in the salvation of every one of those who are ever saved by the grace of God. However, as we grow spiritually, and as we study the further extent of the Word of God, we are exposed to some

teachings which are harder and deeper spiritually than others. It is true that some sayings are hard to understand. These sayings may, in fact, be difficult for many of the saved to understand. It is not a sin to be young and inexperienced in the faith, at least not when we are first saved! We grow and increase in faith and knowledge, and these difficult passages and sayings may be revealed to us as we study and pray unto God. We are only mortals, after all, and our finite minds certainly limit our understanding and our comprehension in spiritual matters. But, I want to remind you again that this is not an excuse for a total lack of desire, and a total lack of studying and praying, and a total lack of effort expended in the pursuit of the knowledge of God and His Word. We need to exercise and grow our spiritual man, by a diligent study and a daily application of the Word of God. We know in our own hearts, as children of God, that all sayings are good for us to hear – profitable to us, if they will “**Sink down into our ears.**” “**Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth**” (II Tim. 2:15).

TAKE THESE SAYINGS WITH YOU

As I conclude this sermon, I want to remind each of you that are under the sound of my voice to “**Take these sayings with you**” when you leave this place. I want you to be reminded of the importance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ – the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ – which is likely the “**saying**” that the Lord Jesus Christ had most in mind when He addressed His disciples. I also want you to be encouraged to truly study the Word of God

– make His Word a part of your daily existence. Let the “**sayings**” of Jesus Christ, and the Word of God penetrate through your ears, into your hearts, and let Him and His Word saturate your very being. All of the outward religious deeds in the world will not do you, personally, any spiritual good if you do not have the Word of God in your heart. “**Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts**” (Jer. 15:16).

You can have all of the best intentions, but if you do not have the wisdom and understanding that comes from the Word of God, how can you scripturally discern the right and the wrong? And, how can you make the Biblically sound decisions that you should make if you do not have the Word of God with you? “**With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes**” (Ps. 119:10-12). This Word of God, and the sayings of God, must be harbored deep in our hearts. The Scriptures and the teachings and the doctrine of God should be a part of our core and the center of our being.

The Word of God is a necessary and ever-present source of wisdom, truth, guidance, and strength. Everywhere we go. Anywhere we are. Every time, and every place, let the sayings of God (the Word of God) be ever-present with us. This is one reason that memorization and a general familiarity with God’s Word is so necessary.

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Let These Sayings

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We can meditate, contemplate, and consider the Word of God whenever and wherever we are. We should take His Word with us; who knows when or where we might be confronted with a situation that will require the wisdom and the power of the Word of God? **“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates”** (Deut. 6:4-9).

The Word of God, and a knowledge (in our hearts) of His sayings, is a proof of our obedience, our devotion, and our love for God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Do you love Him? Then show a love for His Word. Take the Word with you. Let God's Word sink down into your ears, into your heart, and into the very essence of your being. When you wake up; when you work or go to school; when you indulge in your past times; when you eat; when you rest; when you lay down to go to sleep; may the Word of God ever be with you, and may His Word ever be evident in your lives.



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.

IS SEX-CHANGE TREATMENT PLANNED PARENTHOOD'S NEW MONEYMAKER?

(WNS)--While pro-life legislation chips away at its taxpayer-based revenue, the nation's leading abortion provider might have found a new cash cow. At 32 of its centers in 10 states, Planned Parenthood now offers hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for clients wanting to change their gender expression. Despite the long-term physical and psychological risks associated with gender reassignment treatments, the abortion giant's little-known but emerging enterprise has not incited the same public backlash as another of its formerly hush-hush business practices—trafficking in aborted babies' body parts. Capitalizing on an upswing in the growing acceptance of transgender rights, Planned Parenthood is expanding its brand into a potentially lucrative market.

BELIEFS ON HOMOSEXUALITY GET CHRISTIAN STUDENT KICKED OUT OF COLLEGE

(WNS)--Former Missouri State University student Andrew Cash is suing the college for kicking him out based on his opposition to same-sex relationships. Cash, who began his master's in counseling in 2007, was expelled from the program in 2014 for expressing his views on counseling homosexual couples on relationship issues. “He never said he would not counsel a gay person,” Jason Craddock, a lawyer with the Thomas More Society, which filed

the suit earlier this week, told me. Cash told administrators he would counsel homosexuals suffering from depression and anxiety, but not couples and not regarding their homosexual relationships. Instead, he would refer them to another counselor who did not share his views. “That still was not good enough for the university,” Craddock said.

ACLU SUES MISSISSIPPI OVER LAW PROTECTING FREEDOM OF RELIGION, CONSCIENCE

(WNS)--A Mississippi law set to take effect July 1 to protect business owners who believe marriage should be between one man and one woman is now under attack from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The ACLU filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of gay couple Nykolas Alford and Stephen Thomas seeking to block House Bill 1523. Last month, hundreds of protesters stood outside the Governor's Mansion with signs such as “No Hate In My State” while Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant signed the bill into law. He said at the time the new law would “protect sincerely held religious beliefs and moral convictions.” Under the law, wedding-related business owners would be shielded from “discriminatory action” against them for acting in accordance with their convictions that marriage is between one man and one woman, that sex is reserved for marriage, and that gender is a biological, immutable physical characteristic.

In a statement Monday, ACLU attorney Josh Block called the law “anti-LGBT and unconstitutional. We will not rest until every last piece of this law is struck down and all LGBT people in Mississippi have equal justice under the law,” he said.

Standing outside the Jackson, Miss., courthouse, Alford and Thomas compared their actions to the 1960s civil rights movement. When a reporter asked Alford to expound on his earlier statement that the law made him feel like a second-class citizen, he responded, “That is also being black and gay. Our grandparents experienced discrimination for being black, and my parents probably did as well.” My parents were born in the '60s and grew up in the '70s and '80s, and so it is always been a part of our lives. We thought this movement was over, you know? We thought that we would be fine. We thought that we would be equal, and here we are today saying that we are not, and we want equality.”

The ACLU is suing Judy Moulder, Mississippi state registrar of vital records, and seeks a court injunction to bar her from enforcing the law.

Governor Bryant responded by denouncing the lawsuit. “The ACLU continues its mission of trying to use the federal court system to push its liberal agenda. Instead of cherry-picking causes popular with the radical left, the ACLU should allocate its resources defending all civil liberties.”

CHRISTIAN BAKER LOSES APPEAL IN SAME-SEX WEDDING CAKE CASE

(WNS)--The Colorado Supreme Court will not hear the case of a Christian baker who declined to make a cake for a same-sex wedding celebration. The decision, released April 25, upholds a prior ruling by the Colorado Court of Appeals

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against the baker, Jack Philips of Masterpiece Cakeshop in Lakewood, Colo. Philips had appealed the Colorado Civil Rights Commission's order to create cakes for same-sex weddings, reeducate his staff on discrimination policy, and file quarterly "compliance" reports for two years after he declined to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple in 2012. Philips' attorneys said Monday they are evaluating all legal options—including an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

TENNESSEE ADOPTS PROTECTIONS FOR CHRISTIAN COUNSELORS

(WNS)--Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam is facing backlash from LGBT activists after signing a bill that protects Christian counselors who do not want to advise people in same-sex relationships. "No counselor or therapist providing counseling therapy services shall be required to counsel or serve a client as to goals, outcomes, or behaviors that conflict with the sincerely held principles of the counselor or therapist," Senate Bill 1556 states. Sarah Kate Ellis, president of the LGBT activist organization GLAAD, claims the law will "target LGBT people." "Denying anyone vital mental health services simply because they are LGBT is not just outrageous, it is outright dangerous," Ellis said. But Haslam notes the law also protects clients by allowing professional counselors to send them to someone "better suited" to meet their needs.

CHRISTIAN COLLEGES TARGETED FOR GENDER VIEWS

(WNS)--Amid pressure from the nation's largest LGBT advocacy group, the U.S. Department of Education publicly released a list

of Christian schools seeking Title IX exemptions over their views on transgenderism. In December, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) issued a report calling for "greater transparency" for religious schools seeking exemptions "under the guise of religious liberty." On April 29, the Obama administration published the results of the request—placing the spotlight on each college and university seeking to hold true to a Biblical worldview on gender and sexuality.

FAMILIES SUE GOVERNMENT FOR REDEFINING TITLE IX

(WNS)--Fifty-one families from the Chicago suburbs are saying "enough" to the Obama administration forcing schools to let boys and girls who identify as the opposite sex use the restrooms of their choice. The families, represented by Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) and the Thomas More Society, filed a suit against the U.S. Department of Education in federal court May 4. The lawsuit claims the department is "continuing to trample students' privacy and other constitutional and statutory rights" in its enforcement of Title IX, a law that prohibits gender discrimination in federally funded schools. In April 2014, the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) ruled Title IX protections cover discrimination

on the basis of gender identity as well as biological sex. Since then, schools around the country have faced threats of having their federal funding revoked if they do not meet the demands of transgender students.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS ATTACKS IN NIGERIA HIGHLIGHT NEW JIHADIST THREAT

(WNS)--Terrorists descended on four villages in northern Nigeria on April 12, destroying homes and killing villagers. Early reports from eyewitnesses say Fulani tribal fighters burned alive Christian residents, torched animals and houses, and destroyed farms. They estimate the attackers killed 44 villagers, but numbers are difficult to confirm because victims scattered to take refuge elsewhere. Fulani terrorism is on the rise in northern Nigeria but has generated less attention than attacks by Boko Haram, the militant group that last year formally pledged allegiance to Islamic State. Boko Haram gained international notice when it bombed the UN headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria's capital, in 2011. Since then, it has been labeled the most deadly terrorist group in the world—responsible for the deaths of an estimated 11,000 Nigerians in 2015.



From the Pen of a Country Preacher



Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



The Requirements of Discipleship

"Art not thou also one of his disciples?" (John 18:25).

Our English word "disciple" means "a pupil, follower, or adherent of any teacher of religion." "Disciple" is a translation

of the Greek word *mathetes* from *m a n t h a n o* which means "to learn." The root word *math* indicates thought

accompanied by endeavour (See W. E. Vine). Disciple denotes one who follows one's teaching, as the disciples of John (Matt. 9:14), of the Pharisees (Matt. 22:16), of Moses (John 9:28). It is generally used of the followers of Jesus Christ in our New Testament (Acts 9:1).

My concern in this message is the requirements of discipleship. What are the things necessary to being a disciple of Jesus Christ? Are all church members real disciples of Christ? What about even preachers of the gospel? If you were arrested and arraigned on the charge of being a disciple of Jesus Christ, would there be enough evidence to convict you? According to our Lord, the requirements of discipleship are stern and severe.

SACRIFICE OF AFFECTIONS

In Luke 14:26 our Lord declared: "**If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.**" The Master Teacher was not in the number racket. He would not attempt to ensnare any of the multitude present by a smooth path to Heaven (Ezek. 2:6; Acts 9:16). He was more concerned with quality than quantity. His words were adapted to sift the crowd of half-hearted followers.

Much controversy has been made of the words about hating our relatives. Some give the word "hate" its bare, bold, and literal meaning and use it to justify all forms of ill treatment of their relatives. The word hate must have some qualifications. It must not be explained so as to contradict other Scriptures (Eph. 6:1-3; Col. 3:20). Evidently in this

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verse to hate means to love less (Gen. 29:30-31). Jesus explained it this way in Matthew 10:37: **“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”** Christ did not teach that His disciples must hate their family and friends. Rather, He taught those who follow Him must love Him with a deeper love even than their nearest and dearest relatives.

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ, you must sacrifice love of relatives to the supreme love of Christ. He claims His right to the throne of our hearts. When there is competition between the claims of Christ and our relatives, Christ should be everything and our relatives nothing. We must hate all things---our relatives and friends---if they draw us away from Christ and His service. Those who fail to do this **“cannot”** be a disciple of our Lord.

We are to hate our relatives in the same sense we hate our own lives as seen in the last part of the verse. It is impossible to hate your own life in the absolute sense (Eph. 5:29; Job 2:4). A man can hate his own selfish life. He can hate himself when the self in him rises in rebellion against Christ and duty. He may hate that in his relatives which would seek to draw him away from Christ (Matt. 10:36). He must hate the selfishness in his own love for them which tempts him to disobey God and please them in order to retain their friendship. As one hates his own life in this world, he keeps it unto eternal life (Matt. 16:25; John 12:25). Even so, hatred of relatives is really love for them in a deeper

and a more unselfish affection.

SELF-SACRIFICE

In Luke 14:27 Jesus continues to set forth the demands for discipleship: **“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”** Prior to His death Christ foresaw that He must bear His cross (Matt. 16:21-23). Likewise he foresaw that every disciple of His must take up his cross. He saw no exceptions. Each disciple must take up his own cross. Not Christ’s cross, for He only could bear that, but the cross Christ has appointed for him to bear as a disciple. We are not at liberty to step over it, or go around it, or to avoid it. We are not to murmur at the cross appointed us, nor to despise it, nor faint under it. Picture, if you can, a procession led by a cross-bearing Christ, and made up of His cross-bearing disciples, reaching through all the ages of Christendom!

Some speak of the burdens of life as the crosses that they must bear. They think that giving up pleasures and enduring reproaches is all that the cross means for a Christian. In a very limited sense this may be true, but this is hardly all that Christ meant by cross bearing. Christ’s cross was an instrument of death. He carried His cross to die upon. We must take our lives in our hands and be ready at any moment to sacrifice it for Christ and His cause. Christ was crucified for us; we must be willing to die in any way He wishes. It is the martyr’s spirit here that Christ insists upon. Unless we love not our life unto death (Rev. 12:11), we **“cannot”** be His disciple.

Crucifixion has no meaning for a corpse. The victim must be a living man. Paul said: **“I am crucified with Christ:**

nevertheless I live” (Gal. 2:20). To a disciple crucifixion is as real a thing for him as it was for Christ. He must crucify **“the flesh with the affections and lusts”** (Gal. 5:24) and the world (Gal. 6:14). As a living man on a cross, the nails go through his likings, his desires, his hopes, his flesh, and his will. Nailed to the cross he suffers because he is alive. At times he exclaims: **“I die daily”** (I Cor. 15:31). Cross bearing is a living death, designed to crucify the whole body of sin.

MUST GIVE UP ALL

Christ illustrates the stern demands of discipleship in Luke 14:28-32 by two things. First, there is the rash builder: **“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish”** (Luke 14:28-30).

The rash builder illustrates that discipleship involves building a Christlike character. That it is a life-long work of a true disciple. Life on earth is not for enjoyment or worldly gain, but for the building up of holy character. All worldly things are but scaffolding to further building of a Christlike character. The building of such a character takes a lifetime. This life-long task must be considered at the beginning, if there is not to be failure long before the end. A person must count the cost of real discipleship before he professes to be one.

Another illustration is seen in the rash soldier: **“Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to**

meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace” (Luke 14:31-32). Here we see the Christian life is a warfare. We are in enemy territory, and there is a continual struggle with an enemy stronger than ourselves. No one should begin the conflict unless he is prepared to fight to the death. If a person is not willing to face pain and death, without turning back, he **“cannot”** be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Entire self-surrender is necessary to discipleship: **“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple”** (Luke 14:33). You will note that each time in Luke 14 the conditions of discipleship are harder and sterner than before: Hating your relatives and life, carrying a cross, and finally forsaking all we have. Did Christ want to discourage people from becoming His disciples? It would seem He did not care to swell the number of disciples who would follow out of temporary excitement and fail in the hour of trouble. He urged all to count the cost before they started. Feeling is not faith, and fleshly excitement is not the workings of the Spirit of grace.

Very few people are willing to give up all. But if we prize possessions and property more than Christ, then Christ is nothing to us. We must put Christ before everything on earth. We may have to sacrifice everything when He claims it from us. Paul said: **“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom**

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I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

SELF-DENIAL

By nature men are lovers of their own selves (II Tim. 3:2). According to Jesus Christ, self-denial is the badge of true discipleship: **"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"** (Matt. 16:24). This is the fundamental law of admission into Christ's school, and the first and greatest lesson to be learned. If a man would follow Christ, he must voluntarily renounce everything that might hinder his discipleship. He must surrender his will to Christ and have no will but Christ's (I Sam. 3:18; Acts 21:14; Luke 22:42).

Self-denial is not to deny what a man really is (II Tim. 2:13), or the blessings of grace (I Cor. 15:10). It is to deny the understanding and depend upon God (Prov. 3:5-6). It is to deny the affections (I John 2:15) and set them on heavenly things (Col. 3:1-2). It is to deny the body and its members and yield them to Christ (Rom. 6:12-13; 13:14). It is to deny worldly profit for the cause of Christ (Matt. 9:9; 6:20,22; 19:27). It is to deny our health and to hazard our life for Christ (Acts 15:26). It is to deny our life and to lay it down for Christ (Mark 8:34-37; Acts 21:13; Rev. 12:11) and the brethren (I John 3:16).

Christ not only demanded self-denial, but He set an example of it Himself (Phil. 2:5-8; Rom. 15:3). There can be no salvation where there is self-satisfaction, self-righteousness, and self-pleasing (II Cor. 5:14-15). It is our sinful

self we must be saved from, for self is an antichrist and glories in self-exaltation. Till a man denies himself, he denies Christ. Deny self or you will deny Christ, for self is an atheist and an idolater. The initial act of self-denial leads to our salvation, and it becomes the habit and practice of our lives. **"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross DAILY, and follow me"** (Luke 9:23) (emph. MRC).

PERSEVERANCE

Christ taught that only steady continuance is the real and safe proof of discipleship: **"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed"** (John 8:31). Short of making the Word of Christ the restplace for heart and mind, discipleship would be impossible. A true disciple receives and continues in the doctrines of his Master (Rev. 3:8). It is not enough to believe in Him (Jas. 2:17-26); we must also continue in the Word of Him Who is the incarnate Word, yielding to it as the truth about God and man.

The perseverance of the saints is seen here. If there is no continuance in the teaching of Jesus Christ, then there is no real grace and faith in the heart. Those who fall away never knew the grace of God in truth, and they must not flatter themselves by claiming to be disciples of Christ. God's elect continue believing and practicing the teachings of Christ, and their lives show it. Perseverance follows from our election: **". . . and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful"** (Rev. 17:14). Those who have the faith of God's elect trust in Christ and stay in His service (Isa. 54:10; Matt. 10:22). Only hypocrites fail to endure to the end (I John 2:19).

FRUITFULNESS

Another requirement for discipleship is seen in John 15:8: **"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."** Just as good grapes on a vine prove the vine is a good one, so we prove ourselves disciples of Christ by fruitbearing. The construction in the Greek text is durative: "keep on bearing fruit." God the Father is glorified not by our will to bear fruit, but by the fact we actually bear fruit, and not simply some fruit, but **"much fruit"** (John 15:5). Whenever we go on bearing much fruit the Father is glorified. Our continued fruitfulness demonstrates conclusively that we are disciples of Christ.

The branches of a grape vine are united to the vine for the purpose of bearing fruit. The same sap circulates through the whole plant. Even so, Christians evidence the presence of the spiritual life of Christ in them by bearing fruit. We are in union with Christ, and we are therefore able to draw from His Divine fullness all we need to bring forth much fruit. We bear fruit through Christ, and Christ bears fruit through us; our fruit is really His. Separated from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5); in Christ all things are possible (Phil. 4:13).

The idea of discipleship is perfected in those believers who bear much fruit to the glory of the heavenly Husbandman. The fruit which Christ requires of His disciples is faithfulness in doing good and bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Only those disciples who bear the fruit of righteousness prove they are disciples indeed. Jesus said: **"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them"** (Matt. 7:20). John declared: **"If ye know that he is righteous, ye**

know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (I John 2:29).

LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN

Another requirement for discipleship is love of the brethren: **"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"** (John 13:34-35). Love of the brethren is the distinguishing mark of Christ's disciples. By this they may know they are disciples: **"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death"** (I John 3:14). By this feature all others may know them. Tertullian wrote that the glory of the primitive church was seen in how they loved one another. Even their adversaries saw it and said, "See how these Christians love one another."

Alas! how changed is the spirit of the Christian world since primitive times! Look at the malice, envy, quarreling, bickering, and backbiting among modern-day Christians! Nothing hinders the advance of Christ's kingdom more than the absence of brotherly love among professed Christians! Would all the debates and divisions which exist among our churches be present if love for the brethren were as it should be? I fear many church members, whether they know it or not, daily proclaim they are not Christ's disciples! It is stupid to talk about election and regeneration, unless people can see in us practical Christian love.

The test of real discipleship is not knowledge, or orthodoxy, or fleshly activities. Rather, it is

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unselfishly seeking the good of the saints. The disciples of Christ are to be marked by that in which the children of the world are sadly lacking. A Christian must love all other Christians, whether they are in a mansion or a grass hut. We must overlook the distinction of denominations, of the color of skin, and of national boundaries. Wherever we find a man or a woman who bears the Christian name and manifests the Christian spirit, we must love them. If we have no love for our brethren in Christ, we have no salvation, no true Christianity!

DISCIPLESHIP AND BAPTISM

There is a close connection between discipleship and baptism: **"When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John..."** (John 4:1). Baptism does not make one a disciple of Christ. A person must be a disciple prior to his baptism because Christ commanded His church to baptize no one but disciples: **"Go ye therefore, and teach (or, make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"** (Matt. 28:19).

Churches in this age are very quick to baptize new members, even when they have not made a good confession of faith in Christ. Before we baptize a person into the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13), we must discover if he is a follower of Christ. Has he learned the way of salvation by Christ? Has he denied himself? Has he forsaken all for Christ? Can he bear persecutions for Christ? Is he daily increasing in the knowledge of Christ's Word? Does he bear

the fruit of the Spirit? Only when these questions are answered in the affirmative is it proper for us to baptize a person. I fear many churches today are guilty of goat baptism (John 12:4).

CONCLUSION

Do not expect to fare better in this world than your Lord and Master did. Our great Teacher was called Beelzebub, the god of flies, the name of a chief demon (Matt. 10:25). He was persecuted and hated by the world (Matt. 10:22-23). If we are going to be disciples of Christ, we had better get prepared for the same. **"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord"** (Matt. 10:24-25). **"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"** (John 15:18-19).

There is great cost to being a disciple of Jesus Christ. It may cost you life-long separation from your relatives. You may suffer hunger and cold and nakedness. Being a disciple makes demands upon your time, treasures, and talents. It will require that you give yourself up entirely to Christ and His service. You will have to fight against the world, the flesh, and the Devil. You might have to appear before cruel magistrates and wicked rulers. It is possible that you might have to die on a wooden cross as did your Lord and Master. If you are not willing to pay the price, then you cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ (Luke 14:26-27, 33).



The Short Pews



Brief
Articles
by Curtis
Pugh

A BEAUTIFUL STORY TWISTED OUT OF SHAPE

The Lord Jesus illustrated the salvation of individual sinners saying, **"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost"** (Luke 15:4-6).

The two main characters in this illustration are the lost sheep and the shepherd. The ninety-nine sheep are incidental. Notice who does the action in this parable. It is the owner of the lost sheep that does all in rescuing his property.

Remember the Lord Himself told us the two-fold purpose of parables. In Luke 8:10 He said, **"Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand."** Parables are teaching aids to disciples, but intentionally hide the truth to spiritually dead sinners. Those people have not received a love of the truth and only twist the Scriptures **"unto their own destruction"** (II Peter 3:16).

It is to be expected, then, that the vast majority of men, being

lost in sin, miss the point of this parable. Or, they deliberately ignore it and twist it because it does not fit in with their ideas and pet teachings. The lost sheep is not said to be looking for his owner. It is totally passive. The lost sheep does not seek its master and rightful owner. It is like a baby in the birth experience: the baby is a participant in its own birth, but it is not the cause of its birth. It is the mother who goes into labor and it is the owner of the lost sheep who does all necessary to find his lost sheep and carry it safely home. No effort, strength, or activity is mentioned on the part of the sheep.

And so it is with the new birth. Men and women are spiritually dead in their sins (see Ephesians 2:1, 5), and being dead do not even know they are in that awful condition. Oh, they may give mental assent to the truth about themselves, but they do not know it in a spiritually profitable way. But Christ is the Good Shepherd. He seeks each lost sheep knowing exactly where each one is. He finds His lost sheep and raises it to His shoulders, as it were, and safely carries it to His home. Could anything be clearer and more Christ-honoring than to recognize that **"Salvation is of the LORD"** (Jonah 2:9). Have you seen that salvation is wholly of grace? Or do you twist Christ's parable by saying that sinners must do this or that in order to be found?

NOBODY BELIEVES IN PREDESTINATION ANYMORE

A relative once asked this preacher about the differences between two Presbyterian groups. His answer mentioned that the two Presbyterian groups

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held somewhat different views of predestination. His relative's reply was, "Predestination! I didn't know anybody believes in predestination anymore!" This relative was an active member of long standing in a Protestant denomination. Perhaps because she never heard any teaching in her church on the subject, she thought that nobody in this modern era still believes in predestination.

Actually, the truth of a thing does not depend on whether it is believed or not. The truth of a religious teaching depends on whether or not the Bible teaches it. Since the words "predestinate" and "predestinated" are found in the Bible, if you believe the Bible you must believe in predestination. The aforementioned words are found as follows: **"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren"** (Rom. 8:29). **"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified"** (Rom. 8:30). **"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,"** (Eph. 1:5). **In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"** (Eph. 1:11).

A careful reading of these four verses along with an examination of their context should convince any unprejudiced person that there is indeed such a

thing as predestination. That predestination involves certain individuals is clear for it is **"whom he [God] did predestinate."** That predestination took place sometime in the past is obvious. That predestination or pre-determination has been accomplished by the God **"who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"** is stated. God accomplished this predestination **"according to the good pleasure of his will."** It is sad that many professing Christians spend their time either in outright denial of the teaching of predestination or in trying to explain it away.

Predestination is the second step in God's plan of salvation following foreknowledge. Foreknowledge is God's knowing or setting His love upon individuals. Following predestination comes the effectual calling to Christ by which the lost sinner is brought to Christ. Next comes justification: the judicial act of God in declaring the believer righteous. After justification comes glorification. Notice all these are in the past tense in Romans 8:30. The salvation of those predestinated is so sure that God views these persons as already glorified – i.e. they are in His mind and purpose already in possession of their eternal glorified bodies. The Bible says, **"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world"** (Acts 15:18). This is the God with whom we have to do. The teaching of predestination will promote the fear of the Lord and humility in those predestinated. But, alas, almost nobody believes in predestination anymore.

EVENTS MADE CERTAIN

Francis Turretin (1623 – 1687) said, "An event must be made

certain, before it can be known as a certain event." We quote this old Protestant because his words are simple, but deep in meaning. Let us relate Turretin's words to Bible prophecy. No one can know that a future thing is certain until it is made certain. The Bible teaches that God knows all things. The fact that God knows an event to be certain to happen does not make the event certain. However, God, having decreed events aforetime, He knows them to be certain because they are certain: He fixed them to be so.

The Bible says, **"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world"** (Acts 15:18). Since God knows all His works from the beginning of the world, they must be certain. For if He knows a thing is going to happen, it is going to happen. It is not going to happen because He knows that it is, but rather because He fixed it – He made it certain. The fact that He made it certain is the reason that He knows it to be certain. Since God has known all His works from the beginning of creation, we must conclude that all God's works are certain and have been from the beginning of the world. This view is consistent with both logic and the Bible.

Thus, when Jesus prophesied the words, **"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"** (John 6:37) He spoke of a certainty. He spoke of certain individuals whom the Father had given Him. The Father's giving of some people to the Son is a work of God. The fact that Jesus knew that all given to Him by the Father would come to Him is certain. It is certain because God fixed it from the beginning of the world. He fixed it that each individual whom He gave to the Son would come.

God's work involved specific individuals doing a specific thing – coming to Christ. Since God knew with an absolute certainty that these would come, it was fixed and absolutely certain from the beginning of the world.

So it is when the Bible speaks of certain Gentiles, saying, **"...as many as were ordained to eternal life believed"** (Acts 13:48), it speaks of God making certain events yet future. We know this because "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Since He knew from the beginning what He was going to do to and in these Gentiles in ordaining them to eternal life, He made it certain that they would believe from the beginning of the world also. Why? Because a thing must be made certain before it can be known to be certain. Because God made it certain, a believer may with certainty sing, "When His chosen ones shall gather over on the other shore, And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there."

A PERSONAL REVELATION

The Bible is God's revelation. It tells us how God saves sinners and how saved folk ought to live to please Him. It tells us about future events and historical ones. It is a fountain of knowledge. No person is truly educated who does not have a working knowledge of It. But the Bible will not save anyone. It can make a person wise to salvation, but it cannot save.

Salvation begins with the new birth. Jesus said, **"...Ye must be born again"** (John 3:7). This new birth involves a personal revelation. God Himself must come to the lost sinner. God must be revealed in a personal experience to the sinner. The proof of this is found in the words of Jesus. He said, **"And this is**

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life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Again, in Matthew 11:27, the Lord Jesus said, **“...no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”**

The words of Zophar ring true in Job 11:7-8, **“Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?”** God cannot be known except He reveal Himself. The Bible reveals facts about God, but man cannot search and find God. God cannot be experimented with, put under a microscope or in a test tube and analyzed. He must make Himself known. Remember. Jesus said no man knows **“...the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”**

Eternal life is knowing **“the only true God, and Jesus Christ”** as stated in the quotation from Jesus furnished above. Add to that this fact: the Son must **“reveal him.”** That work is a personal, spiritual, internal making-known of God to the spirit of a lost sinner.

So then, no one can save himself. No one can find out God. No one can birth himself anew. In fact, nowhere in the Bible does God tell us what a lost sinner can do to birth himself anew. Neither is there anything that a lost sinner can do to please God and motivate Him to birth the sinner anew. **“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God”** (Rom. 8:8).

Lost sinners dare not trust in themselves! They are unable to

remedy their lost, spiritually dead condition. Ah! But Jesus came to give His life for His sheep! He came that sinners might be made alive. He came to reveal the Father to whomsoever He wills. The new birth does not come by man's will: the Bible is clear on that! It says of those thus born again, **“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”** (John 1:13). Do you know God in this revealed way?

INNER LIGHT

What a person believes is dear to him. Belief systems motivate people to act. For instance if a person believes that good works result in salvation they will try to work their way to Heaven. On the other hand, if they believe that salvation is by grace they will seek to learn if they are recipients of God's grace. Whatever a person's belief system is they hold it to be the truth. For them it is the truth and many people have died down through the centuries rather than give up their beliefs – their truth – their inner “light.”

The Lord Jesus spoke of men's belief systems when He said, **“Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness”** (Luke 11:35). It is possible, then, that a person's inner “light” be wrong. It is possible that a person can be quite confident that they know and understand the truth while actually believing lies. In such cases that person's inner “light” is actually inner “darkness.”

These words of the Lord Jesus are based upon these two facts: one, there is such a thing as truth; and, two, it is possible to know the truth. That truth exists and can be known is a basic teaching of the Bible. Jesus said to His disciples, **“And ye shall know the truth,**

and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). These words of the Lord also indicate that there is such a thing as truth and that it is possible to know it. But as the first verse quoted above warns, it is possible that those things which a person believes and holds dear are actually error.

The importance of the truth is seen again in the future condition of those who do not love the truth – those whose inner light is actually inner darkness. There is a city which in the future shall be the habitation of Christ and His bride. Outside of that blessed place and refused entry into it are people classified as **“...whosoever loveth and maketh a lie”** (Rev. 22:15). What! Is it possible that some people love lies? Is it possible that some people love lies so much they make it their business to make and promote lies? Sadly it seems so! Outside of the blessing of God now, they shall remain so throughout eternity.

Whether an individual is a church member or not, each one of us believes certain things regarding God and eternity. We believe something about salvation even if we deny the existence of Heaven and hell. In that case we deny the existence of those things, but in doing so indicate what we believe – and that we do indeed have an inner belief system. Each person thinks they believe the truth. They think they have light in them. So the words of Jesus spoken long ago are still appropriate: **“Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.”**

FOLLOW YOUR HEART

Often the advice is given, “follow your heart.” And a great many people are doing just that. In doing this, people only achieve a touch of fleeting happiness.

What is worse, they never arrive at lasting joy and peace with God. The Bible has much to say about the human heart. None of it good. For instance the Bible says, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it”** (Jer. 17:9)? It also says, **“Even in laughter the**

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BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 4-1-2016 to 4-30-2016

Beginning Balance	\$2,216.33
RECEIPTS:	
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	25.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	313.45
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	150.00
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Emmanuel B. C., Oldtown, KY	100.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR	12.50
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Grace M B. C., Tulsa, OK	70.00
Helen Sturm, Ashland, KY	100.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
Landmark B. C., Moncks Corner, SC	100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	35.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Parkway L. B. C., Springfield, OR	100.00
Perry Ames, Valley, WA	41.08
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR	50.00
Satish Isaac, Queens Village, NY	100.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	28.00
Anonymous	1,210.00
Dividing checks	150.00
Sub Total	\$3,770.03
TOTAL	\$5,986.36
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	974.76
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.90
Dividing checks	150.00
Total Expenditures	\$4,479.66
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,506.70

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 4-1-2016 to 4-30-2016

Beginning Balance	\$7,243.20
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
.....	325.00
TOTAL	7,568.20
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	603.98
Program Production	195.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	798.98
.....	6,769.22
Interest	+0.05
ENDING BALANCE	\$6,769.27

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heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness” (Pro. 14:13).

A person who follows his heart only heaps trouble to himself. The Lord Jesus said: **“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies”** (Matt. 15:19). In addition to displeasing God, evil thoughts of all sorts produce sorrow to others and to self. Murders bring joy neither to the victim, his family, nor to the murderer and his family. Adulteries and other sexual sins often ruin marriages, result in diseases, consume savings, break up families and do harm to children. Stealing, lying and blaspheming God only bring sorrow to all affected by these things. So why do people continue following their hearts? The answer is found in Jeremiah 13:23: **“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”** People cannot stop doing these sinful things! They go on following their own deceitful and desperately wicked hearts. All this brings more sorrow to them while here on earth – and stores up judgment in the world to come.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me,” - this was the prayer of the Psalmist, (Ps. 51:10). God is able to give sinners a new heart as He said in Ezekiel 36:26: **“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”** Such a supernatural work must be accomplished by God.

Men cannot change their hearts. They are in bondage to them. Obedience to wicked hearts only produces fleeting pleasure followed by emptiness and sorrow. The only solution is to be “born again.” This new birth is necessary for salvation. It includes getting the new heart mentioned above. The Lord Jesus said, **“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”** (John 3:7). Only God can do this. Your will cannot bring it to pass. The Bible makes that clear in John 1:13 where we read: **“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”** Stop trusting in yourself, in religion, in your works, or in your attempts to be obedient to the Bible. Only God can birth you into His family. You are shut up to that fact.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Philadelphia Baptist Church of Decatur, AL and Pastor Doyal Thomas would like to announce their Summer Revival Meeting for June 15th - 19th. Service times are Wednesday thru Friday at 7:00 p.m., Saturday 10:00 a.m., and Sunday 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

The primary speaker will be Elder Timothy Works. Elder



Enrique Cantu will be the additional speaker on Saturday which is the Quarterly Fellowship. A noon meal will be provided Saturday.

All are invited to attend.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Northport, AL and Pastor Todd Bryant would like to announce their Annual Summer Bible Meeting for July 29th - 31st.

Service times are Friday night at 7:00, Saturday morning at 10:00 followed by lunch, and Sunday at 10:00 followed by lunch.

Sechuled speakers are Elders Chad Beck and John Fry.

The Windsor Baptist Church of Windsor, IL is seeking a qualified candidate for pastor. They are small in number but rich in

truth. Candidate should meet the qualification in I Timothy 3. For more information please contact Brother John Gregory at (217) 728-9966 or Email windsorbaptist.grace@gmail.com.

The Faith Missionary Baptist Church of Cobbitty, South Wales, Australia is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact David Jackson at 4 Station Street, Thirlmere, NSW 2572, Australia or Email: shellie45@bigpond.com.au.

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

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