

# 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

## Who Is Worthy?

By Paul Stepp  
of Indore, West Virginia

My text comes from Revelation 5:1-5: "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

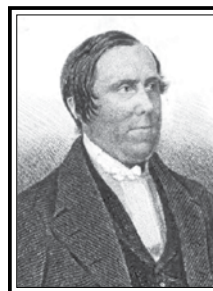
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## On Addressing Sinners

By James Smith  
(1802 - 1862)

The design of these pages is not to provoke controversy, for to that the Author has a great aversion; nor is it an attack upon any of the brethren who hold different views upon this subject; but it is a statement and defense of the Author's principles; and a reason for his method of addressing sinners, which has been objected



to by some as unscriptural and improper. That he once held the opposite view of the subject he readily acknowledges, nor did he hastily change his mind; it was not until he was fairly beaten off the ground he

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## Who Is Leading You?

By Tom Ross  
of South Point, Ohio

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:14-16).

The question posed is of great importance which leads to other questions that really determine the course of your life. Who



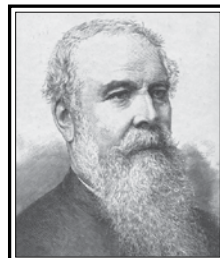
charts your course for daily living? Who do you look to for advice, counsel, and direction each day? Whose example are you following? Who prompts or leads you to make certain decisions in your daily life? Do you care what God thinks? Are you open to being corrected by the Word and the conviction of the Spirit when you are wrong? The answers to these questions will reveal whether or not you are really born again. They will go a long way in determining the spiritual success or failure of your life. If the Holy Spirit of God, the third person of the Holy Trinity, dwells in you there will be a

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## Wheat or Chaff?

By John Charles Ryle  
(1816 - 1900)

"Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into



the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12).

Reader, You see a question at the head of this page. For whom do you think it is meant? Is it for corn merchants and farmers only, and for none else? If you think so, you are much mistaken. It is meant for every man, woman, and child in the world. And among others, it is meant for you.

The question is drawn from a verse of Scripture which is now before your eyes. The words of that verse were spoken by John the Baptist. They are a prophecy about our Lord Jesus Christ, and a prophecy which has not yet been fulfilled. They are a prophesy which we shall all see fulfilled one day, and God alone knows how soon.

Reader, I invite you to begin the new year by looking at the great truths which this verse contains. I invite you to listen to me, while I unfold them, and set them before

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

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

## Who Is Worthy?

(Continued from page 1) ♦

### NO MAN IS WORTHY

To answer my question, I must begin with this answer: no man is worthy.

John wept when he considered this thought.

Who can save? Who can help? Who can come before God?

It is a sad, but true fact, that no man is worthy. When we equate worthiness (or worth) with goodness; and when we consider man and his worth; then we can find the words of Jesus Christ to be very applicable: **"And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God"** (Mark 10:18). According to Jesus Christ, there is no man that is worthy – only God is good and worthy. To further reinforce this point, we read in Micah 7:2, **"The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net."**

Ezra understood the worthlessness and the sinfulness of mankind, and he wondered at the righteousness of God, and acknowledged the inability of man to stand (just) before God. We read in Ezra 9:15, **"O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this."**

### JESUS CHRIST IS WORTHY TO STAND BEFORE GOD

Sometimes we talk about this phrase – "worthy to stand before God." And, I believe that sometimes this phrase becomes a bit worn, and that it loses some

of its meaning. However, we must understand that our God is king and sovereign; and our God is holy and just; and our God is perfect and demands perfection. When we think of these things, what an incredible thing it is, to imagine any man standing before God! It seems that no man is worthy to stand before God, without that God would destroy him out of hand! In fact, the men of Israel that had looked upon the Ark of the Covenant, had an idea as to the holiness and perfection of our God: **"And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us"** (I Sam. 6:20)?

As we consider this thought, and the immense privilege or responsibility or the perfection that is required in order to stand before God, let me give you an earthly example. We read in Esther 4:11, **"All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days."** And then, we read also in Esther 5:2, **"And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre."** And finally, we read this in Esther 8:4, **"Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood**

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## Gleanings for the Young & Old



### NO "TILL" IN ETERNITY.

"Oh, mother, I do not know how to think of eternity, for there is no 'till' in eternity—till tomorrow, till next week, till next year."

Yes, there are measures for time; we know none to measure eternity. It is enough for us to know that Heaven and Hell are there. One of these will be our final home. How can we reach the one; how escape the other? Jesus says, **"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"** (Luke 13:3, 5). **"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"** (John 14:6).

If you reach Heaven, there will be no fear of a "till" to disquiet your perfect peace; if you are among the lost, there will be no hope of "till" to end your sorrow. Do not "till" until it be forever too late.

### CARE FOR OTHERS.

A poor old man, busy planting an apple tree, was rudely asked, "What do you plant trees for; you cannot expect to eat the fruit of them?" He raised himself up, and leaning upon his spade, answered, "Some one planted trees for me before I was born, and I have eaten the fruit. I now plant for others, to show my gratitude, after I am dead and gone."

Thus should we think and act for the welfare of others. **"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise"** (Luke 6:31).

### THE SILVER DOLLAR, OR HOW GOD PROVIDES.

It was a season of great scarcity on the hill regions of New Hampshire, when a poor woman, who lived in a hut by the woods, had no bread for her little family. She was sick, and

without either friends or money. There was no helper but God, and she betook herself to prayer. She prayed long, she prayed in earnest; for she believed that He who fed the young ravens would feed her.

On rising from her knees one morning, her little bare-footed girl opened the door to go out. Something shining on the sill stopped her. The child stooped down, and behold, a silver dollar! She ran and took it to her mother. It really was a new, round, bright silver dollar. They looked up and down the road; not a living person was in sight, and neither footsteps or wagon-wheels were to be heard.

Where did the dollar come from? Did God send it? Doubtless it was from His hand; but how did it get there? Did it rain down? No. Did He throw it from the windows of Heaven? No. Did an angel fetch it? No. God has ways and means for answering prayer without sending special messengers. He touches some little spring in the great machinery of His providence, without in the least disturbing its regularity, and help comes. Sometimes we do not see exactly how, as this poor woman did not: then it seems to come more directly from Him; while in fact our all being taken care of ever since we were born comes just as directly from Him, only He employs so many people to do it, fathers, mothers, servants, shopkeepers, that we are apt to lose sight of Him, and fix our eye only on them.

But how did the silver dollar get on the doorsill? some boy may ask. It happened that a pious young blacksmith was going down the

sea-board in quest of business. It was several miles before he could take the stage-coach, so instead of going in the wagon which carried his chest, he said he would walk. "Come, ride," they said; "it will be hot and dusty." He kept answering, "No," to all his friends urged. "I'll walk, and take a short cut through the pines," and off he started with a stout walking-stick. As he was jogging on through a piece of woods, he heard a voice from a little lonely hut by the road-side. It drew his notice, and he stepped towards it on tiptoe; then he stopped and listened, and found it was the voice of prayer, and he gathered from the prayer that she who offered it was poor, sick, and friendless.

"What can I do to help this poor woman? thought the young man. He did not like to go into the hut. He clapped his hand into his pocket and drew out a dollar, the first silver dollar he ever had—and a dollar was a big sum for him to give, for he was not as rich then as he is now. But no matter, he felt that the poor woman must have it. The dollar being silver, and likely to attract notice as soon as the door was open, he concluded to lay it on the sill and go away, but not far; for he hid behind a large rock near the house, to watch what became of it. Soon he had the satisfaction of seeing the little girl come out and seize the prize, then he went on his way rejoicing. The silver dollar came into the young man's hand for this very purpose, for you see a paper dollar might have blown away; and he was led to walk instead of ride—why, he did not exactly know, but God, Who directed his steps, did know. So God plans, and we are the instruments to carry on His plans. Oftentimes we seem to be about our own business when we are about His, answering, it may be, the prayers of His people.

The young blacksmith is now in middle life: he has been greatly prospered, and given away his hundreds since then; but perhaps he never enjoyed giving more than when he gave his first silver dollar.

**"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"** (Phil 2:13).



### BE KIND.

Little R. was a playful, intelligent lad. He did nothing by halves. If he studied, he did it with all his might, and was sure to be at the head of his class. If he played, it was in earnest. Woe to the boys who stormed his snow-forts. Yet he was gentle and affectionate. He had a famous dog who shared all his sports, and seemed as happy in them as his master. Lion, for that was his name, would take R's dinner-basket in his mouth, and carry it carefully and safely; and he would defend his master from rude boys, as if he were his guardian. This lad grew to be a man and a minister of the gospel; but his attachment to Lion never ceased, and he has never been known to do a cruel act to a brute creature. He has often been heard to say that he could not love or trust a boy that was unkind to animals. God made them for our service, but not for cruel sport.



# Who Is Worthy?

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**before the king,”**

What these verses will remind us of, is this: even in the realms of men, it is oftentimes not possible for one to stand before a king, unless that the king would allow it. And, if a king on this earth can demand such respect, and inspire such fear, and require such obedience, then, how much more our Heavenly Master and King?

The respect and fear and obedience that God requires, excludes any man from standing before Him in his own righteousness, with the exception of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We read in Hebrews 9:24, **“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”** He is worthy even to stand **“in the presence of God for us.”** His worthiness is so great, that it even extends to cover the worthlessness of you and me.

## JESUS CHRIST IS WORTHY TO LOOK, OPEN, AND READ THE WORD OF GOD

There is only one that is worthy to open the book that is mentioned in our text verses; and there is only one that is worthy to look upon and read from the very words of God; and that one is Jesus Christ. Now, when I say that He is the only One that is worthy to open the book and to read the words of God, I am not saying that we ought not to do so; I am only saying that He is the only One that can look upon these things, and read these things, and can do so without suffering reproach, and without any feelings of inadequacies

or imperfection. You see, Jesus Christ is the only One that we can say has fulfilled the words of God. We read in Luke 24:44, **“And he said unto them, These [are] the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”** Again, we read in John 19:28, **“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.”** I believe that the fact that Jesus is the fulfiller of the words of God, makes Jesus Christ eminently qualified to open and read the word of God, whatever word that might be.

I suppose that we could even say that, in essence, the Word of God that we have before us today, are all about Jesus Christ. We read in John 5:39, **“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”** Therefore, He is perfectly able to read any words that God may have written.

Our Saviour, as the Creator of all that is, and as the Saviour of all men, and as the source of all goodness and grace, is worthy to perform the will and purpose of God. We read in Revelation 4:11, **“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”**

## CHRIST IS WORTHY TO SAVE

Now let us expand our study. We have just noticed that man is not worthy to stand (just) before God, nor is he worthy to open the book. And, we have noticed that Jesus Christ is perfection embodied, and that

therefore He is worthy to stand before God in righteousness; and He is therefore worthy to open the book. However, let us go a little farther. Now that we see what Jesus can do, what else is He worthy to accomplish? To put it simply, all that we have known and learned about the Lord Jesus, proves Him to be eminently qualified (worthy) to be the Saviour of men. We read in I John 2:1, **“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:”** Our advocate is a worthy one! Even the Holy Father in Heaven will hear Him! This is the One Who is worthy to save. No man can count himself worthy, but every man can count the blessed Son of God – **“Jesus Christ the righteous”** – worthy to save.

## CHRIST IS WORTHY OF OUR LOVE AND DEVOTION

Let me make something else clear to us all today. Since man is un-worthy and Jesus is worthy; and since man is helpless and Jesus is the Saving Christ; then, we must also say that Jesus Christ is worthy of our love and devotion. Certainly He is worthy to stand before God and to open and read the book. And, as the Son of God, He is worthy to be our Saviour. Therefore, He most definitely is worthy of our love and devotion. David said, **“I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies”** (II Sam. 22:4). We might say, that David believed that his salvation **“from”** his **“enemies”** came from God; and, therefore, God was **“worthy to be praised.”** I believe you and I can do the same – we can praise God for the

worthiness of His Son Who has saved us from our sins.

## CONCLUSION

John the beloved wept, when he saw that no man was worthy to stand in the sight of God. And, so should we. We ought to weep when we consider our own miserable condition, when the Son of God is revealed to us as our Saviour. And, we ought to weep over the miserable condition of those that are still yet lost and undone.

However, John the beloved also rejoiced, when he saw the Lamb of God and His worthiness. Remember, one of the elders told John, **“Weep not.”** Indeed, the Lion of the Tribe of Juda has undertaken to open the book. Later on, in this same chapter, we read in Revelation 5:12, **“Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”** We, too, ought to rejoice when we see the Lord as our Saviour. And, we ought to live our lives rejoicing in the salvation that He has granted to us. And, when the lost souls of men are at stake, we ought to rejoice in the worth and the might and the goodness and the mercy of our Saviour, the Lamb of God. Our Saviour is the same Lamb of God that John the beloved saw in the Revelation that was given unto him. Our Saviour can (and will) succeed where all others will most certainly fail! Our Saviour, the Lamb of God, can stand before God, and can bring us into His presence, when all of our best attempts and all of man's goodness are only filthy rags in the sight of God! Praise be to God that our Saviour is the worthy Lamb of God!





# Who Is Leading

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distinct and noticeable difference between you and the world of the unsaved.

Carefully read Romans chapter eight and you will find just how important the indwelling and the leadership of the Spirit of God really is. If you are truly saved you are no longer to walk after or follow after the flesh, but after the Spirit (8:1). The indwelling of the Spirit is absolutely essential to identify a believer's union to Christ (8:9). Believers must be led by the Spirit of God to prove that they are indeed adopted sons and daughters of God (8:14-16). The comfort of the Holy Spirit is what gives God's children assurance that they are joint heirs with Christ and will one day be glorified with Him (8:17-18). It is the earnest of the Spirit who preserves us and insures the ultimate glorification of our body (8:23-25). It is the Spirit who takes our petitions to the throne of grace in prayer even when we cannot give voice to them (8:26-27). As a child of God, bound for Heaven, you must never underestimate the importance of being led by the Holy Spirit each and every day of your life.

## WHO OR WHAT LEADS THE UNSAVED?

1. When a person is unsaved, lost, unregenerate, without Christ they are not led by the Spirit. In fact, every lost person is born into a state of sin and rebellion against God, His laws, and His Word (Psalm 51:5; 58:3). We are all born of the flesh, the old sinful nature that we inherit from our parents. The origins of the fleshly nature we are born with may be traced all the way back to the sinful head of the human race, Adam (Rom. 5:12).

2. The fleshly nature is entirely incapable of producing anything spiritually good or profitable to God (Rom. 8:6-8). The sin nature has corrupted how we think, how we feel, what we desire, and how we respond to God. This is why lost people cannot make right decisions in the spiritual realm. They follow after their fleshly inclination to sin and rebel against God, which is why they will not seek after God (Rom. 3:10-12).

3. The lost or unsaved man is not only trapped in a fleshly nature that hates and opposes God (John 3:19-20). He is also blinded by the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4), in captivity to the will of Satan (II Tim. 2:25-26), and led by the spirit of disobedience to follow after the flesh and the world (Eph. 2:2-3).

4. The deplorable condition described above applies to every single member of the human race. We all at one time were like the children of wrath, in captivity to sin and Satan, in agreement with a world that is diametrically opposed to God. This is why lost people make terrible decisions. They are led by sin, Satan, and the world system that is opposed to God. If God does not intervene in a person's life by giving them spiritual life, enabling them to repent and believe the Gospel, they will die in their sins because of their own willful rebellion. They will spend the infinity of eternity in the Lake which burns with fire and brimstone, regretting their willful rebellion while suffering the torments of the wrath of God (II Thess. 1:7-9).

## THE GREAT CHANGE

1. How can a person who is dead in sin, in bondage to Satan, rebellious against God, and willfully rejecting the truth ever be changed? The fact is there

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# Little Hills

By Nathaniel Hille of  
Plant City, Florida



## The New Birth #15 Evidences of Having Been Born Again—Part 8

**“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”** (I John 5:3). As we wrote last time: keeping God's commandments evidences that we love God and the brethren—thus manifesting that we are born-again. And now we are told that **“His commandments are not grievous”** or “and these orders of his are not irksome, burdensome, oppressive, or grievous.” The Bible declares that our Lord's yoke is **“easy, and my burden is light”** (Matt. 11:30); that the way of the transgressor is hard (Prov. 13:15). Before God regenerates a person they find that His commandments are impossible to keep, that they have no desire to keep them, even despising them; but having been born-again we now **“delight in the law of God after the inward man”** (Rom. 7:22). We are told that the blessed man “delights in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Ps. 1:1-2).

Is worshiping the Lord on the Lord's day irksome to you? Is giving 10% (tithe) to the Lord's work like pulling teeth? Is reading your Bible every day a painstaking task? Yet you have no problem watching sports on Sunday, buying whatever you want, or watching TV every day? Perhaps it is because you

have not been born-again. **“Marvel not..., Ye must be born again”** (John 3:7).

**“And his commandments are not grievous”** (I John 5:3). As we noted previously, the word “grievous” may also be rendered: burdensome, heavy, weighty, irksome, or oppressive. God's Word declares that HIS commandments are NOT burdensome, heavy, weighty. Jesus said, **“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”** (Matt. 11:30). It is not God's commandments that are grievous, but man's commandments are grievous!

The Lord Jesus gives us the example that His commandments are NOT grievous. In John 10:18 Jesus stated, **“this commandment have I received of my Father.”** Jesus was referring to the commandment of Calvary—where He would suffer the wrath of God to save His elect. It was the commandment that the Father gave Him. The Scriptures declare, **“...Jesus... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross”** (Heb. 12:1-2). He endured the cross and counted it a joy to do so as it was the commandment He received of His Father. It was the place of immense suffering, yet it was counted for joy. Do you count the commandment of God as grievous, or joy? Perhaps you need to be born again.



# Who Is Leading

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is nothing he can do in and of himself. He is blinded, polluted, filled with sin, unwilling, unholy, defiled, and ungodly. He only knows what he knows, which is the realm of spiritual darkness and inability.

2. God the Holy Spirit must give the sinner spiritual life in the creative act of regeneration that is also referred to as the new birth (John 3:3-5). Only the Spirit of God can give spiritual life to a dead sinner and at the same time change his mind, heart, and will. The very moment the Holy Spirit gives spiritual life to a dead sinner a radical, miraculous change occurs. The Spirit changes our will, making us willing to submit to the claims of God and the truth of the Gospel. He gives us the gift of repentance where our mind is changed. He gives us the gift of saving faith that enables us to believe the Gospel of Christ (II Cor. 4:6; 5:17; Eph. 2:8-10; Col. 1:13-14).

3. The very moment the elect are given spiritual life a new man or nature is created by the Holy Spirit that is capable of having communion with God (Eph. 4:22-24). The Holy Spirit begins to indwell the believer to teach, comfort, enlighten, guide, lead and empower the believer to bring forth spiritual fruit unto God (Gal. 5:22-25).

## ARE YOU LED BY THE SPIRIT?

1. Even though believers are born of the Spirit, given a spiritual nature, and the ability to commune with God, the old fleshly nature of sin still remains. Paul likened the inner conflict of the flesh and the Spirit to spiritual warfare in Romans 7 and Galatians 5. In both chapters Paul makes it clear

that believers may be led of their fleshly and sinful nature to rebel against God.

2. The question as to whether you are led by the Spirit or your flesh is not as hard to answer as you may think. The fleshly nature will always be in agreement with Satan and the world. Those who make decisions after the flesh rebel against God and are described in Galatians 5:16-21. When a believer is led by, follows after, and walks in the flesh it means that he is acting like lost people who ultimately die in their sins! Lost people follow each other and are often governed by peer pressure. Lost people are led by their emotions which are fickle. Lost people are led by errors and falsehoods.

3. If you are led by the Spirit it means that you are following His directions, His instructions, and His commands. Pray tell where do we find the directions, instructions, and commands of the Spirit? In the Word of God that the Spirit has inspired and preserved for our sanctification (II Tim. 3:16-17). The only way you can have assurance that you are being led by the Spirit is if you are living in active obedience to the Word of God that He has inspired. I can guarantee that the Spirit will never lead you into sin. He will never lead you to disobey God's Word. He will never lead you to live in direct contradiction to the truth of Scripture.

4. Far too many professing Christians want to blame God for their rebellious course of conduct with a phrase that goes something like this: "I feel led of the Lord..." You can fill in the blank with a variety of answers that will not stand the test of Scripture here or the judgment seat of Christ in the hereafter. The Spirit will not lead you away from the truth or

the Lord's church. The Spirit will not lead you to commit adultery or leave your spouse. The Spirit will not lead you to marry a lost person. The Spirit will not lead you to gossip about others. The Spirit will not lead you to stop tithing. The Spirit will never lead a woman to declare that she is called to preach and pastor. You get the general idea. If you are doing something that does not line up with the truth of Scripture do not try to justify your sin by saying you are led of the Spirit. To do so would only compound the sin you are trying to justify.

5. I would urge you to examine who or what is leading your life and influencing the decisions you make. Stop following after your fleshly emotions, the example of the world, the philosophies of the wicked, and your own sinful desires. Surrender yourself to the Spirit's leadership and determine by grace to be governed only by what pleases the Lord as revealed in His Holy Word. This attitude should guide every decision, large or small in your life. Are you led of the Spirit to please the Lord in your marriage, your service, your family, your finances, your friendships, your work, etc. The Spirit will not lead you into confusion, chaos, and sin. He will direct you to follow after the example of Christ who always leads in paths of righteousness (Psa. 23:1-3).

Memorize and meditate often on the following Scriptures to help you in the quest to glorify God and be led by the Spirit:

Psalm 119:133: **"Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."**

Proverbs 3:5-7: **"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways**


**acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord and depart from evil."**

I Corinthians 10:31: **"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."**


Colossians 3:16-17: **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, and the Father by him."**



The  
Noted  
Pastor



By Todd  
Bryant  
of  
Northport,  
Alabama



## The Easy Error of Traditionalism

**"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:8-10).**

For some of us, it is easy to become traditionalists. But for all of us, religious traditionalism is to be guarded against. Some of

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us have a predisposed personality that simply does not like change. I am one of those. I hate signing on social media only to find that the entire homepage has changed. Where is my chat window? Where are my groups? And why in the world does my own feed default to “top stories” rather than “most recent”? Who wants that? Please give me the option to use it the old way. I like Microsoft Word in the old format. I like Excel in the old format. I like my iPhone in the old format. I simply do not like change. Yet, I am married to a beautiful, godly woman that wants the newest, most cutting edge edition of anything and everything. I do not hold her “error” against her. It is just a preference – a preference that simply has no lasting consequences. It is easily fixed by her having her own MacBook and me having mine.

This whole debate over “how” to do things in church continues to drag along without truly touching the most important things. We want church to “look like church.” But our view of church is based on little more than the previous generation – perhaps two generations back. If we view church through the eyes of a believer 1900 years ago, none of our churches look like churches today. The problem is, we fail to see that. Churches 1900 years ago did not have buildings, pulpits, pews, fellowship halls, pianos, hymnbooks, pastors in coats and ties, offering plates, baptistries, etc. What if we took those things away from our churches today – any one of them? There would be uproar and mass hysteria. There would be accusations of people departing from the faith. The

term “apostasy” would be thrown around. The label of “heretic” would be tossed towards certain people. And yet, we know none of the early churches used any of those things in their weekly worship of God.

Religiously, most of us are far less tolerant of change than in any other facet of life. Generally speaking, we are comfortable in the way we do things. Yet, this often leads to confidence that our way is the only way. Must a church have a building to be a church? Must there be pews? Must there be an American flag in the sanctuary? A Christian flag? Must there be three songs sang? Must “Amazing Grace” always follow the Lord’s Supper? Must the pastor wear a coat and tie? Must we collect tithes in a box – or perhaps by passing a plate? All of these questions are legitimate things to discuss. All of them may have arguments made for or against them. But we cannot consider our preference on these things to be adamantly scriptural. What I prefer and what I have Biblical support for is not always the same thing. We need to make certain that we make a distinction between the two.

I have no desire in this article to argue for the regulative or normative principle of worship. I would argue, though, that we should follow the regulative principle of worship if I were to write on it. That is, we ought to follow the teaching of Scripture on all things that we do in worship. We should have “chapter and verse” for our practices. That said, such practices do not always look the same in every church. Churches are (Biblically) independent and given some liberty to do things differently. Some churches never stand for singing while some stand during

the entire song service. The Bible gives no specific instruction for singing other than saying we are to **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”** (Col. 3:16). Was Paul’s intent here to have every church look the same in this? Not at all. Of course, there should be similarities. But whether a church sings while sitting and another sings while standing is not on Paul’s radar whatsoever. Few people could read in the 1st century. So logically, most songs had to be memorized by the congregation. And even if one could read, everything was handwritten. However, this does not prohibit churches today from having printed copies of lyrics in a society where printing is available and we have a high percentage of literacy. Paul does not care whether the church memorizes a song or sings from the lyrics on a page. His point is that they sing – and sing scriptural, God honoring songs in a way that glorifies God.

There simply is no step-by-step schedule of worship in the Bible for New Testament churches. We are instructed on what to do. However, exactly what order and through what medium these things are carried out, we are given leniency. Does the singing precede the sermon? What if we had it after? Do we pray after the first song? The second? Before the sermon? After? The key is **“I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting”** (I Tim. 2:8). Clearly prayer is to be a major part of the worship service. The order of when it is done during the service will be different from church to church. It does not make the church I

pastor right and the church you attend wrong merely because we have prayer at a different time. The important thing is that prayer is a part of our services.

As singing and praying are prescribed in the Bible, so the preaching of the Word of God is a necessity for the worship service. Paul told Timothy, **“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine”** (I Tim. 4:13). This is rather clear. The exposition of Scripture – that is, reading a passage and explaining to the congregation what it means – is to be a major part of the worship service. This may be done before the song service, after the song service, or between song services. An elder may teach through Revelation or the Song of Solomon. Despite the actions of some denominations, every elder is not required to teach the same passage as every other elder in every church on the same Sunday. While our church may be going through Romans currently, another church may be going through Isaiah. There will be variance from church to church. However, the methodical preaching of God’s Word must be present when we assemble for worship. This is not optional.

Consequently, there are three essential parts of the worship service outlined for New Testament churches in the Bible – preaching, prayer and singing. These may look different from church to church. In fact, if churches are truly independent, they will look different. That said, we are not allowed to vary from these activities. These are required. If the pastor preaches from an elevated pulpit or by sitting on a stool, we have no instruction. We may have a preference but we do not have Scripture to back up

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such a preference. The key is that the Bible is faithfully proclaimed while the gospel is declared truthfully. When we pray, the congregation is to reverently open their hearts to God through faith in Jesus Christ. Whether they stand, sit or kneel, nothing is said. The key is that we pray as a local assembly. When we sing, we are to sing Biblically accurate lyrics with music that does not overpower the theme of the song. This may be done sitting or standing... from loose-leaf paper, from a hymnbook, from memory or from a screen. We simply are not given a requirement on where to write the letters that make up the lyrics – or to write them at all for that matter. The important thing is that we sing to the Lord.

With all of the problems in modern Christianity – none of which are more detrimental than a corruption of the Gospel itself – it seems petty that we would argue over a schedule in a worship service rather than the quality of worship. Is the Bible clear about how to carry out some things? Absolutely. However, we are not given such rigorous step-by-step instruction as the Mosaic Law. Preach the truth with zeal...sing to the Lord with all your heart... pray for the Lord to lead us to be more faithful in carrying out our instruction. But, do not get bent out of shape when another church collects tithes by passing a plate while you prefer a box in the back of the church – or the front... whatever! The important thing is that there are members willing to share what God has prospered them.

Traditionalism is easy for us all to fall into. We must guard against it. Fight for the truth by all means.

Fight for the things God instructs us to do – of course! However, if we are not careful, we will find ourselves arguing for the wrong things. Our focus will turn from Christ to ritual. We will have the idea that our worship is accepted because of (extra-Biblical) legal demands rather than approaching God **“in spirit and in truth”** (John 4:24). Every church will have traditions. There is really no way to get around that. We all have to do things somehow. Let us remember, however, that just because somebody does not look exactly like we do, they are not our enemy. Let us acknowledge those that preach the truth and sing the truth and pray the truth as brothers and sisters in Christ. There are not many doing those things today. Let us not make an enemy of the people of God merely over a preference or a tradition.



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occupied, by what appeared to him the plain meaning of many portions of God's Holy Word, that he surrendered and changed sides. Nor is the change of recent date, many years have passed away, since after much prayer, searching the Scriptures, and deliberation of mind; he was obliged as an honest man to yield to conviction, and to embrace what appeared to him to be the truth of God, regardless of consequences. Nothing was farther from his mind than publishing any thing upon the subject, wishing to live in peace and prosecute his work without interruption; but circumstances arose which appeared to him to demand it; he has therefore in as short a compass as possible, hastily

thrown together a few of those Scriptures which led him to adopt his present views, and a very few of his reasons drawn from thence.

He wishes it to be particularly understood, that no portion of this piece is to be considered as interfering with the glorious doctrines of free and sovereign grace, on which his hopes rest, which form the principal subjects of his ministry, and are his boast and glory. To them he is as much, or more attached than ever; and he hopes to live and die publishing them wherever providence may give him an opportunity of doing so. Salvation by free grace is his beloved theme; and to set forth Christ, in the glory of His Person, the riches of His grace, and the infinite merit of His blood, His joy and delight; and if he could see that any doctrine in this piece militated against the glory of his adorable Saviour, it would soon be rejected and renounced by him, with sorrow that it ever proceeded from his tongue or pen.

That sinners are to be addressed all acknowledge, but, How are they to be addressed? This is the question. Our great Master commands us to preach the gospel to them; but setting forth their danger, and warning them of the same, is not publishing the glad tidings of a free and full salvation, by the life and death of Jesus, for the vile and unworthy, without money and without price. If I require something of a sinner, either felt or performed, to warrant him to believe in Jesus, or to warrant me to exhort him to fly to His open arms for life and peace; the glorious doctrine of free justification by faith without works falls to the ground; for as no man can be justified but by receiving Christ, and as there is no receiving Christ but by faith, if I am to require something good in

the sinner before I urge him to flee to the Saviour, he is not justified as UNGODLY which is what the Apostle asserts (Rom. 4:5). The gospel appears to me to furnish a plain and sufficient warrant for any and every sinner who hears it, to believe in Jesus, and with such views, I dare not restrict the call to certain definite characters.

A minister is sent with the gospel message, this he is to deliver to every creature; to each individually as though God had sent it to each by name; nor do I conceive that he can justify himself in merely preaching “before,” without addressing himself to, every sinner who hears him in the name of God who sent him. To every hearer is the Word of God's salvation sent. Christ is to be evidently set forth before them as dying the just for the unjust, to bring them to God. As a servant he is accountable for the delivery of the message, but not for the design of his Master, or the reception his hearers give it. I must therefore declare all I believe to be the counsel of God, whatever may be the consequences, that I may stand before God approved, and clear from the blood of all men. I have no bye end to answer, my object is to know and publish the truth, maintaining a conscience void of offense toward God and men. I view myself, as a dying man, under great responsibility, having shortly to stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of my ministry. I have no wish to dictate to any of my brethren, nor be unfriendly with any whose views differ from mine; but to the law and the testimony, to my own Master I must stand or fall: and now let us ask, “What saith the Scriptures?” and may the Lord open our eyes, ears, hearts, and mouths to perceive, attend to,

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believe, and confess the truth to His praise and glory. Amen.

My plan will be to go over some portions of the divine Word, in order to ascertain the mind of God upon the subject; and I shall confine myself principally to the New Testament, that I may not exceed my limits, for I only propose to write a short piece, not a volume. But I would recommend to every person who wishes fully to understand my views, and to enter into the subject discussed, to take the Bible and carefully consult the references which are made; for to have quoted all the Scriptures at length would have enlarged the piece beyond what I intend.

Matthew 6:19-20. Here the Lord Jesus Christ seated on the mount surrounded by a mixed multitude, teaching them as anointed with the Holy Ghost for the purpose, says, **“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, ...But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...”** Spend not your time and strength in making a fortune, but in securing a treasure, an inheritance in Heaven. If they already possessed a title to, an earnest of, these treasures, as the converted do, why exhort them to lay up or provide them? If it is wrong to exhort sinners to spiritual exercises, how could our Lord thus address them? Not because power went with the word as some say, for the prophecy (Isa. 49:4) and the event proved the contrary.

Matthew 7:7-8. Here the same multitude are exhorted to **“ask,” “seek,” and “knock;”** with the assurance that so doing they shall obtain, find, and be admitted. Are not these spiritual exercises, and for spiritual things? and yet

some of the persons addressed are in the context called hypocrites. How then can it be improper to exhort sinners to pray, seek, and knock at mercy's door?

Matthew 7:13-14. **“Enter ye in at the strait gate...”** The gate is Christ, (John 10:9): the way is holiness, (Isa. 35:8): the end is Heaven, (Matt. 10:32): the people are without, they are exhorted by Him who never spoke rashly or made a mistake to enter: and what is entering, but believing? It cannot therefore be wrong for gospel ministers to exhort sinners who hear them, to enter in by the door, and walk in the way to Heaven, for Jesus did so.

Mark 1:15. **“...Repent ye and believe the gospel.”** What is the gospel? Let John 3:14-21: and I Timothy 1:15, answer. It is the good news of a Saviour for sinners, able, willing, and authorized to save all that come unto Him. The glad tidings of God's free favour and unmerited mercy to the vile, unworthy, and miserable. Sinners are required to believe that God sent His Son into the world to save sinners, and to repent, or change their minds and their conduct, with sorrow and contrition. To embrace the Saviour God has provided, and receive the message He has sent. If our Lord required only what is called natural faith, or natural repentance: He only required that which would still leave them under the curse of God, and exposed to His tremendous wrath. But Jesus calls upon them to **“...believe on Him...”** (John 6:28-29), and to all such **“...gave he power to become the sons of God...”** (John 1:12). The faith Jesus required, appears to me to be a believing with the heart (Rom. 10:9-10); to which salvation is promised (Mark 16:16): the repentance He enforced is that to which the promise of forgiveness

of sins is appended (Acts 2:38-40; 3:19-26). How then can it be wrong for us to exhort sinners to repent and believe the gospel? Without repentance they must perish (Luke 13:2-5); with it they are delivered from the wrath to come.

Luke 13:24-30. **“Strive to enter in at the strait gate...”** A curious question had just been proposed by one present to the Saviour, “Are there few that be saved?” Instead of gratifying curiosity, our Lord exhorts, “Strive even to an agony,” (so the word used signifies,) “to enter through the strait gate” (Campbell's translation). Here He Who spake as never man spake, exhorted those that were without to “exert their utmost strength;” to force their entrance through the strait gate. It is proper therefore to exhort those that are without Christ, to believe on Him, enter by Him, and be saved.

John 3:14-21. Jesus is here represented by the brazen serpent, to which every person in the camp of Israel, bitten by the fiery flying serpents was directed to look; and the promise was given that every one that looked should live. The Saviour calls to the ends of the earth, and says, **“Look unto me, and be ye saved...”** here is no restriction, no description of character; but **“...all the ends of the earth...”** are invited to look and live (Isa. 45:22). The Father gave Him “that WHOSOEVER believeth on him may have everlasting life;” and the gospel calls upon every one that heareth to believe, or to flee for refuge to the hope which it sets before them (Heb. 6:18). Self-preservation is said, to be the first law of nature; it is therefore a duty according to this law to receive God's gracious message, and call upon Him, **“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be**

**saved”** (Rom. 10:13). The ground of a sinner's condemnation is said to be, not merely breaking the moral law, but that “...light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” he is condemned “because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.” If he is condemned for not believing, it must have been his duty to believe; and if he had believed he could not have been condemned (John 5:24 with 6:47). The Holy Spirit was sent to “convince the world,” not merely the Jews, but “the world, of sin because they believed not on Jesus,” (John 16:8-9): how could non-believing be a sin, if believing was not a duty? and how could it be a duty if God did not require it? and if God did require it, how can it be wrong for gospel ministers to enforce it? The call of the gospel is to sinners as sinners, to all sinners, **“Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man”** (Prov. 8:4): but the promise of eternal life is restricted to those who believe, **“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him”** (John 3:36).

John 5:39-40. **“Search the scriptures....”** The Jews are here directed to their own Scriptures as being testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus; and are reprov'd for not coming to Him for life. This certainly implies that it was their duty to come; or else Jesus would not have reprov'd them for not doing so; and if it was the duty of the Jews, on the ground of the proclamation being made to them, is it not of the Gentiles also, the same proclamation being now made to them? The life Jesus came to give was **“everlasting**

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**life,”** (John 6:27; I John 5:11); “abundant life,” (John 10:10); this He has promised to every willing soul, (John 4:10; 7:37): and for this He exhorted the carnal Jews to labour (John 6:27).

John 6:26-29. Jesus declares the persons here addressed to be carnal, self-seeking persons; for this He reproves them, and then exhorts them to labour for the soul, to obtain that bread which endureth to everlasting life, and promises to give it them: they enquire, “What is the labour God requireth us to do?” He answers, “This is the labour, which God requireth, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent, or commissioned.” Here faith is called a work, because commanded (I John 3:23); because it is obedience to a law, called the **“law of faith”** (Rom. 3:27); **“the law of the Spirit of life”** (Rom. 8:2); which is made known to all nations to be obeyed by faith (Rom. 16:25-26; Heb. 5:9). It is called a work because it is an effort of mind (Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24; I Cor. 9:24-25). Faith, then, is a work which God requireth of carnal self-seeking persons, and He has authority to do so; and man once had ability to obey this requirement: he was created in knowledge (Col. 3:10; in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:23-24); in uprightness (Eccl. 7:29); yea, in the very image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). But he deprived himself of this ability by sin, which is a departure from, and a resistance to God; he is now a rebel in arms against his Maker, and his inability is the effect of his crime. But, provision is made for weakness, as well as wickedness in the everlasting Gospel, and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Power, is promised to **“EVERY ONE**

**THAT ASKETH”** (Luke 11:9-13). This provision is compared to a sumptuous feast, the Lord’s servants are sent out with a commission to bid all that they find, whether in the streets and lanes of the city, or in the highways and hedges, to come and partake: yea, they are by argument, persuasion and reasoning, to compel them to come in, assuring them of a hearty welcome (Matt. 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24). The faith which God requires has Christ for its object, and salvation for its end (I Pet. 1:9). In the passage under consideration, the work required is said to be believing on Him Whom God commissioned; but in the following passages the very same words are used in reference to saving faith, let me entreat you to consider them seriously and prayerfully: John 1:12; 6:47; 7:39; 17:20; 20:31; Acts 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 4:4-5; 10:4,16. Now, considering, that our Lord was speaking to a plain unlettered multitude, and that the Bible was written under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the same, (for the Bible is the poor man’s book;) can we suppose, that precisely the same words would be employed, if the faith intended was different? How could the foolish way-faring man help mistaking his way, if this was the case (Isa. 35:8)? This would only bewilder and confuse instead of instruct and guide. The faith spoken of appears to me to be a simple crediting the Saviour’s word, and venturing on His power and grace for life and salvation. Men ought to receive Christ, or they ought to reject Him; they ought to believe on Him, or neglect His great salvation (Heb. 2:3); and we as ministers of the gospel ought to exhort them to do one or the other. God requires faith, He has an undoubted right

to do so; and **“...He that believeth on me hath everlasting life”** (John 6:47); but if any hearer of the gospel is condemned, he hath never believed, for such is the testimony of Jesus (John 3:18). The provision set before the people was spiritual, and endureth unto everlasting life; they were required to labour for it with the assurance that Jesus would give it; and what was applicable to those persons is applicable to all such characters, and will be while the present dispensation lasts. They were exhorted by Jesus, yet they refused, and left His ministry on account of His hard sayings; and this was their condemnation: if we preach the same truths, in the same way, the same effects may follow, for the gospel is still a **“savour of life unto life,”** or a **“savour of death unto death”** (II Cor. 2:15-16).

John 12:35-36. Christ came “a light into the world,” He is the luminary that giveth life; He here exhorts the unbelieving Jews to believe in Him that they may be the children of light: a child of light is the characteristic of a Christian (Luke 16:8; Eph. 5:8; I Thess. 5:5-8; I John 2:8-11). Can it then, be any more a sin for us, to exhort Gentiles to believe in the light, than it was in our beloved Master to exhort the Jews? If any person should bring verses 39 and 40, as an objection, we remark that they form no valid objection, for the rejection of Christ was the cause why God gave them up to a reprobate mind (Luke 11:52; 13:25, 34, 35; 19:41-42; Acts 28:24-28; Rom. 11:19-20).

Luke 3:7. Here persons called a **“generation of vipers,”** had been warned to flee from the wrath to come, but there is no escaping that wrath but by believing in Jesus (Mark 16:16): therefore it is only following a good example to

warn even a generation of vipers, or Satan-like sinners to believe in Jesus and escape from wrath (I Thess. 1:10).

Mark 6:12. the Apostles “went out and preached that man **SHOULD** repent:” mere reformation is only washing the outside of the cup and platter, or whitewashing the outside of the sepulchre; for this our Lord reproved and condemned the Pharisees; the disciples exhorted to what would be pleasing to God, but **“...without faith it is impossible to please him”** (Heb. 11:6); therefore doubtless they exhorted to a repentance which flows from faith.

Acts 3:19-26. In this passage Peter calls upon the multitude to “repent and be converted;” and promises the forgiveness of sins to all such; it is evident therefore that the repentance here required is that which is accompanied by pardon; but all such repentance is preceded by faith; therefore he calls for faith in Christ, and repentance toward God as Paul did (Acts 20:20-21). If it was proper for Peter to preach thus, it is proper for us, seeing we live under the same dispensation, have the same commission, and have to preach to persons of the same character.

Acts 8:20-23. Peter here testifies that Simon Magus was in **“the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity;”** yet he exhorts him to “repent and pray” that his sins may be forgiven him; forgiveness of sins is a spiritual blessing, flowing through faith, and ending in eternal life; Simon is therefore virtually exhorted to believe, pray, repent, and seek forgiveness of sins, though in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; if it was virtue in Peter thus to act, (and who says it was

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not?) how can it be vice in us? Or, if we fear or neglect to do it, how can we prove that we follow the Apostolic example, or imitate the divine Model?

Acts 13:40-41. **"Beware..."** how was this evil to be avoided but by receiving the Apostolic message and acting upon it? and what is this but faith? here then Paul indirectly exhorts the unconverted to believe in Jesus, in order to avoid danger, and realize safety.

Acts 13:46-47. Here the Word of God which is the vehicle of salvation is presented to the Jews, they reject it, and thus reject Christ, and pass sentence on themselves, that they are unworthy of eternal life. Can that be put away which is not brought near and presented? Certainly not. Had they received the Word as they should, they would have enjoyed eternal life; but there is no eternal life but by believing, therefore it was believing that the Apostle required, and that faith which would have put them in possession of eternal life; but they put from them the Word which is the instrument of salvation, and the Apostle considered this to be passing sentence on themselves; but if the Apostle required faith of his hearers, even that faith which receives Christ, and salvation by Him, on the ground of His commission, why should not we who have the same commission and the same gospel?

Acts 17:30-31. Here God is said to "command all men every where to repent, because, etc." If this repentance had been only natural, while it would have benefitted society, it would have been but of little use at the bar of God; but repentance is required

because God intends to judge the world; surely then the repentance required, is that which stands connected with faith, pardon, justification, and eternal life; else the people may render what God requires, and at last perish for not rendering more. Some persons ask me, "what is the use of inviting dead sinners?" I may ask them in return, What is the use of God requiring a repentance, which if rendered, leaves us in the same fearful state of condemnation as before? But I am not to do a thing because I think it useful, or neglect any thing because I think it useless; my rule is God's Word, I am to occupy as the Master has given me directions; until He come, and then He will set all things strait, and reconcile what I cannot harmonize.

Acts 26:20. Here Paul tells us that in his preaching he shewed both to Jews and Gentiles, **"...that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."** If Paul shewed them this, it must have been their duty, and in his commission; and if it was the duty of sinners then to repent, turn to God, and do good works, it is their duty now; and if it was in Paul's commission to exhort them so to do, it must be in ours. If Paul did his duty in thus acting, how can we do ours, if we neglect to act thus? "There is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:7); repentance and remission of sins go together (Luke 24:46-47; turning to God is gospel conversion (I Thess. 1:9); and is required (Acts 14:15; 26:17). If therefore Paul exhorted Jews and Gentiles to repent, and fill Heaven with joy, to turn to God and be added to the Church, (as all such should be,) and to perform good works, as the proof of the vitality and spirituality of their religion; then it cannot be wrong to imitate

so admirable an example; though for so doing, we may be denounced and condemned, though we never use expressions half so strong as he has.

Acts 28:23. Here Paul is persuading the people **"concerning Jesus,"** in II Corinthians 5:10-11, he informs us he did so from a knowledge of the terrors of the Lord; but would any thing but that faith which appropriates the work of Jesus secure from those terrors? If then Paul persuaded them with a view to their escaping those terrors, he doubtless pointed out their danger, set before them Jesus the refuge, and exhorted them to seek shelter in Him; and this is faith. But it appears to me that we may as well preach Mahomet, and a pilgrimage to Mecca, to poor sinners who are exposed to the terrors of the Lord; if the gospel gives them no warrant to fly to Jesus for safety, or, if we may not persuade, and exhort them as Paul did to believe on Him to the saving of the soul (Acts 18:4; 19:26). The object of the Apostle was the salvation of his hearers (I Cor. 9:19, 22); like his Divine Master what he said to them was with the design that they might be saved (John 5:34); and he most affectionately desiring their salvation was willing not only to impart to them the gospel of God, but even his own soul also, if he might but win them to Christ (I Thess. 2:8; Rom 9:3; 10:1; Gal. 4:19). Here was no reference to the divine decrees, but while he believed them heartily, and preached them to the church; he proceeded in his work as though he believed them not, becoming all things unto all men that he might by all means save some; the decrees being matters of faith, and not a rule of conduct. He ascribed the success of the gospel

to his God, and the blinding of the sinner to Satan (II Cor. 4:3-4; and so did Jesus (Luke 8:12). He acted upon the persuasion, that **"he that winneth souls is wise"** (Prov. 11:30); and **"he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins"** (James 5:20).

II Corinthians 5:10-21. Here the Apostle vindicates his conduct from the aspersions cast upon it, (some said he was beside himself, etc.;) and gives an account of his ministry; he called it the ministry of reconciliation, and stiles himself an ambassador for Christ, whose work was to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God. The vehemence and perseverance with which he prosecuted his work, he ascribes to the love of Christ which, like a torrent, carried him away. The Corinthians to whom he wrote were already reconciled to God, his hope of them was steadfast, they were established in Christ, anointed, and sealed with the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 1:7, 21-22); but accounting for his zeal, in reference to the unconverted, he shews that it was in perfect accordance with his office and work, as a minister of reconciliation. God by the Apostle besought those to be reconciled who were in a state of enmity and alienation, hereby manifesting the greatness of his condescension, long-suffering, and forbearance; and by the same rule are we to proceed, to the same end. He preached Christ to every man, and warned every man; beseeching them not to receive the glad tidings of the grace of God in vain (Col. 1:28; II Cor. 6:1). Being allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, as a faithful herald, he published the glad tidings, **"...not**

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## The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

### 1. What are your thoughts upon Ecclesiastes 5:2?

Roger Reed  
20 Ledgewood Dr.  
Mansfield, Ohio 44905

Missionary of  
West Jefferson  
Missionary Baptist  
Mission  
90 E. Main St.  
West Jefferson, Ohio  
43162



My thoughts on Ecclesiastes 5:2 are that great care and thought should be given on how we approach our God in prayer. Our prayers must come from the heart, and we should not let our tongue overrun our thoughts as some do in public, as well as private, prayer in many denominations, including some Baptist.

We should take care that we do not talk to God as we do to each other. The late Brother Cockrell said that, "Ecclesiastes 5:2 is the divine rule of prayer. And that we must be grave, humble, and serious." I concur with Brother Cockrell.

In fact I agree with his assessment of Ecclesiastes 5:2 so much that I will quote him to answer the question in full! He goes on to say, "The throne of grace is a throne of majesty. The confidence of a child must be tempered with the humility of the sinner. We are unworthy to receive any favor from God, or to have any communion with Him. We must be grave, humble, and serious (as noted above). There is a great distance between God and man. "God is in heaven" is expressive of His majesty, sovereignty, and supremacy (Ps. 103:19; 115:3; Isa. 57: 15). The earth is God's footstool. We are mere worms on earth, unworthy

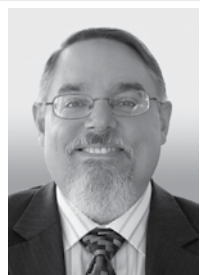
of His notice (Gen. 18:27). Let your words be well weighed and well-ordered (Job 9: 14). There is more substance in a few minutes' real communion than in an hour of formal exercise. Let us speak to God in words from the Bible (John 15:7; Rom. 8:26-27). This verse does not prohibit long prayers, but rash prayers (Matt. 6:7-8; 1 Kings 18:26). Christ prayed all night (Luke 6: 12)." (End quote).

Sometimes, because we have become so busy, I am afraid we do not take time to be thoughtful in our approach to a holy, sovereign God. And in so doing we dishonor our Heavenly Father from above. We must take more care not to dishonor Him. God Bless!

ROGER REED

Tom Ross  
6339 County Rd. 15  
South Point, OH  
45680

Pastor  
Mt. Pleasant  
Baptist Church  
6939 County Rd. 15  
Chesapeake, OH  
45619



**"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few"** (Eccl. 5:2).

This verse contains both a command and a warning concerning our words and our inward thoughts. We are commanded to be guarded and cautious with the words that proceed out of our mouth. The Hebrew word for rash is *bahar* and it conveys the idea of speaking hastily without thinking, or saying something quickly by reacting

out of fear or agitation. Moses was guilty of speaking rashly as Psalm 106:32-33 records: **"They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips"** (cf. Num. 20:10-12). The reaction of Moses prevented him from leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land! What a lesson for all of us not to speak reactively, flippantly, or haphazardly without thinking! It would do us well to remember that there are consequences for idle speech as Jesus declared: **"... Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by they words thou shalt be condemned"** (Matt. 12:34-37). It is important to note that Jesus connects our words to the inward thoughts and desires of our heart. What we say is often predicated upon what we think intellectually and feel emotionally. Thus, it behooves us to keep our inward desires, thoughts, and emotions in check. If we would truly apply these principles to our thoughts and speech we could eliminate gossip, talebearing, lying, vulgarity, and mean-spirited attitudes from our lives.

This command and warning should be viewed with the majesty, sovereignty, and omniscience of God in view. Our God is an all knowing Sovereign who sees and hears all that we do and say. Proverbs 15:3-4 declares: **"The**

**eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach of the spirit."** Should we not live with a sense of awe and reverence as we consider that our great God is actively reviewing everything we think, say, and do? Hebrews 4:13 reveals: **"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."** Everything we think, say, and do ought to be regulated by the immutable standard of Colossians 3:17: **"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."**

We are also admonished not to talk so much in light of the sovereignty and omniscience of God by the phrase **"therefore let thy words be few."** When we do speak, we should do so thoughtfully and carefully. Our words should be aimed at glorifying God and edifying those we are speaking to, with a sincere desire not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:25, 29-31 states: **"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another... Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but act which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and glamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."** These principles should govern all our speech including everyday conversation, prayer,

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## The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Christ states in John 3:5 that a man must both be born of water and the Holy Spirit, does this not mean that baptism is a requirement to salvation?

Matthew Stepp  
286 Big Creek Road  
Wayne, WV 25570

Pastor  
Big Creek  
Baptist Church  
286 Big Creek Road  
Wayne, WV 25570



There is only this ONE time that this phrase **"born of water"** is used in the Bible- here in John 3. So why would anyone think this phrase would have anything to do with baptismal regeneration? Whoever did, must have gotten that idea from man, because Bible baptism is a picture of death, not salvation. **"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: ...For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, ...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 indeed unto sin..."** (Rom. 6:3-11). Ten references to death in this passage equal death. Selah! Think about it!

Now, I know that the resurrection is also pictured in baptism, but that picture

continues in service, not salvation. Undeniably, the primary picture of baptism is death unto our sinful bodies. We never see the picture of being baptized unto (just) life, but always a baptism unto a transformed life of service. And that picture is fulfilled by the goal of baptism: being added to the Lord's New Testament Baptist churches.

So, what is the verse talking about? The context is Christ informing Nicodemus about two births: **"..Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"** (John 3:3) Nicodemus struggles with this concept and our text verse is where Christ is explaining this rebirth, by contrasting a second birth with the first birth. **"..Except a man be (1) born of water and (2) of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"** (John 3:5). So, to be **"born of water"** is speaking of our natural birth, and to be born **"of the Spirit"** is referring to our supernatural birth— salvation by grace through the blood of Christ and the effectual calling of the Holy Ghost.

This is further validated throughout the rest of the passage, including John 3:6, 12, **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ...If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"**

There is a striking distinction between the two births, the one is earthly, fleshly and **"of water,"**

while the second regenerating birth is heavenly and **"of the Spirit."**

The only remaining question, is why does Jesus say **"born of water,"** instead of "born of the flesh" or born of "earthly things" as He later does? Obviously, it is to show a more complete picture of these births, is it not? The more information we have, the more complete our understanding of the topic at hand. The more synonyms, the better.

A couple of thoughts concerning water. The Lord is purposely contrasting water and the Spirit. Our bodies are over 60% water in weight, and H<sub>2</sub>O is certainly an earthly element. Earth and water are the fundamental building blocks of humanity, even in Genesis 1:20, 24. The other two primal elements, fire and air are more often spiritual pictures or analogies. Secondly, water and "seas" are at times pictorially used of the masses, or multitudes of humanity. **"And four great beasts came up from the sea..."** (Dan. 7:3). **"Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever"** (Jude 1:13). **"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea..."** (Rev. 13:1). **"Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters...The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues"** (Rev. 17:1, 15). John 3:5 in context is then showing **"...except a man be born of water [humanity] and of the Spirit [heavenly],"** he will not enter the kingdom of God. If we only have the birth of water, then we are doomed to eternal death. What we need are words of Spirit

and the birth of life. **"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"** (John 6:63). Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP

Tom Ross  
6339 County Rd. 15  
South Point, OH  
45680

Pastor  
Mt. Pleasant  
Baptist Church  
6939 County Rd. 15  
Chesapeake, OH  
45619



I guess if you are a Catholic, Campbellite, or a Protestant baby sprinkler every time you see water you automatically apply it to the doctrine of salvation. However, there are absolutely no saving qualities in H<sub>2</sub>O no matter how it is applied. Unsuspecting infants having water sprinkled on their foreheads by a priest are not saved by this antichristian superstition. Nor will immersion in water by a Campbellite elder or an Apostolic bishop secure salvation for their converts. Plain and simple, water, no matter how it is used, applied, or blessed; cannot, will not, shall not ever, under any circumstances secure or insure the salvation of anyone, anywhere. I realize that nearly everyone but the Baptists attach saving qualities to H<sub>2</sub>O and that I am in the decided minority who firmly stand against the heresy of baptismal regeneration. But stand I must, because I believe my salvation rests entirely in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in His perfect life, sacrificial death, burial, and glorious resurrection for me personally. I dare not add to His work or trust in anyone or anything but Christ alone for salvation. I realize the Catholic

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## Forum #1

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witnessing, interaction with our families, church members, and in the work place.

Perhaps the best way to achieve obedience to this command and to heed the warning is to follow the example of the Psalmist as stated in Psalm 19:13-14: **"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."**

TOM ROSS

Matthew Stepp  
286 Big Creek Road  
Wayne, WV 25570

Pastor  
Big Creek  
Baptist Church  
286 Big Creek Road  
Wayne, WV 25570



Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 is what our LORD is quoting in Matthew 5:33-37, **"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."**

The Preacher starts off praising the merits of "listening" rather than "rashly blathering on like

fools." **"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God..."** (Eccl. 5:1-2). Real good advice: Be a man of few words! But even more particularly, look WHERE we are to approach unto with this wisdom- **"the house of God!"** Certainly, our lives are to center around this most important place, and if our hearts are right in the Lord's house, everything else will fall into reverential place in our lives. James adds to what the Lord and Solomon have said on the matter in James 1:19-20, **"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."**

The parallel passages grow closer, as the Ecclesiastes writer continues: **"...for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. ...When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."** Inherent in a vow is submission to authority. **"... And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac"** (Gen. 31:53). Because of Jacob's reverence of his earthly father, it was an oath that Laban recognized as worthy of trusting in. A common phrase used by Old Testament saints was **"...as the LORD liveth..."** Boaz, Gideon, Saul, David, Elijah, etc... When used, it meant that God was watching, observing and witnessing the veracity of their statements.

But, lest it become just a common saying with no merit or soundness, the Lord and our other quoted saints warn not to "swear" or "make vows" without seriously considering the inherent commitment one has entered into. I always marvel at the words Gehazi made as he considered taking the forbidden payment from Naaman in II Kings 5:20, **"But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him."** Do we not consider that **"as the LORD liveth."** He is alive and watching. Gehazi and ourselves go out and lie to Naaman and our neighbors, as if God is not aware.

Be a man of few words. **"Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God."** Verses 6-7 conclude the admonition here in Ecclesiastes. Surely, as James goes on in his epistle to warn us, **"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. ... the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. ...the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men..."** (James 3:5-9). Beloved reader, please join Brother James and me in abhorring the dangers that our

tongues can get us into on short notice. **"...My Brethren, these things ought not so to be."** Selah! Think about it!

**"And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD"** (Lev. 19:12). The strength in our promises and assurances to others, is ultimately our integrity. As Christ Jesus informs us, we do not own anything else—not Heaven, not Earth, nor even the hairs upon our head. A solemn "yes" or "no" will be enough for our neighbors and even our enemies, if we live the life of a virtuous Christian. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



## Forum #2

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Church has already condemned me to the fires of Hell and that the Campbellites think I am the worst sort of heretic. However, I will take my stand with Christ, the apostles, and faithful Baptists through the ages believing that salvation is by sovereign grace apart from the works or ordinances of man. Jesus Christ alone is the way of salvation as He clearly stated in John 14:6: **"...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me."**

In John chapter 3 Jesus is talking to Nicodemus about being born again by the Holy Spirit. He is clearly contrasting the first birth with the new birth. The first birth was our physical birth where we inherited a fleshly, sinful nature from our parents. As a result of the physical birth we are incapable of seeing or entering into the kingdom of God. Our dead, fleshly, carnal nature

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## Forum #2

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prohibits us from pleasing God in any way according to Roman 8:7-8: **"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."** You can apply water 100 different ways to a sinner and it will never make him acceptable to God. That which is flesh is flesh and that is all it will ever be! Water in no way, shape, or form ever gives spiritual and eternal life to a dead sinner! Salvation is not found in an ordinance or a ceremony performed by men. If baptism was necessary to be saved it would mean you would have to go to someone other than Christ to administer salvation. I do not need a priest or a preacher to be saved. I can go directly to Christ Jesus and believe that He alone is my Mediator, my Surety, my Savior, and my Lord. When the Philippian jailor asked what must I do to be saved, Paul simply told him **"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house"** (Acts 16:31). Salvation is bound up in a Person, not in a ceremony or ordinance, or any works of sinful men. This message of salvation in Christ alone is what Peter and Paul both preached as revealed in the Book of Acts: **"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins... Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses"** (Acts 10:43; 13:38-

39).

There are basically two or three views regarding how the term **"water"** is used in John 3:5 held by those who believe in salvation by grace alone through Christ. First, and I believe the one that fits best with the context and the contrast between the physical and spiritual birth, is that being **"born of water"** refers to the physical birth of a baby when its mother's water breaks. Second, some believe that the water here refers to the Word of God and they reference John 15:3, Ephesians 5:26, James 1:17 and I Peter 1:23. Third, John Gill believed that the water and Spirit in John 3:5 were one in the same, not material water or the ordinance of baptism.

I believe with all my heart that whenever the Holy Spirit regenerates a dead sinner, He gives them the gifts of repentance and saving faith in the Gospel of Christ. I see the Divine side as regeneration by the Spirit, and the human side as the elect's response to the converting power of the Word of God. I believe that the power of the new birth or regeneration is in the work of the Holy Spirit alone. The Spirit must make the dead sinner spiritually alive before the sinner is able to respond to the converting power of the Word in repentance and saving faith. There must be spiritual life before the spiritual gift of faith is exercised. I do not believe there is any time lapse between the new birth by the Spirit and faith in Christ. Regeneration always results in repentance and faith immediately. I can faithfully preach the Gospel, but unless the Holy Spirit regenerates there will be no conversion as I Thessalonians 1:5 reveals: **"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy**

**Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."** Elders T.P. Simmons and Al Gormley believed in the water of the Word and the Holy Spirit as the agents of regeneration. Elders Milburn Cockrell and C.D. Cole believed that the Holy Spirit was the sole agent or efficient cause in regeneration. I fall more in line with the Cockrell and Cole interpretation simply because I believe only the Holy Spirit can impart spiritual life. John 1:12-13 states: **"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."**

Regardless which view you may adhere to, the fact remains that all who believe in salvation by free and sovereign grace agree that the ordinance of baptism or the application of physical water has nothing at all to do with the new birth. **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in him"** (Eph. 2:8-10). Baptist Baptism follows salvation as a symbolic declaration of a sinner's new life in Christ. It is a good work of righteousness (Matt. 3:13-17) that publicly declares allegiance to Christ and His church. But make no mistake at all about it, physical water or H<sub>2</sub>O in any form has absolutely nothing to do with the salvation of a soul. I stand with Jesus who said: **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not**

**perish, but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16).

TOM ROSS

Roger Reed  
20 Ledgewood Dr.  
Mansfield, Ohio 44905

Missionary of  
West Jefferson  
Missionary Baptist  
Mission  
90 E. Main St.  
West Jefferson, Ohio  
43162



Before I answer this question, let me make it perfectly clear that baptism is in no way necessary to salvation. God does not require for a sinner to meet this requirement in order to be saved.

**"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"** (Mal. 3:6).

With that said, let us ask the reader a few questions. Do you see anyone being baptized before John the Baptist? Are there any references to anyone in the Old Testament that was baptized? If baptism is needed before anyone can be saved then all the Old Testament saints from Abel to the time of Christ are eternally lost, right? I think we will find that the Old Testament Scriptures plainly teach otherwise, unless you do not believe Malachi 3:6?

If baptism is essential to be saved, then the repentant thief who died next to Christ, as well as those that are saved on their deathbed, or the ones who are saved and never leave the hospital, or who are saved and died before they could be baptized are eternally lost? There are also other denominations that I believe are saved but do not baptize, what about them?

If baptism be necessary to salvation we must totally ignore every passage in Holy Writ which teaches that salvation is by grace and not by works, that it is a free

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## Forum #2

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gift and is not brought on by anything the sinner does. Wow, I must have had it wrong all these years, but I am pretty sure that the Bible teaches that we are saved by grace alone and that nothing else in the equation is needed to be saved.

Oh, wait, did Paul not tell the Philippian jailer when he asked, "What must I do to be saved?" that he needed to be baptized? NO, of course not, here is the Scripture, read it for yourself: **"And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house"** (Acts 16:27-31). They did not tell him to be baptized so he could be saved. But they did tell him and his house about the Lord and then they were baptized. **"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house"** (Acts 16:32-34).

Then what about Paul's statement in I Corinthians 1:14 if baptism was essential to

salvation? **"I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius"** (I Cor. 1:14). Then we read on in I Corinthians 1:15-18, **"Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."** Do you think Paul made a mistake? If you do you have a serious problem!

So, what does Christ mean by **"born of water?"** If it has no reference to the waters of baptism, what do they signify? Before we answer the question, we must see how the word **"water"** is used in other passages in this gospel. To the woman at the well Christ said in John 4:14, **"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."** Was this literal **"water?"** Clearly, **"water"** is here used figuratively.

Again, in John 7:37-38 we are told, **"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."** Here, too, the word **"water"** is not to be understood literally, but figuratively. These passages in John's Gospel are sufficient to merit us in giving the word **"water"** in John 3:5 a figurative meaning.

I would like to quote A. W. Pink

for the rest of the meaning, he says, "If then the Lord Jesus used the word **"water"** figuratively in John 3:5, to what was He referring? So, to simply answer, it is **"The Word of God."** This is the instrument used by God in regeneration. In every other passage where the instrument of the new birth is described, it is always **"The Word of God"** that is mentioned.

In Psalms 119:50 we read, **"For thy word hath quickened me."** Again, in I Corinthians 4:15 we find the apostle saying, **"I have begotten you through the gospel."** Again, we are told in (James 1:18) **"Of his own will begat he us with (what? - Baptism? no but with) the word of truth."** Peter declares, **"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"** (1 Peter 1:23).

The new birth, then, is by **"The Word of God,"** and one of the emblems of the Word is **"water."** God employs quite a number of emblems to describe the various characteristics and qualities of His Word. It is likened to a **"lamp"** (Psa. 119: 105) because it illumines. It is likened unto a **"hammer"** (Jer. 23:29) because it breaks up the hard heart. It is likened unto **"water"** because it cleanses: see Psa. 119:9; John 15:3; Eph. 5:26: **"Born of water"** means born of the cleansing and purifying Word of God.

The Producer of the new birth. **"Born of water, and of the Spirit"** (John 3:5). The Holy Spirit of God is the Begetter; the Word is the **"seed"** (I John 3:9) He uses. **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"** (John 3:6). And again, **"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing"** (John 6:63). Nothing

could be plainer. No sinner is quickened apart from the Word." (end of quote).

There is still much to study and much more to consider if one thinks he or she is saved by baptism. I am not sure, but like all false doctrine, water baptism or baptismal regeneration, as it is more rightly called, had to have a beginning and/or be started by someone. I believe, but not 100% sure, that baptismal regeneration was started by Alexander Campbell. We know his followers who call themselves Campbellites were excluded from a Baptist church for their heretical and unscriptural practices. They are known today as the Church of Christ.

Whether or not baptismal regeneration started with Campbell, it is still a well-known fact that it is still practiced by his followers today. The lack of study makes one ignorant. God Bless!

ROGER REED



## On Addressing

(Continued from page 11) ♦

**as pleasing men, but God,..."** and so should we (I Thess. 2:4). And as Peter preached the gospel unto **"them that (were) are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit"** (I Peter 4:6), so we proclaim the good news of an able and willing Saviour to every child of man, persuaded with the evangelical Ralph Erskine, that

*"Though none will come till conscious of their want,*

*Yet right they have to come by sovereign grant:*

*Such right to Christ, his promise, and his grace,*

*That all are damn'd who hear and*

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# On Addressing

(Continued from page 16) ♦  
don't embrace."

Psalms 2:10-12. Here Christ is set forth as King in Zion, the kings and judges of the earth are exhorted to do homage and yield obedience to Him; to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling; and a blessing is pronounced upon all who put their trust in Him. The service He requires is spiritual, the homage He demands is that of the heart, and the blessing He pronounces is eternal life; if a man is instructed by God's Word, if he serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling; if he pay the homage of the heart to Jesus, and put his trust in Him; he must be a spiritual man; but this is what the passage requires; and though kings and judges only are addressed, yet what is required of them is demanded in other places of their subjects also; and all who refuse are threatened with death. **"But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me"** (Luke 19:27). If they are slain for refusing to submit to the Redeemer's government, it must have been their duty to submit, and had they submitted they had been spared. The Jews would not "submit" to the righteousness which God provided for, and presented to, sinners by His gospel; and they perished in their own deceivings; but it must have been their duty to have embraced with gladness and trusted with confidence in this glorious provision (Rom. 10:1-4).

Proverbs 1:20-33. Here WISDOM, by which most interpreters consider the Son of God is intended, is represented as addressing sinners in the streets and other public places;

He reasons and expostulates with them, and exhorts them to turn at His reproof, promising to pour out His Spirit upon them; but though He called, they refused; though He earnestly pleaded with them stretching out the hand (Isa. 65:1-3) yet they disregarded, therefore He threatens to "laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh." It was plainly their duty to hear, attend, and obey; by so doing, the threatening would have been avoided, and the fulfillment of the promise realized. But their iniquities "turned away these things, and their sins withheld good things from them" (Jer. 5:25); and brought upon them the most fearful evils (Luke 19:27). This passage warrants us to reason, expostulate, and plead with sinners; and to exhort them to repent and turn to God, as does also Prov. 9:1-6; Isa. 55:1-4.

Isaiah 55:6-7. **"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts...."** Elder Owen, the great champion of free grace, on this passage says, "Let the perverse and wicked one (so the Hebrew word signifies,) forsake his way: and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy, and to our God for He will multiply to pardon. You see to whom He speaks, to men perversely wicked, and to such as make a trade of sinning. What doth He call them unto? Plainly to repentance. but what is the ground of such an invitation unto such profligate sinners? Why, the abundant forgiveness and pardon that is with Him, super abounding unto what the worst of them can stand in need of; as Rom. 5:20. The Lord speaks of an impiously wicked man; a man of deceit and perverse wickedness; he whose design and course is nothing but a lie, sin, and iniquity; such an

one as we should have little or no hopes of, or could scarce find in our hearts to pray for, but are ready to give him up as desperate. But let him return unto the Lord, and he shall obtain forgiveness." Here then is an exhortation, and warrant, for the vilest and most hardened, to seek the Lord, forsake their way, and expect forgiveness; and this passage fully justifies us in exhorting, persuading, and entreating the openly wicked, and daringly impious to repent, believe, and be saved.

"The Gospel proposeth the heavenly Canaan to souls, in such sort as the earthly Canaan was proposed to the people of Israel. I speak not strictly of the terms, but of the nature of the proposal (Heb. 3:12-13, 18-19). Compare chapter 4:1-3, 6. Here is a promise left us, viz. upon record, set before us in the Gospel, that all who believe shall be saved. **"...Unto us was the gospel preached..."** We have been evangelized as well as they, viz. by this proposal of the heavenly Canaan, as they were by the earthly. So, verse 6. They to whom it was first preached, or as in the margin, to whom the Gospel was first preached, viz. The same Gospel in type, with ours in the antitype. Now see Deuteronomy 1:8. **"Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess (it)."** This was while they were yet in the wilderness (v. 19). Again, v. 21. **"Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee...."** It was to be enjoyed and possessed in the way of faith and obedience, though not for them. Unbelief came and cut them short. So it doth many that have the gospel preached to them; of which the Apostle warns the Hebrews. In Matthew 19:21, **"Go and sell that thou hast...and thou shalt have treasure in heaven...."** What hurt to say, that Christ offered\* him

another treasure better than his earthly? And is not the same thing done in gospel daily? But when Heaven is set before men, and all the glory and happiness of the world to come, it is not, say they, worth fighting, striving, running for; nor worth denying all for. Thus it draws out a discovery of the prodigious folly and wickedness of the heart." (Beart's Eternal Law and Everlasting Gospel.)

Sinners are called upon by our Lord to "repent." Mark 1:15; "to believe," John 12:36-42: "to ask:" "to seek:" "to knock," Matt. 7:7; 6:33: to "come," Matt. 11:28: to "enter," Matt. 7:13: to "strive even to an agony," Luke 13:24: to "labour," John 6:27: to "walk in the light," John 12:35: to "provide for themselves treasures in Heaven," Matt. 6:19-20: to "come and follow Him," Matt. 19:21; Luke 18:22: and "to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" John 5:22-23, The Apostles called upon sinners to "repent," to "be converted," Acts 3:19: to "turn to God," Acts 26:20: to "beware," Acts 13:40-41: and to "be reconciled to God." II Cor. 5:20. They "reasoned" with them, Acts 17:2; 18:4; 24:25. "warned" them, Col. 1:28: "persuaded" them, Acts 28:23; 19:8, 26; 28:23; II Cor. 5:11: and "besought" them, II Cor. 5:20: being commanded to "preach" to them, Mark 16:15: to "teach" them, Matt. 28:19-20: to "bid them to the marriage," Matt. 22:9: and to "compel them to come in." Luke 14:23. Here then is the word we are to obey, the examples we are to imitate; and if for obeying the Master's commands, and imitating His examples, and that of His most honoured servants, we are despised, denounced as unsound in the faith, and considered unfit to preach the gospel; we have only to bear this

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# On Addressing

(Continued from page 17) ♦

cross, commit the keeping of our souls unto Him in well doing as unto "a faithful Creator," and go on with our work, waiting for His glorious appearing when **"every man shall have praise of God"** (I Cor. 4:5). Religious talk should be accompanied with religious tempers, and if it is not we should pity, pray for, and forgive; remembering that it is more praiseworthy to forgive a foe, then please a friend.

(Manna In The Wilderness, 1849)

**"Wherever the gospel comes, there is no man living can be lost, who is willing to take God's own grace, on His own ground, and to that end for which He hath**

revealed it in His own Word" (John Martin, of Keppel Street).

But if so, the gospel must warrant every man to take the grace; and if the gospel gives the warrant, should not the preacher urge it upon his hearers to **"have grace, whereby we (they) may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:"** And should he not address them as Paul did the Jews, **"See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven"** (Heb. 12:25, 28; with 3:12, 19; 4:1-11).



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## 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.

## SUPREME COURT READIES FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY SHOWDOWN

(WNS)--The fate of one Missouri playground is long overdue. In the 15 months since the Supreme Court agreed to hear *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Comer*, the United States has put a new president and a new Supreme Court justice in place. With Justice Neil Gorsuch sworn in, the court on April 19 will hear the anticipated religious liberty case that started over playground equipment but could affect faith-based organizations around the country. In 2012, Trinity Lutheran Church applied for a Missouri state program to reimburse nonprofits for rubber playground surfaces made from recycled tire scraps. The

program receives funding through a fee attached to new tire sales and helps reduce the number of old tires in landfills while providing a cost-effective way to purchase safe playground surfaces for children. The state awarded grants to 14 applicants, but Trinity Lutheran's preschool was not one of them.

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## TRUMP OVERTURNS OBAMA'S PLANNED PARENTHOOD FUNDING EDICT

(WNS)--President Donald Trump signed his first piece of pro-life legislation into law on April 13, overturning an eleventh-hour rule from the Obama administration to protect Planned Parenthood funding. "This is a major pro-life victory," said

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis. "Taxpayers should not be forced to fund abortion, plain and simple." Trump signed the Congressional Review Act, which blocks a last minute order President Barack Obama issued in the waning days of his presidency. The Obama order banned 13 conservative states from redirecting Planned Parenthood's Title X funding to community health centers that do not offer abortion. This is the first piece of pro-life legislation Trump has signed into law and the first time the U.S. Senate has successfully passed a pro-life bill in more than eight years.

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## PRO-LIFE GROUPS DELIVER 200,000 BABY SOCKS TO U.S. CAPITOL

(WNS)--Pro-life advocates, led by Students for Life of America, on April 26 displayed almost 200,000 baby socks on the lawn in front of the U.S. Capitol to represent the number of Planned Parenthood abortions each year. "These socks represent all the women betrayed by the abortion industry and their preborn babies who will never be able to wear the baby socks because of Planned Parenthood," said Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America. "This generation wants to defund Planned Parenthood. They expect our elected officials to keep the promises they made during the election." Planned Parenthood aborted 323,999 babies in 2016 and receives around \$500 million of annual federal funding. Students for Life wanted to collect enough socks to represent each baby aborted. After reaching more than half of their goal, pro-life advocates transported the socks in a moving truck to display outside the Capitol complex. They said it was time for lawmakers to defund the nation's largest abortion provider.

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## CREATIONISTS CHEER

## FINDINGS IN BEAR GENOME SEQUENCING PROJECT

(WNS)--Baby Bear's big surprise may not be that he found Goldilocks asleep in his bed, it may be that he discovered his parents came from two entirely separate species. Evolutionists are equally surprised because separate species are not supposed to be able to interbreed. But the new findings come as no shock to creationists, who note the discovery backs the belief that God created types of animals that diversified into what scientists now consider separate species. Evolutionary scientists in Germany made the discovery after sequencing the genomes of all known bear species for the first time. They were surprised to find that mixed breeds of bears are not nearly as rare as they had assumed.

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## COMMISSION IDS RUSSIA, OTHERS AS RELIGIOUS PERSECUTORS

(WNS)--The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) called on the Trump administration to clearly communicate that religious freedom is a top foreign policy priority as state and non state-actors increasingly persecute religious minorities on a global scale. In its annual report, the commission for the first time asked the State Department to identify Russia as a "country of particular concern" and to create a new designation for terror groups. "The state of affairs for international religious freedom is worsening in both depth and breadth of violations," the report said. "The blatant assaults have become so frightening ... that less egregious abuses go unnoticed or at least unappreciated." The report, which covers 2016 to February 2017, is the 18th since the commission's creation in 1998.

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## TOO YOUNG TO CROSS A

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# Bible & the Newspaper

(Continued from page 18) ♦

## STREET BUT OLD ENOUGH FOR A SEX CHANGE

(WNS)--More than 200 children under the age of 14 died in the United States in 2014 after being struck by a car. Another 8,000 suffered injuries, according to the National Center for Statistics and Analysis. A new research study conducted at the University of Iowa has determined children younger than 14 do not possess the cognitive skills and judgement to safely cross a street. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) published an excerpt of the study in its Daily Briefing, a nod some physicians found ironic, given the organization's support for transgender treatment. "This same AAP, however, also frequently promotes the claim that children this age or younger are cognitively capable of deciding that they are the wrong sex," noted Michelle Cretella, president of the American College of Pediatricians, a conservative alternative to the AAP.

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## RELIGIOUS HATE CRIMES ARE ON THE RISE

(WNS)--Hate crimes against minority faiths spiked 86 percent in the last 12 months—even as analysts believe many incidents continue to go unreported. On May 2, the Senate Judiciary Committee sought answers from civil rights leaders and the Trump administration about the lack of reporting and why religious minorities—particularly Jewish and Muslim Americans—are a growing target. "Religious hate crimes against Muslims are the fastest growing category," said committee chairman Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa. "Fear for practicing one's religion should never happen in this country. This problem has been growing for some time, and is not new." FBI data indicates hate crimes against Muslims rose 67 percent

between 2014 and 2015. But Jewish Americans continue to be the most targeted for hate crimes. In the first quarter of 2017, statistics show 541 reported anti-Semitic incidents—including 161 bomb threats, an increase of 127 percent from this time last year.

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## INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS FINES FOR WORSHIP, PRISON FOR BIBLE STUDY IN CHINA

(WNS)--Amid increasing attempts to suppress religious activities, Chinese authorities have detained, fined, and imprisoned Christians for public worship, buying and selling devotionals, and group Bible study. In late April, a court in Xinjiang convicted five Protestants who attended a Bible study in 2016, charging them with "gathering a crowd to disrupt social order," Asia News reported. The verdict came with five-year prison sentences for two pastors, and four- and three-year sentences for three others. They plan to appeal. Earlier in April, authorities raided a Christian concert and arrested those attending. Taiwanese Pastor Xu Rongzhang was singing "Jesus Loves You" when the raid took place, China Aid reported. Before releasing them, officials forced the Christians to say they would not organize large gatherings again and told Xu not to hold any meetings of more than 10 people.

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## DID YOU KNOW A RIVER HAS THE RIGHT TO SUE YOU?

(WNS)--New Zealand's parliament recently granted legal personhood to the Whanganui River. Four days later, the High Court in India declared the rivers Ganga and Yamuna are living entities. Now two glaciers in the Himalayan region that feed the Indian rivers, as well as nearby forests, lakes, meadows, and other natural features, have joined this special class of legally protected persons, the India Times

reported. India is highly motivated to protect the Ganga and Yamuna rivers from environmental damage because Hindus worship them just as some indigenous people of New Zealand worship the Whanganui river. But this is not about religious beliefs in India or New Zealand, Wesly J. Smith, program chair for Discovery Institute's Center on Human Exceptionalism, told me. These surprising legislative acts reflect a radical and dangerous environmental movement, called Rights of Nature, that is growing worldwide. According to the Indian court ruling, the rivers' and glaciers' rights are equivalent to the rights of human beings, and any harm caused to them will be considered harm to an individual. The rivers and glaciers now have court-appointed legal guardians—and they have the right to sue, the Delhi newspaper Mint reported.

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## UN COUNCIL ACCREDITS CHRISTIAN GROUP AFTER YEARS OF DEFERRALS

(WNS)--The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) accredited global religious freedom advocacy group Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) on April 19 after a UN committee deferred the group's application for eight years and denied it in February. The consultative status will give the Britain-based nonprofit access to attend open meetings and present at the UN. Human rights advocates described the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations' repeated denial as a political game by member countries with a bias against human rights groups. ECOSOC's 54-member council voted 28-9 with 12 abstentions.

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## WILL SWEDISH MIDWIFE'S CASE BIRTH NEW PRO-LIFE PROTECTIONS IN EUROPE?

(WNS)--A Swedish midwife denied a job because of her pro-life views is taking her case to the European Court of Human Rights. On three separate occasions, potential employers refused to hire Ellinor Grimmark, and recently the Swedish Labor Court upheld those decisions, declining to consider international conscience protections, her attorneys claim. Rebecca Ahlstrand, an attorney with Scandinavian Human Rights Lawyers representing Grimmark, said her client was disappointed but not surprised by the Swedish court's April 12 decision. Media depictions of Grimmark have not been kind, exacerbating the caricature of someone opposed to abortion, Ahlstrand said. And the few supporters she does have wonder whether her case will have broader implications for Christians trying to live out their faith in the very secular country.

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## BRITISH TEACHERS' UNION PUSHES LGBT EDUCATION FOR TODDLERS

(WNS)--Britain's largest teachers' union thinks toddlers should be included in expanded compulsory LGBT education programs. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) passed a motion April 17 calling on British lawmakers to campaign for compulsory sex education classes and the "promotion of LGBT+ matters for all schools from nursery throughout all phases of state education," according to The Times of London. The group decried the current "lack of policies which promote LGBT+ within schools," causing a "significant negative impact" on the well-being of homosexual and transgender students and teachers. Expanding sex and relationship education (SRE) programs would ensure those students "are told explicitly in the law that their lives are important, too."



# Wheat or Chaff

(Continued from page 1) ♦

you in order. Who knows but this text may prove a word in season to your soul? Who knows but my question may help to make this year the happiest year in your life?

Listen, before you begin once more to walk your appointed path of duty. Listen, before you start once more on some round of business. Listen, before you plunge once more into some course of useless idleness and folly. Listen to one who loves your soul, and would fain help to save it, or draw it nearer to Christ. Who knows what a year may bring forth? Who can tell whether you will live to see another one? Be still, and listen to me a few minutes, while I show you something out of the Word of God.

I. Let me show you, in the first place, *the two great classes into which this world may be divided.*

There are only two classes of people in the world, in the sight of God, and both are mentioned in the text which begins this tract. There are those who are called "the wheat," and there are those who are called "the chaff."

Viewed with the eye of man, the earth contains many different sorts of inhabitants. Viewed with the eye of God, it only contains two. Man's eye looks at the outward appearances: this is all he thinks of. The eye of God looks at the heart: this is the only part of which He takes any account. And tried by the state of their hearts, there are but two classes into which people can be divided: either they are wheat, or they are chaff.

Reader, who are the wheat in the world? Listen to me, and I will tell you.

The wheat means all men and women who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, all who are led by the Holy Spirit, all who have felt themselves sinners, and fled for refuge to the salvation offered in the Gospel, all who love the Lord Jesus, and live to the Lord Jesus, and serve the Lord Jesus, all who have taken Christ for their only confidence, and the Bible for their only guide, and regard sin as their deadliest enemy, and look to Heaven as their only home. All such, of every church, name, nation, people, and tongue, of every rank, station, condition and degree, all such are God's wheat.

Show me men of this kind anywhere, and I know what they are. I know not that they and I may agree in all particulars, but I see in them the handiwork of the King of kings, and I ask no more. I know not whence they came, and where they found their religion; but I know where they are going, and that is enough for me. They are the children of my Father in Heaven. They are part of His wheat.

All such, though sinful, and vile, and unworthy in their own eyes, are the precious part of mankind. They are the sons and daughters of God the Father. They are the delight of God the Son. They are the habitation of God the Spirit. The Father beholds no iniquity in them: they are the members of His dear Son's body; in Him He sees them, and is well pleased. The Lord Jesus discerns in them the fruit of His own travail and work upon the cross, and is well satisfied. The Holy Ghost regards them as spiritual temples, which He Himself has reared, and rejoices over them. In a word, they are the wheat of the earth.

Reader, who are the chaff in the world? Listen to me once more,

and I will tell you this also.

The chaff means all men and women who have no saving faith in Christ, and no sanctification of the Spirit, whosoever they may be. Some of them perhaps are infidels, and some are formal Christians. Some are sneering Sadducees, and some self-righteous Pharisees. Some of them make a point of keeping up a kind of Sunday religion, and others are utterly careless of everything except their own pleasure and the world. But all alike who have the two great marks already mentioned, no faith and no sanctification, all such are chaff. From Paine and Voltaire to the dead churchman who can think of nothing but outward ceremonies, from Julian and Porphyry to the unconverted admirer of sermons in the present day, all, all, are standing in one rank before God; all, all are chaff.

They bring no glory to God the Father. They honor not the Son, and so do not honor the Father that sent Him. They neglect that mighty salvation, which countless millions of angels admire. They disobey that Word which was graciously written for their learning. They listen not to the voice of Him who condescended to leave Heaven and die for their sins. They pay no tribute of service and affection to Him who gave them life, and breath, and all things. And therefore God takes no pleasure in them. He pities them, but He reckons them no better than chaff.

Yes! you may have rare intellectual gifts, and high mental attainments. You may sway kingdoms by your counsel, move millions by your pen, and keep crowds in breathless attention by your tongue. But if you have never submitted yourself to the yoke of Christ, and never

honored His Gospel by heartfelt reception of it, you are nothing in His sight. Natural gifts without grace are like a row of cyphers without a unit before them: they look big, but they are of no value. The meanest insect that crawls is a nobler being than you are. It fills its place in creation, and glorifies its Maker with all its powers, and you do not. You do not honor God with heart and will, and intellect and members, which are all His. You invert His order and arrangement, and live as if time was of more importance than eternity, and body better than soul. You dare to neglect God's greatest gift, His own incarnate Son. You are cold about that subject which fills all Heaven with hallelujahs. And so long as this is the case, you belong to the worthless part of mankind. You are the chaff of the earth.

Reader, let this thought be graven deeply in your mind, whatever else you forget in this tract. Remember there are only two sorts of people in the world. There are wheat, and there are chaff.

There are many nations in Europe. Each differs from the rest. Each has its own language, its own laws, its own peculiar customs. But God's eye divides Europe into two great parties, the wheat and the chaff.

There are many classes in England. There are peers and commoners, farmers and shopkeepers, masters and servants, rich and poor. But God's eye only takes account of two orders, the wheat and the chaff.

There are many and various minds in every congregation that meet for religious worship. There are some who attend for a mere form, and some who really desire to meet Christ, some who come

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# Wheat or Chaff

(Continued from page 20) ♦

there to please others, and some who come to please God, some who bring their hearts with them and are not soon tired, and some who leave their hearts behind them, and reckon the whole service weary work. But the eyes of Jesus only see two divisions in the congregation, the wheat and the chaff.

There were thousands of visitors to the great exhibition of 1851. From Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, from North, and South, and East, and West, crowds came together to see what skill and industry could do. Children of our first father Adam's family, who had never seen each other before, for once met under one roof. But the eye of the Lord saw only two companies thronging that large palace of glass, the wheat and the chaff.

Reader, I know well the world dislikes this way of dividing professing Christians. The world tries to fancy there are three sorts of people, and not two. To be very good and very strict does not suit the world: they cannot, will not be saints. To have no religion at all does not suit the world: it would not be respectable; "thank God," they will say, "we are not so bad as that." But to have religion enough to be saved, and yet not go into extremes, to be sufficiently good, and yet not be peculiar, to have a quiet, easy-going, moderate kind of Christianity, and go comfortably to Heaven after all, this is the world's favorite idea. There is a third class, a safe middle class, the world fancies, and in this middle class, the majority of men persuade themselves they will be found.

Reader, I denounce this notion of a middle class as an immense

and soul-ruining delusion. I warn you strongly not to be carried away by it. It is as vain an invention as the Pope's purgatory. It is a refuge of lies, a castle in the air, a Russian ice-palace, a vast unreality, an empty dream. This middle class is a class of Christians nowhere spoken of in the Bible.

There were two classes in the day of Noah's flood, those who were inside the ark, and those who were without; two in the parable of the Gospel net, those who are called the good fish, and those who are called the bad; two in the parable of the ten virgins, those who are described as wise and those who are described as foolish; two in the account of the judgment-day, the sheep and the goats, two sides of the throne, the right hand, and the left; two abodes when the last sentence has been passed, Heaven and Hell.

And just so there are only two classes in the visible church on earth, those who are in the state of nature, and those who are in the state of grace, those who are in the narrow way, and those who are in the broad, those who have faith, and those who have not faith, those who have been converted, and those who have not been converted, those who are with Christ, and those who are against Him, those who gather with Him, and those who scatter abroad, those who are wheat, and those who are chaff. Into these two classes the whole professing church of Christ may be divided. Besides these two classes there is none.

Reader, dear Reader, see now what cause there is for self-inquiry. Are you among the wheat, or among the chaff? Neutrality is impossible. Either you are in one class, or in the

other. Which is it of the two?

You attend church perhaps. You go to the Lord's table. You like good people. You can distinguish between good preaching and bad. You think Popery false, and oppose it warmly. You think Protestantism true, and support it cordially. You subscribe to religious societies. You attend religious meetings. You sometimes read religious books. It is well: it is very well. It is good: it is all very good. It is more than can be said of many. But still this is not a straightforward answer to my question, Are you wheat, or are you chaff?

Have you been born again? Are you a new creature? Have you put off the old man, and put on the new? Have you ever felt your sins, and repented of them? Are you looking simply to Christ for pardon and life eternal? Do you love Christ? Do you serve Christ? Do you loathe heart-sins, and fight against them? Do you long for perfect holiness, and follow hard after it? Have you come out from the world? Do you delight in the Bible? Do you wrestle in prayer? Do you love Christ's people? Do you try to do good to the world? Are you vile in your own eyes, and willing to take the lowest place? Are you a Christian in business, and on weekdays, and by your own fire-side? Oh! think, think, think on these things, and then perhaps you will be better able to tell the state of your soul.

Reader, I beseech you not to turn away from my question, however unpleasant it may be. Answer it, though it may prick your conscience, and cut you to the heart. Answer it, though it may prove you in the wrong, and expose your fearful danger. Rest not, rest not, till you know how it is between you and God. Better a thousand times find

out that you are in evil case, and repent betimes, than live on in uncertainty, and be lost eternally.

Reader, remember my question, meditate on it at the beginning of a new year. Are you wheat or chaff?

II. Let me show you, in the second place, *the time when the two great classes of mankind shall be separated.*

The text at the beginning of this tract foretells a separation. It says that Christ shall one day do to His professing Church what the farmer does to his corn. He shall winnow and sift it. He shall thoroughly purge His floor. And then the wheat and the chaff shall be divided.

There is no separation yet. Good and bad are now all mingled together in the visible Church of Christ. Believers and unbelievers, converted and unconverted, holy and unholy, all are to be found now among those who call themselves Christians. They sit side by side in our assemblies. They kneel side by side in our pews. They listen side by side to our sermons. They sometimes come up side by side to the Lord's table, and receive the same bread and wine from our hands.

But it shall not always be so. Christ shall come the second time with His fan in His hand. He shall purge His Church, even as He purified the temple. And then the wheat and the chaff shall be separated, and each go to its own place.

Before Christ comes separation is impossible. It is not in man's power to effect it. There lives not the minister on earth who can read the hearts of every one in his congregation. About some he may speak decidedly, he cannot about all. Who have oil in their lamps, and who have not, who

♦ (Continued on page 22)



# Wheat or Chaff

(Continued from page 21) ♦

have grace as well as profession, and who have profession only and no grace, who are children of God, and who of the devil, all these are questions which, in many cases, we cannot accurately decide. The fan is not put into our hands.

Grace is sometimes so weak and feeble, that it looks like nature. Nature is sometimes so plausible and well-dressed, that it looks like grace. I believe we should many of us have said that Judas was as good as any of the Apostles; and yet he proved a traitor. I believe we should have said that Peter was a reprobate when he denied his Lord, and yet he repented immediately, and rose again. We are but fallible men. We know in part, and prophesy in part. We scarcely understand our own hearts. It is no great wonder if we cannot read the hearts of others.

But it will not always be so. There is One coming Who never errs in judgment, and is perfect in knowledge. Jesus shall purge His floor. Jesus shall sift the chaff from the wheat. I wait for this. Till then I will lean to the side of charity in my judgments. I would rather tolerate much chaff in the Church, than cast out one grain of wheat. He shall soon come who has His fan in His hand, and then the certainty about every one shall be known.

Before Christ comes I do not expect to see a perfect Church. There cannot be such a thing. The wheat and the chaff, in the present state of things, will always be found together. I pity who leave one Church and join another, because of a few faults and unsound members. I pity them because they are fostering ideas which can never be realized.

I pity them, because they are seeking that which cannot be found. I see chaff everywhere. I see imperfectness and infirmities of some kind in every communion on earth. I believe there are few tables of the Lord, if any, where all the communicants are converted. I often see loud-speaking professors exalted as saints. I often see holy and contrite believers set down as having no grace at all. I am satisfied if men are too scrupulous, they may go fluttering about like Noah's dove all their days and never find rest.

Reader, do you desire a perfect Church? You must wait for the day of Christ's appearing. Then, and not till then, you will see a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Then, and not till then, the floor will be purged.

Before Christ comes I do not look for the conversion of the world. How can it be, if He is to find wheat and chaff side by side in the day of His second coming? I believe some Christians expect that missions will fill the earth with the knowledge of Christ, and that little by little sin will disappear, and a state of perfect holiness gradually glide in. I cannot see with their eyes. I think they are mistaking God's purposes, and sowing for themselves bitter disappointment. I expect nothing of the kind. I see nothing, in the Bible, or in the world around me, to make me expect it. I have never heard of a single parish entirely converted to God, in England, or Scotland, or of anything like it? And why am I to look for a different result from the preaching of the Gospel in other lands? I only expect to see a few raised up as witnesses to Christ in every nation, some in one place and some in another. Then I expect the Lord Jesus will

come in glory, with His fan in His hand. And when He has purged His floor, and not till then, His kingdom will begin.

"No separation and no perfection till Christ comes!" This is my creed. I am not moved when the infidel asks me why all the world is not converted, if Christianity is really true. I answer, it was never promised that it would be so in the present order of things. The Bible tells me that believers will always be few, that corruptions, and divisions, and heresies, will always abound, and that when my Lord returns to earth, He will find plenty of chaff.

"No perfection till Christ comes!" I am not disturbed when men say, "Make all the people good Christians at home before you send missionaries to the heathen abroad." I answer, if I am to wait for that, I may wait forever. When we have done all at home, the Church will still be a mixed body, some wheat and much chaff.

But Christ will come again. Sooner or later there shall be a separation of the visible Church into two companies, and fearful shall that separation be. The wheat shall make up one company. The chaff shall make up another. The one company will be all godly. The other company will be all ungodly. Each shall be by themselves, and a great gulf between, that none can pass. Blessed indeed shall the righteous be in that day! They shall shine like stars, no longer obscured with clouds. They shall be beautiful as the lily, no longer choked with thorns. Wretched indeed will the ungodly be! How corrupt will corruption be when left without one grain of salt to season it! How dark will darkness be when left without one spark of

light! Ah! Reader, it is not enough to respect and admire the Lord's people. You must belong to them, or you will one day be parted from them forever. There will be no chaff in Heaven. Many, many are the families where one will be taken and another left.

Who is there now among the readers of this tract that loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity? If I know anything of the heart of a Christian, your greatest trials are in the company of worldly people, your greatest joys in the company of the saints. Yes! there are many weary days, when your spirit feels broken and crushed by the earthly tone of all around you, days when you could cry with David, "Woe is me that I dwell in Mesech, and have my habitation in the tents of Kedar." And yet there are hours when your soul is so refreshed and revived by meeting some of God's dear children, that it seems like Heaven on earth. Do I not speak to your heart? Are not these things true? See then how you should long for the time when Christ shall come again. See how you should pray daily that the Lord would hasten His kingdom, and say to Him, "**Come quickly, Lord Jesus.**" Then, and not till then, shall be a pure unmixed communion. Then, and not till then, the saints shall all be together, and shall go out from one another's presence no more. Wait a little. Wait a little. Scorn and contempt will soon be over. Laughter and ridicule shall soon have an end. Slander and misrepresentation will soon cease. Your Saviour shall come and plead your cause. And then, as Moses said to Korah, "**the LORD will show who are his.**"

"This is certain, when the elect are all converted, then Christ will come in judgment. As he

♦ (Continued on page 23)

# Wheat or Chaff

(Continued from page 22) ♦

that rows a boat, stays till all the passengers are taken into his boat, and then he rows away; so Christ stays till all the elect are gathered in, and then He will hasten away to judgment" (Thomas Watson, 1660).

Who is there among the readers of this tract that knows his heart is not right in the sight of God? See how you should fear and tremble at the thought of Christ's appearing. Alas! indeed for the man that lives and dies with nothing better than a cloak of religion! In the day when Christ shall purge His floor, you will be shown up and exposed in your true colors. You may deceive ministers, and friends, and neighbors, but you cannot deceive Christ. The paint and varnish of a heartless Christianity will never stand the fire of that day. The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. You will find that the eye which saw Achan and Gahazi, has read your secrets, and searched out your hidden things. You will hear that awful word, "**Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?**" Oh! tremble at the thought of the day of sifting and separation. Surely hypocrisy is a most losing game. Surely it never answers to act a part. Surely it never answers, like Ananias and Sapphira, to pretend to give God something, and yet to keep back your heart. It all fails at last. Your joy is but for a moment. Your hopes are no better than a dream. Oh! tremble, tremble, tremble, and repent.

Reader, think on these things. Remember my question. Meditate on it, as you begin a new year. Are you wheat or chaff?

♦ (To be continued in July issue)

## The Short Pews



Brief  
Articles  
by Curtis  
Pugh

### YOU AND THE WORD OF GOD

Each person has a relationship to the Bible, the Word of God. Some have never heard the Word of God preached nor have they read it, not having Bibles themselves. Others who could attend places where the Word of God is preached refuse to do so. Others twist the Bible to make it say what they want it to say. Peter wrote of Paul's writings saying, **"... which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction"** (II Peter 3:16).

Others have a healthy relationship to the Word of God. Paul wrote of his thanksgiving for the Lord's church in Thessalonica. He said: **"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe"** (I Thess. 2:13).

Paul was thankful because when he had been there preaching the Word of God some of the population received his preaching for what it was: the Word of God. They did not reject what he said. Rather their old beliefs and ideas were changed because of the Word of God.

Paul explains why their ideas, beliefs, and lives were changed. The Bible **"effectually worketh"**

in those **"that believe."** The Bible is for believers. It is in believers that it brings forth spiritual fruit. It is in the lives of believers that repentance and faith and amendment of life are seen. Referring to the Scriptures of his day the Psalmist wrote, **"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul..."** (Psalm 19:7).

So we must ask: what makes an individual a believer? What brings a sinner to the place where the Word of God works effectually in them changing them and their behavior? The Bible reveals that there is a spiritual birth that causes sinners – unbelievers – to believe and to receive (welcome) Christ. The Bible says: **"But as many as received him, to them gave he power [privilege or right] 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). Consider what is the cause and what is the effect here. If God births sinners spiritually because of something they did in order to bring it about, these two verses are contradictory. For this passage says that the spiritual birth is not **"of the will of man."** It is not something that man does. So the two verses above speak of some sinners who believed in and welcomed Christ when He was here on earth. The cause of their believing and welcoming Him was that they had been born **"of God"** and not of any act of their will. Jesus said, **"...Ye must be born again"** (John 3:7).

### WORSHIPING CREATION

Far from being a new thing, the worship of creation or nature can be traced back to the beginnings

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### BEREA BAPTIST BANNER

#### Financial Report

4-1-2017 to 4-30-2017

Beginning Balance ..... \$2,285.03

#### RECEIPTS:

Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX ..... 50.00  
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 ..... 200.00  
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, Portland, ME ..... 20.00  
George Heidorn, Marietta, OH ..... 50.00  
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY ..... 300.00  
Grace B. C., Rural Hall, NC ..... 50.00  
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL ..... 50.00  
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK ..... 35.00  
Indore B. C., Indore, WV ..... 100.00  
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC ..... 50.00  
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY ..... 35.00  
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH ..... 100.00  
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN ..... 50.00  
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL ..... 100.00  
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR ..... 50.00  
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS ..... 25.00  
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL ..... 100.00  
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX ..... 60.00  
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA ..... 25.00  
Subscriptions ..... 30.00  
Anonymous ..... 220.00  
Dividing checks ..... 150.00  
Sub Total ..... \$2,622.50  
TOTAL ..... \$4,907.53

#### EXPENDITURES:

Printing ..... 490.00  
Postage ..... 662.30  
Wages ..... 2,300.00  
FICA ..... 175.90  
Dividing checks ..... 150.00  
Bank Charge ..... 13.00  
Total Expenditures ..... \$3,791.20  
ENDING BALANCE ..... \$1,116.33



### BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST

#### Financial Report

4-1-2017 to 4-30-2017

Beginning Balance ..... \$5,529.60

#### RECEIPTS:

Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS ..... 225.00  
Briar Creek, B. C., Williamsburg, KY ..... 100.00  
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY ..... 300.00  
Interest ..... +.04  
..... 625.04  
TOTAL ..... 6,154.64

#### EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time ..... 640.00  
Program production ..... 195.00  
TOTAL EXPENDITURES ..... 835.00  
ENDING BALANCE ..... \$5,319.64

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Philadelphia B. C. of Decatur, AL and Pastor Doyal Thomas would like to announce their Summer Revival /Quarterly Fellowship Meeting for June 14th - 18th. 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 Nathaniel Hille.

On Saturday Elder Shaun Trescott will be the additional speaker and a noon meal will be provided.

All are invited to attend.

The Indore Baptist Church of Indore, WV, and Pastor Paul Stepp would like to announce their Annual Bible Conference for June 23rd thru 25th.

For more information contact Pastor Stepp at (304) 587-4660 (H) or (304) 807-5069 (M).

All are invited to attend.

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

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

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

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

All are invited to attend.

The Windsor Baptist Church in Windsor, IL is seeking a qualified candidate for pastor. We are a sovereign grace independent Baptist church, small in number but rich in truth. We are seeking a candidate qualified for the position

as described in I Timothy 3. Any interested potential candidate please contact Brother John Gregory at windsorbaptist.grace@gmail.com or phone 217-728-8311.

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

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

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

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

# The Short Pews

(Continued from page 23) ♦

of the world's religions. Generally it involves the seasons, nature, superstitious ideas about peculiar looking stones and other objects, holidays or holy days, the sun, moon, stars, angels, etc. Creation worship parades as a peaceful movement that teaches equality among the peoples of the earth and the betterment of society. As he often did, Paul warned of those who would use "enticing words" to lead people astray by their underhandedness (see Colossians 2:4).

God in His Book points out the wicked character of creation worship. In Romans 1:25 it is written: **"Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."** It is as if someone wrote a great book, made a great discovery, painted a glorious painting or some other truly magnificent work only to have people worship and honor what he or she had accomplished while not only ignoring the originator of the thing – and going beyond that – heaping scorn and slander upon him or her.

Jonas Salk developed a vaccine for polio. The men who wrote the

Constitution of the United States produced a grand document copied 'round the world. These are just two who along with a multitude of others are recognized and honored for their work: and rightfully so. They have contributed much to the betterment of society. But in creation worship, God who is the Creator is ignored, slandered and hated while His works are worshiped. He is not even recognized as existing by some who worship nature this way. Certainly His Word is ignored which means that there is no effort on the part of creation worshipers to honor Him. Whether the earth, the elements, angels, or any other created thing is honored or worshiped in creation worship God is not the object of such devotion.

Think about what a travesty – a debased and distorted kind of worship this is! Rather than honor the Creator, those who worship creation deny Him, and, in so doing, pervert **"the truth of God into a lie"** (Rom. 1:25). It is God the Creator who should be worshiped and not His handwork!

And who is the Creator? God's Word tells us. Speaking of Jesus Christ as the "Word," or revelation of God, John said: **"The same [Christ, God the Son] was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made"** (John 1:2-3). According to John 5:23 it is the Father's will, **"That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."** Do you worship the Son of God, Jesus Christ who is the Creator? To worship or honor any created thing or person is to defraud God the Father and God the Son of their rightful honor and glory!



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