

## America A Spiritual Wasteland!

By Shawn Berry  
 of Somerset, Kentucky

**"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God"** (Ps. 9:17). I preached a message a couple of years ago entitled, "America a Sinking Ship". I would like to change that thought to, "America a Sunken Ship". I believe that the nation in which we live has crossed the line. I believe this nation has continued in a downhill run into wickedness and away from God for so long that we have finally crossed the line on God's timetable. God has allowed every wicked person, nation, etc. to continue on in their wickedness in order to show His attribute of mercy, but only for a certain time. Then He reveals His judgment and wrath against sin and wickedness. I believe that we have crossed that line. God has unleashed His judgment upon this land and I tremble at the thought of it.

The foundation of this nation has been destroyed. I do not think there is



anything left of that foundation that has not been trampled on and completely polluted. This country was founded upon the idea of one true God, and the freedom to serve that one true living God, and the freedom to do that which was right in the eyes of that one true living God.

Today this country cannot even figure out who that one true living God is. And the only freedom is the freedom to promote that which is wicked. The freedom that this country was founded upon was not intended to give someone the freedom to print pornography. This country was not founded upon the freedom to let little Jimmy become little Jenny, because his mama decided he looked cute in a dress. That is completely against the Word of

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## Are There Few That Be Saved?

By Raymond Bennett  
 of Ithaca, New York

**"And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves**



thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold,

there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last" (Luke 13:22-30).

The disciple's question (v. 23) implies that the disciples had caught the meaning of the two parables, realizing that there will be many professors in the kingdom of God, complacently nesting and feeding in the sheltering branches of the mustard tree, but relatively few who are real believers.

Jesus' response to that question is the same response that Matthew gathers in what we have come to call "The Sermon

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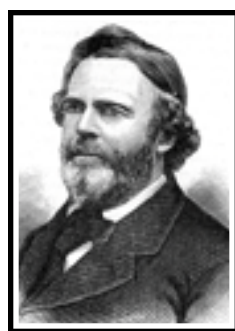
## Nicodemus, The Religious Inquirer

By George C. Baldwin  
 (1817 - 189?)

*"Acquaint thee, O mortal! Acquaint thee with God,  
 And joy, like the sunshine, shall beam on thy road,  
 And peace, like the dew-drop, shall fall on thy head,  
 And sleep, like an angel, shall visit thy bed."*

*"Acquaint thee, O mortal! Acquaint thee with God,  
 And he shall be with thee when fears are abroad,  
 Thy safeguard is danger that threatens thy path,  
 Thy joy in the valley and shadow of death."*

To inquire, search after truth, is one of the most interesting exercises of which the human mind is capable. Your children never exhibit a more promising trait than when they develop a disposition to make inquiries, which sometimes leads them to ask questions which you find it difficult to answer. Nothing more dignifies a young man than the development of a spirit of investigation. No exponent better indicates



the intellectual and moral condition of any community, than the degree in which this constitutes a characteristic. At no point in their history do the great minds of the world appear invested

with such sublimity of interest, as when we behold them searching into hitherto unexplored realms after new truths. When is Galileo encircled with such interest as at the point where he commenced his investigations by watching the oscillations of the old cathedral lamp, from which he was led on to such important results? Or Newton, as when commencing his career of unparalleled brilliancy by the discovery of the principle of gravitation? Or young

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## Pressing Toward the Mark

By B. H. Carroll  
 (1843 - 1914)

**"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"** (Phil. 3:13-14).

I am to preach this night from the theme: "Forgetting the things behind and reaching forth to the things before, I press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." As an introduction to this service I have read with earnestness, and I trust you have heard with solemn attention, the following Scripture lessons: Romans 8:28-30, inclusive; Ephesians 1:15-23, inclusive; I Thessalonians 5:23, and Philippians 3:7-14.

From these declarations of God's



Word it is evident that the average Christian has only a faint conception of the sublimity and glory of his destiny under grace. We are accustomed ordinarily to content ourselves in

stepping short of God's appointments in our behalf. It is my purpose, God's Spirit assisting, to lead you this night to lift up your eyes to greater things that you may be uplifted by them and drawn toward them by all the attractive power of the gospel.

Before the foundations of the world were laid God fore-knew every Christian in this house; before the morning stars sang together God, according to His foreknowledge, chose every Christian in

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**Oh! grant us, Lord, to feel and own, the power of love divine;  
 The blood which doth for sin atone, the grace which makes us thine.  
 "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).**

May 5, 2009

Volume XXIX, Number 5  
Whole Number 358

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

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

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

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES - U.S.

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES - FOREIGN One Year \$45

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

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

CHURCH PHONE: 1-662-282-7794.

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6. To inform people of world events in light of Bible prophecy.
7. To condemn and expose error wherever it may rear its ugly head.
8. To stimulate Christian growth in grace.
9. To make the Devil and his demons as mad as possible.

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## America

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God and it is an abomination! Romans 1:27-32: **"And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."** A lot of the people in America are either guilty of these things or guilty of taking pleasure in those that do commit them.

The so-called spiritual leaders of our country sound a lot like the description given in Jeremiah 14: 13-14 concerning Israel, **"Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart."** We have a lot of spiritual leaders out here peddling lies and that is why we have a bunch of people that call themselves Christians running around looking like the world and living like the Devil. We have all of these spiritual leaders who are denying God's hand of judgment that is upon this nation. This country is drowning in sin and people are denying it.

The sad thing is, the people love to hear it just as we read of in Jeremiah 5:26-31, **"For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for**

**these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"** If God felt this way about the nation of Israel when they did these things, do you not think He feels the same way about America as we do these things today?

**"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people"** (Prov. 14:34). This country is full of sin and wickedness and it is a reproach. It is horrifying!

Much of the problem can be traced right back to God's people. The cure for America is the same as the cure that God offered Israel in II Chronicles 7:14, **"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."** God's people refuse to be humbled. God's people are lacking in prayer. God's people are too busy to seek His face. God's people are too in love with their wicked ways and this world to forsake them.

How many, of God's people, for years have shut their eyes and ears to God's Word when it addresses sin. They will hear all of the interesting stories and the flowery messages of God's grace and all of those lovely things, but you get on Christian living and you begin talking about people throwing out all of the things that are in their life that do not belong and God's people will not have it. Hosea chapter eleven and verse seven describes God's people in America very well, **"And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him"** (Hos. 11:7). God's people are bent on backsliding. If you followed the average child of God away from the church building on Sunday and followed them through the week what would you see? **"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear"** (Isa. 59:2). The iniquities that no one believes they have are separating them from the face of God!! I am writing this article because I love the country in which I was born and raised. I love America the land of the free and the home of the brave. I love it so much that I am willing to stand up and fight for the things that I know this country was really founded upon. We need to stop justifying wickedness and sin. We need to stop making excuses for the flesh. We need to stop entertaining worldliness.



## Few Be Saved

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on the Mount," Matt. 7:13: **"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."** Beware of the easy road!

"Strait" does not mean "without bends or curves," it means a small or narrow way, as in II Kings 6:1: **"And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us."** What the "sons of the prophets" were saying was that the place where they dwelt was too small for all of them. **"Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too confining for us."** (21KJ)

"Strait" is also used to mean difficult or distressing. Compare here I Chronicles 21:13: **"And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD"** when David was made to choose one of three punishments from the Lord.

This lesson is often forgotten in modern Christian preaching. The "Christian road" is never a straight and easy road; it is a strait and narrow road. Someone said, "It is not that Christianity has been tried and found wanting, it is that Christianity has been found difficult and not tried." We do serious error when we preach or imply a "problems solved, live happily ever after" gospel.

There are many who know, and actually believe (academically) the hope and life of the gospel, but like one person put it to me, "I see where this is going and I don't want to go that route." Blinded by Satan **"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them"** II Cor. 4:3-4), they see and often desire and teach the ethical side of the gospel but, like the well known young ruler, they take that as the requirement for eternal life, making the ethical teachings a "works unto salvation," or flee from Christianity because they see it as too restrictive. That, by the way, is a damning side effect of over emphasizing legalistic cultural taboos which are not Scriptural steps of obedience.

**"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"** (Matt. 7:14). There aren't as many people walking the same road that we walk as we'd often like to think.

There will be many walking a similar road, even preaching and practicing the same doctrines, practices and ethics that we do, but service now may not mean reality of conversion. Matthew 7:22-23: **"Many will say to me in that day, Lord,**

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**Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**” They will offer excuses, even claiming to have sat at Jesus’ feet when He (or the man of God) was teaching (vv. 26-27). Those claims may even be true, as far as they go, but there is a vast chasm between hearing and believing, hearing and doing.

**“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”** (Heb. 4:2) **“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”** (James 1:22).

Many will claim their “Christian heritage”; unaware that growing up in the church or having Christian parents and grandparents has nothing to do with their salvation. They will see those “fathers in the faith” in the kingdom of God but be thrust out themselves. **“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out”** (Luke 13:28).

Like the self-righteous Jews that Jesus is addressing, they will see those many converts from the lands and societies which *they* had despised and rejected. **“And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God”** (Luke 13:29). Those will sit down at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, hearing the Lord’s gracious words, **“thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.”** But they will be excluded.

**“And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.”** This statement, here, seems to require a different interpretation than the reversal of chronological order which is usually given to it. The “first or last” position is not necessarily chronological order. It may have some reference to the kingdom offered to the Jews first and the national rejection of the King making them the last to actually receive the king while the Gentiles, or more specifically the church, which appears in a later chronological order, becomes the first to receive the King. Then in the final recognition and reception of their Messiah (Zech. 12:10) Israel will receive the kingdom. But we suggest that position, not chronological order, is the application here.

The general application of this verse, both here and when Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 19:30 and 20:16, is very

applicable and valuable. The Lord sees the service of His servants and does not rate or reward them according to what we see on earth. Many whom we honor as giants of the faith may show up in a lower position than some poor unknown prayer warrior who has spent many lonely hours on his or her knees in secret prayer. There may be many an unknown but faithful servant of God who sees little to no earthly reward or fruit for his service but will take a higher place of honor than the well known preachers of high reputation today. In that sense they will be “first” in honor before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Let us labor therefore to be faithful and diligent in prayer while still faithful in service. The incident of the “widow’s mite” can apply here. She gave all that she had, all that the Lord had given her. That would be the faithful prayer warrior who otherwise lacks the gifts to be a great pulpit. The rich gave a portion of what they had, keeping some back for themselves. That would be the great pulpit who has great gifts in oratory and education, but may be lacking in his secret prayer life.

They may be using these same excuses at the Judgment Seat of Christ, boasting of their great sermons and the numbers of converts, but taking a back seat to the faithful prayer warrior whose prayers brought down the blessing of God upon his preaching and the grace of God upon his congregations.



## Nicodemus

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Watt, as when, seated by his mother’s hearth, his attention was directed to the steam which issued from her kettle, and the inquiry sprang up within his ardent soul as to whether that force might not be applied to purposes of usefulness---an inquiry whose results have changed the face of the world? All great discoveries have been made by inquiring men. They have been the world’s intellectual pioneers, and have reaped in their own souls the virgin harvests of truth.

Such a spirit, however, is interesting in the ratio of the elevation and importance of the object toward which it is directed. He who is investigating an atom interests us somewhat; but how much does he who is endeavoring to reveal the secrets of a globe? So does he who is engaged in developing our material natures and necessities, but assuredly far less than does he whose investigations relate to our immaterial natures, their spiritual necessities, and the fullness of God’s supply to meet them. The latter belongs to the province of religion, and is the specific work of the religious inquirer.

While, therefore, men occupy a noble position when inquiring in any

department of the wide realm of truth, theirs is the noblest who intelligently seek to know religious truths, for it relates to the highest possible subjects---God and the soul, sin and redemption; because it appertains to our highest, most enduring interests; yea, interests which shall live involved in weal or woe when the earth shall have been wrapped in its shroud of flame, and during all the subsequent “eternal years of God.” A man occupying this position I now present to you in *Nicodemus, the religious inquirer.*

As to an art gallery there are some full-length portraits, some half size, some busts, and others mere outline sketches, which latter, by a few masterly lines, indicate prominent and characteristic features; so in the New Testament exhibitions of men, there are full and partial delineations of life and character. Our present subject belongs to the latter class. The place he occupies on the canvas is limited, but the drawing is perfect, the coloring is deep yet perfectly natural, and the sketch strikingly impressive.

The first thing concerning him which arrests attention is the *position which he occupied in society.*

He was a **“ruler of the Jews,”** that is, he was a member of the Sanhedrim, the supreme council or court of Jewish national judicature. Many suppose that it was originally founded by Moses, and reorganized by Ezra, but the more probable opinion is that it was established by the Maccabees, or Asmoneans, who assumed the government under the title of High Priests. The room in which it convened was a rotunda, half of which was within and half without the temple. This may seem strange; but are you aware that it was unlawful to sit in the temple at Jerusalem? Hence the Sanhedrim, who wished to have the influence of the holy place, to give force to their authority, built their rotunda half within it and half without. They say, during their deliberations, in the part which was outside of the sanctuary. The president was called a “Prince,” and sat upon a throne; his deputy bore the title of “Father of the House of Judgment,” and was located on the right hand; his sub-deputy, seated on the left, was called “The Wise,” and the members, seventy in number, filled the remaining portion of the semicircle. To be a member of this body was next to the highest positional eminence among the Jews, and therefore the following qualifications were requisite: it was required that a man should be of unstained birth, skilfull in the written and traditional law, acquainted with physic, astrology, mathematics and the languages; that he should not be a usurer, a gamester, or deformed, but of good personal appearance, mature age, and wealthy. The authority of this body, although much crippled by the Roman invasion, was at this time very powerful in Jerusalem, and had, in every town and city of Palestine, inferior councils, consisting

of twenty-three persons each, which were subordinate to and controlled by it.

You perceive now, in the absence of any detailed account of the life and social condition of Nicodemus, how much concerning him we learn from the mere fact that he was a member of this august

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## Pressing Toward

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this house; before He said, **“Let there be light”** (Gen. 1:3), God predestined every Christian in this house, according to that election and according to that fore-knowledge, to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, but fore-knowledge, election and predestination were thousands of years of time in the divine mind only.

In time, and in your own case, nearly six thousand years after this convenient exercise of the divine mind and heart, God called you. The call was according to the predestination before the world was; the predestination was according to the election before the morning stars sang; the election was according to the fore-knowledge before the foundations of the world were laid.

One might naturally infer that a purpose so anciently carried in the mind of God, and for so many ages, looked to a corresponding consummation. If He called me according to His fore-knowledge and election and predestination, and treasured His purpose to call me through such a period of time, surely He did not mean to call me to an ignoble destiny. The calling must be something infinitely high; hence, our text speaks of the high calling of God; that is, a calling from on high, or a heavenly calling. Heaven does not trifle as earth trifles. He calls us to something higher than any earthly good, higher than the mountains, higher than the clouds that wreath their base in garments of mist, higher than the stars which illumine their crests, high above all principalities and powers in heavenly places---even as high as the throne and glory of God Himself.

Our text declares that this high calling holds out before our eyes a prize to be won; toward that prize, it beckons and incites and stimulates. How important then the calling! What is the prize of the high calling of God? Is it earthly fame, or wealth, or political power, or fading pleasure, or any of the objects toward

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## Pressing Toward

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which the thoughts and aspirations of men on earth are usually turned? May we know definitely what this prize is?

The prize is something to be won. The context tells us just what it was that Paul desired to win. He says: **“I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ”** (Phil. 3:8). What is to be won is the prize, and Christ is to be won. If Paul had not won Christ at the time of this statement we may be sure that no Christian here has won him. In the sense of this text, you did not win Christ when you were converted; you did not win Christ in your richest, sweetest, and highest revival experience. That is an attainment for the future. Evidently, therefore, it does not mean Christ in the flesh, not Christ in the manger, nor in the Temple disputing with the doctors, nor as a healer and teacher in the cities of Judea and Israel, not Christ working mighty miracles, not Christ in Gethsemane; yea, not even Christ on the cross, nor in the grave, but Christ in glory.

To win Christ in glory is to actually reach Him where He is, and to possess Him there, to claim Him as ours, though He be invested with the sovereignty of the universe, and sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God, reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords.

To win Christ then is not to know Him, and hear Him and see Him as John the Apostle did by the Sea of Galilee, but to enter into an inheritance with Him as John saw Him in the book of Revelation; that Son of man clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle, with head and hair white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and whose voice was as the sound of many waters. The Christ holding in His hands the angels of the churches, and having at His girdle the keys of death and hell; the Christ that once lived and was dead, but now, behold, is alive forever.

That we may understand better the value of winning Christ, as set forth in the text, let us consider the other thoughts concerning Him thus won, as set forth by the apostle in our context. He says: **“That I may win Christ and be found in him.”** Found in Him when? Evidently at the judgment day when the searchlight of divine justice discovers the location of every man; to be found in Him at that great day of assize; the day of the White Throne; the day when good and bad are separated and assigned to everlasting destinies. When we win Him then will we be found in Him by the discriminating eye of infinite justice.

This further appears from the additional thought, **“Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law,**

**but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”** (Phil. 3:9). The reference is evidently to the time of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. When indeed we win Him then we will be found in Him, and being found in Him will stand not in our law righteousness but in the righteousness which is through faith. The thought continues: **“That I may know him.”** This is not a knowledge of Christ in the flesh. He seeks to know Him as He is in glory. That knowledge follows his winning Him. If Christ is his prize, Christ is also his righteousness and his hiding place, and the knowledge of Him there is unlike the knowledge of Him here. Here we see through a glass darkly; then, face to face; here, we know in part; then, we shall know as we are known.

Such being the prize, evidently there must be some last attainment which precedes the winning and enjoyment of the prize. This leads us to consider next the expression, **“the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”** (Phil. 3:14). What is that mark? It is the standard, the measure, the limitation which designates the end of all Christian striving. Sometimes we call it a goal, as in the foot race of the ancient Greeks the goal marked the termination of the race. When one reached the goal he might claim the prize, but he could not lay his hands upon it, nor receive it from the judge until this goal was touched. It is of much importance to us therefore to understand just what is that Ultima Thule of Christian effort and growth.

It will count nothing for us so far as the attainment of the prize is concerned if we stop short of this goal, if on a last analysis we are not up to the mark. The pertinent question, therefore, is, Has God placed this mark anywhere in our earthly life? or, Is death this goal?

Paul surely did not count it as placed anywhere in his earthly life, and just as surely disclaims finding it in the hour and article of death. In the fourth chapter of his letter to Timothy he declares that the time of his departure is at hand, and says: **“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day”** (II Tim. 4:8). He did not obtain the crown when he died. It was laid up for him. There was a day appointed upon which he would receive it. He would receive it by the verdict of a righteous Judge when he reached the goal.

I repeat, death is not that goal. True, at death the spirit is perfect; so he tells us in the letter to the Hebrews: **“Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect”** (Heb. 12:22).

Here we find the perfected spirit. When the spirit reaches Mount Zion, when it attains to the heavenly Jerusalem, when it enters the company of the angels, when it joins the general assembly and church of the First Born, when it comes to God, the Judge, then is the spirit made perfect, but even the perfection of the spirit, following upon the dissolution of the body, though like Stephen, we have said: **“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”** (Acts 7:59), though like the spirit of Lazarus when he died, which the angels carried to the bosom of Abraham, yet the goal is not there because the whole man is not there. Complete salvation has not been attained.

In the book of Revelation John saw the souls of the martyrs under the altar crying out unto God for something not yet obtained. With greater emphasis then, the question recurs: What is the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?

The mark or goal is the last end which we reach. Our context tells us distinctly what it is. Let us listen to Paul's explanation of it: **“If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead”** (Phil. 3:11); and again he says, **“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection”** (Phil. 3:10). When that day comes appointed of God, the dead will be raised and judgment will be rendered. The estate of the resurrection from the dead is therefore the completed state of the saved man. This is in accord with one of the Scriptures read to you as an introduction. I quote it again from the Revised Version: **“And the God of Peace, himself, sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Mark the date---at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, when He comes, He comes to raise the dead and judge. The supreme destiny of the saved man, in all its sublimity and glory is involved in the meaning of the conditions of the resurrection. Concerning this, Paul says in our context: **“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect”** (Phil. 3:12). Nothing but attainment and perfection could satisfy him. Until he reached the estate of the resurrection of the dead and was clothed with its glory he did not believe that he had laid hold upon all of the things for which Christ laid hold of him.

You remember when and how Jesus called him. It was on the way to Damascus. He was going as a persecutor of the faith which he afterwards preached, but about midday Jesus met him; not Jesus in the flesh, but Jesus in glory. Jesus called him: **“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”** (Acts 9:4). “Rise and stand upon thy feet. Thou art a chosen vessel unto me. I will make thee a minister and a witness, not only in the things which thou hast seen, but in those which shall hereafter be

revealed unto thee.”

It was a high calling. It had a glorious prize, but the mark which measured the limit of upward movement was Paul's resurrection from the dead.

If today one of us were permitted to walk through the treasury house of Heaven we might see one crown shining brighter than the stars of the firmament. The question would be asked, “Whose crown is this?” “That is Paul's crown.” “Does he wear it now?” “No, though two thousand years have passed away since he took his departure from this world by the way of martyrdom, it is still held in reserve because Paul has not yet reached the mark.”

On this point David speaks. He speaks concerning his aspirations and cravings. He declares just when he will be satisfied. His language is: **“I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness”** (Ps. 17:15).

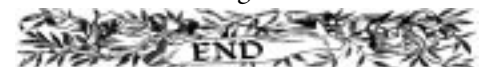
In determining what this mark is, we have gained much touching another point. It surely shows us that none of us here has as yet attained, or are already perfect; that we have reached no stopping place; that we should not be content with the present degree of our piety; that we should not yet lay aside our armor; that we not yet have been transferred from the militant force of Jesus Christ to the crowned and glorified throng that will be found in Him at that day.

There is but little hope of usefulness for any Christian who is satisfied with his attainments, who counts himself as perfect, who thinks that he has already learned whatever is to be known, who assumes himself to be even now a graduate in the school of God's discipline.

This leads us to the consideration of three things upon which our entire attention should be fastened; three things binding us by imperative obligation. What are these three things? Our text tells us plainly.

First, Something to Remember. When we are enjoined to forget only a certain class of things, that limitation implies an obligation to remember the things not specified. What then are the things that we are to remember? We are to remember that we are not yet up to the mark; that we have not yet attained; that we have not yet laid hold upon all of the things for which Jesus Christ laid hold of us. By day and by night this remembrance should be with us. Caesar once said: “Count nothing done which anything remains to be done.” So we should relax no effort until we reach the mark.

One expression, therefore, I trust will ring in your minds like the sound of an alarm bell when you go away from this service: I AM NOT UP TO THE MARK. May each individual Christian here look to mountain heights of endeavor yet to be scaled, may he expect to behold his horizon widening as he ascends.





## ..... NEW STATIONS CARRYING THE BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST .....



### Mini-Edition by Joseph Harris

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### More Politically Correct Junk

I have written on political correctness many times since 2001. It seems to be a mainstay now in American culture, having become entrenched in institutions and organizations. In their desire to not be offensive, liberals can actually be entertaining in their quest for sensitivity. Though we should not seek to be offensive, we should also not go out of our way to change common sense words that give accurate descriptions. When words are changed, ultimately, meanings change because words have meaning. I will repeat some thoughts and definitions and throw out some new ones for your consideration. Over the past few years, the scourge of political correctness has caused people to choose their words carefully to "fit in" with an understanding and tolerant society. Remember, the real goal of PC is to redefine established definitions and effect a change in thinking, attitudes and philosophies. Replacing well established words and phrases with less offensive, "more descriptive" words almost always changes the original understanding. Consider the following list of words. Some are PC, others are "dressed up" to sound better.

Animal trainer.....interspecies com-

municator: Animals.....non-humans: Bald.....hair challenged (this one gives me a higher self esteem): Bisexual.....sexually non-preferential: Paper.....processed tree carcass: Bum.....displaced homeowner: Cattle ranch.....cattle concentration camp: Chicken processing plant.....holocaust center: False teeth.....alternative dentation: Prostitute.....sex care provider: Sex change.....gender reassignment: Foreign national without proper documentation.....Illegal alien: Anti-sobriety activist.....A drunk: Mechanically dysfunctional.....broken: Chronologically detained and challenged.....late.

Communication through speech is powerful. Speech is communication and occurs when one expresses thoughts of the mind with words from the mouth. Words are important and do have meaning. The word alcoholic is not harsh sounding and not as offensive as calling someone a drunk. Unfaithful spouse certainly sounds better than adulterer and promiscuity is more pleasing to the ear than fornication.

Jails are no longer known as institutions which incarcerate prisoners. They are adult detention centers where detainees are housed. Why? It just sounds better. After all, we wouldn't want the detainees to bear an extra burden of guilt by reminding them of what they really are (criminals) and what they have really done (broken the law). Notice also, the prisoners of war in the recent war on terror are called detainees. Call me crazy, but I like prisoner of war. When I hear news reports of some Palestinian militant who has blown himself up along with innocent civilians and bystanders, I have to remind myself that he is a militant not a terrorist. It just sounds better. You've got to admit, militant and gunman both sound better than terrorist or bomber.

How about those high school drop outs? The battle is on to rename them so they will not be plagued with lower self esteem caused by a lifelong negative label. Though I haven't heard the new title yet, I think diploma challenged is nice. In the future I will no longer refer to myself as a professor or teacher, but a classroom facilitator, one who inculcates (teaches) recipients of knowledge (students).

And Black people are no longer Black people, but African Americans, yet not a single Black American I know was born in Africa, and neither were their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents. (Here's a question: if a white person born and reared in South Africa becomes an American citizen, is that person an African American?) This would also apply to Chinese, Italian, Arab, Korean and other ethnic groups. The correct classification should be Americans of African descent, Americans of Chinese descent, Americans of Arab descent, etc., with emphasis on American.

I think we should return to reality in plain speech. The truth is becoming harder to find, yet it is the truth which will set us free.



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STATION	TIME	DIAL	WATTS
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WFAM, Augusta, GA .....	Sunday 4:00 - 4:30 p.m.....	1050.....	5,000 AM
WFTA, Tupelo, MS.....	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.....	101.9.....	3,000 FM
WIJD, Mobile, AL.....	Sunday 8:00 - 8:30 p.m.....	1270.....	5,000 AM
KARI, Blaine, WA .....	Saturday 10:30 - 11:00 a.m.....	550.....	5,000 AM
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DXUM, Davao City, Philippines	Sunday 2:30 - 3:00 p.m.....	819 Khz.....	10,000 AM
DXDS, Digos City, Philippines...	Sunday 12:00 - 12:30 p.m.....	1161 Khz .....	1,000 AM





## From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell  
(1941 - 2002)



### Inward Renewal and Outward Decay

**"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day"** (II Cor. 4:16).

The text and its context concerns the sufferings of Paul and his companions, and their being overruled for the good of the churches and the glory of God. The apostle assured the church at Corinth that he and his friends would continue to preach the gospel despite worldly opposition. They would not become discouraged and give up in the good fight of faith.

#### THE OUTWARD MAN

What does Paul call here the **"outward man"**? It corresponds to the **"earthen vessels"** in verse 7, **"the body"** in verse 10, and **"our mortal flesh"** in verse 11 of this same chapter of II Corinthians. The outward man refers to the whole sphere of the senses and the flesh. It points to the whole framework of the body in its present state on earth and the whole circle of human and earthly relationships. The outward man is related to the temporal and to the seen (v. 18). We must not confuse the **"outward man"** with the **"old man"** (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9) of which Paul speaks in other Scriptures and tells us to put off.

The **"outward man"** is the mortal frame which is undergoing decay and moving toward the grave. Our fleshly body depends on sunshine, food, exercise, and water for its growth and vigor. But the body loses its health through hunger, thirst, nakedness, labor, and many distressing conditions. This causes disease, decay, and death.

This fleshly body is a house of clay (Job 4:19), an **"earthly house"** (II Cor. 5:1). It is the dwelling place of the renewed spirit in a redeemed man and a temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:15,19). A believer must present his body as a **"living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,"** for this is his **"reasonable service"** (Rom. 12:1). The body must be kept under the control of the regenerated spirit (I Cor. 9:27). Keep it under subjection as a rider keeps his horse beneath him. By doing this, it will not be an opponent of the spirit, but it will constantly support and minister to it.

#### THE INWARD MAN

Having shown that the **"outward**

**man"** is our life in its human and corporal condition, I now want to define **"the inward man."** It is primarily our moral and spiritual being, that **"new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him"** (Col. 3:10). Paul called it the **"inner man"** in Ephesians 3:16, and Peter styled it **"the hidden man of the heart"** (I Peter 3:4). This man is related to the unseen and eternal (II Cor. 4:18). The inward man is the real man who rises from day to day through successive stages of renewal to a higher life. It is the part of man which manifests the life of Christ in the flesh (II Cor. 4:11) and has the power to resist sin.

Man is a trichotomous being: **"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (I Thess. 5:23). The inward man in my text includes both soul and spirit which make up the immortal part of man (Heb. 4:12). The soul is the seat of the sense which gives us world-consciousness and the spirit is the faculty of God-consciousness. Paul does not bother to make this distinction in II Corinthians 4:16, seeing he is dealing only with the mortal and immortal aspects of man.

An unbeliever has only the outward man. He has no spiritual nature within that is being renewed. The decay of the body is the decay of everything. Time passes, life ebbs away, and finally the outward man perishes, and so does the inward man. How tragic this is!

Paul was not a materialist. He did not believe, like the modern cults, in soul sleep. To him man was made up of at least two parts: one material which perished and another that experienced renewal. While the body would decay and die, the immortal part would live on and ripen for glory. Neither was Paul a defender of Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, nor Manichaeism. The inward man and the outward man were but two parts of just one man, not two different men. Paul saw an indivisible personality from without and within after regeneration.

#### THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO

The contrast between the outward man and the inward man was to Paul very great. The outward man perished

while the other was renewed. One was enfeebled while the other was strengthened. One would grow old while the other renewed its youth. Paul was conscious of outward descent to feebleness on earth, an inward ascent of firmer strength and higher vitality.

The outward man is destined to death and decay. All the feeding, all the nourishing, all the fresh air, all the drugs and doctors, cannot keep the body working permanently. There is a time to die. Soon the sight grows dim, and the hearing is dull, and the taste palls, and the hands tremble, and the breath goes hard, and the whole earthly frame totters. Finally, the silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel is broken at the cistern (Eccl. 12:6). Then the body of man goes to its long home in the earth and the mourners go about the streets.

The inward man is immortal. Nothing can destroy a regenerated spirit. Jesus Christ said: **"And I give unto them eternal life"** (John 10:28). The curse of the law, the malice of the Devil, the evil of sin, the power of temptation, the frown of the world, the sting of death, nor the damnation of Hell, can hurt the regenerated spirit whose vitality is well nourished and maintained. Food for the body is soon gone, but food for the spirit is a permanent element of good. It goes to the making of a godly character which neither death nor demons can touch. The light of eternity shines in the heart of the inward man, a light which cannot be extinguished (Prov. 4:18).

The outward man dies daily, but the inward man is not dependent on the body for its life and vigor. It expands while the body decays. The inward man may exist independent of the body and in a separate state (II Cor. 12:1-4). The apostle said: **"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. . . . We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord"** (II Cor. 5:6,8).

The inward man is invigorated daily and constantly: **" . . . the inward man is renewed day by day."** Spiritual growth is not the same every single day, for some days are better than others. Nevertheless, each day is a day of spiritual progress. A man's mind expands, his faith grows, his courage becomes bolder, his hope becomes brighter, his views of Divine truth and his sense becomes clearer, and his sense of his own sinfulness grows deeper. Daily his love and patience become stronger and stronger. Job 17:9 says: **"The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."** As the outward man nears the grave, the inward man receives new strength which prepares it for its flight unto the

spiritual world.

#### THE INWARD MAN NEEDS RENEWAL

Titus 3:5 shows that **"the washing of regeneration"** is followed by **"the renewing of the Holy Ghost."** The regenerated sinner is liable to faint, fall, and fail. Therefore he must pray: **"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me"** (Ps. 51:10). A renewed man may be overcome by sin and Satan for a brief moment of time. Only the God who gives spiritual life can maintain that same life. That is why the psalmist said: **"He restoreth my soul"** (Ps. 23:3).

How does God renew the inward man? First, by spiritual food. The body lives by meat and drink. Scientists tell us that bodily life and health depends on the food we eat. Likewise, the renewed spirit of man needs spiritual food: **"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby"** (I Pet. 2:2). A little new-born baby desires his mother's milk. Even so, a spiritual babe in Christ desires the Word of God (John 8:31,47; 10:27). A truly saved person will take advantage of every opportunity to hear the Word of God so the inward man may be renewed.

Second, the inward man is renewed by the Holy Spirit: **"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man"** (Eph. 3:16). A true believer feels his limitations, his weaknesses, his lack of intensity of purpose, his powerlessness when it comes to living for Christ and witnessing for Him. He needs strength in the inner man to bear trials, to perform duties, and to glorify Christ's name. This power is communicated to a man through the Holy Spirit. He is connected with the great eternal dynamo who works in and through him. The source of power for the spirit in man is the Holy Spirit of God (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).

Third, the inward man is reinvigorated by waiting on the Lord: **"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint"** (Isa. 40:31). To wait upon the Lord does not imply inactivity or want of personal exertion. It means that a person is sensible of his weakness and hopes for aid from God. This feeling is in connection with the most strenuous effort to secure the object. To wait on the Lord without using the means He has appointed is to meet with disappointment.

Those who acknowledge their need of spiritual strength to help in time of weakness shall be renewed and caused to grow stronger. They will become

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# Inward Renewal

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strong in faith and be able to contend with their spiritual foes, to gain the victory over sins, to meet the trials of life, and to discharge their duties. God gives strength to the inward man if we seek it in the way of His appointments. Being strengthened in the inward man, we shall ascend above the world and enter into the holiest.

Fourth, the hidden man of the heart is renewed by fresh grace: **“But he giveth more grace”** (Jas. 4:6). Grace does not stop at salvation. We need it every day to carry us along the way. God gives internal grace in the hearts of His people. This additional grace causes their faith to grow exceedingly, and their love for God to increase, and they experience growth in every Christian grace. This fresh supply of grace enables them to overcome their evil passions and to subdue their corrupt inclinations. Those who receive from God **“grace for grace”** (John 1:16) experience growth in grace (II Pet. 3:18).

## THE DECAY OF THE OUTWARD THE MEANS OF RENEWAL

By the wasting away of the outward man, the life of the inward man is actually furthered. Sickness and suffering of the body are made food for the soul's growth. Tears, trials, and turmoils make the inward man thrive. When the outward man enjoys every gratification the inner life languishes. It is only when flesh and blood are in serious trouble that the inner life is quickened. It is because our outward man perishes that our inner man is renewed day by day.

John Albert Bengel (1687-1752), near the end of his life, said to a friend: “Illness serves to quicken and enlarge us in spirit after we have been dwindling. When our spiritual lamps burn dimly, it is often because the wick needs retrenching; and retrenchments are made from time to time upon the outward man by sickness and affliction.”

Jean B. Massillon (1663-1742) of France once said: “In proportion as the body falls into ruin, the spirit is disengaged and renewed; like a pure and brilliant flame, which ascends and shines forth with additional splendor in proportion as it disengages itself from the remains of matter which held it down, and as the substance to which it was attached is consumed and dissipated.”

How sad is the departure of a godless man when he has no spiritual life within him! His last minutes on earth are full of darkness and despair. He reflects on the errors and follies of a misspent life. There is nothing to save him from the sting of sin. He is under the law and must bear its dreadful curse. The righteousness of Christ is not his justification before God. The Holy Spirit is not his sanctification.

He has nothing bright and attractive, nothing hopeful or desirable. There is only a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. He is like the sun on a stormy evening, going down in gloomy thunder clouds, leaving no ray of light behind.

**“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints”** (Ps. 116:15). The death of a saint is precious to the Lord and beautiful to those who witness it on earth. Dying to a Christian is a most blessed experience. He has never been so situated to glorify God as in his dying hours. He can display the truth of God's promises and the support of His everlasting love as he can in no other circumstances. While the eyes of the outward man are closing to the beauties of earth, the eyes of the soul are opening to the glories of Heaven. While he is releasing his hold on this earthly life, he is embracing the unseen and eternal world. While the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed more and more. A righteous man comes to his last hour like an apple that gathers to itself all the life of the tree, and all the dew and sunshine of summer, and at last bends and breaks the branch from which it hangs.

## THE WORTH OF RENEWAL

It was because Paul's inward man was renewed day by day that he could say, “I faint not.” Paul never flinched when he faced tremendous difficulties. He never lost heart under the terrific pressures of life. He never swerved from his purpose because of inward spiritual renewal. He persevered because of preservation from God's Holy Spirit.

Earthly opposition and bodily persecution wear down the physical life, but the inner life of the spirit in man grows stronger under such things. While the outer is being destroyed, the inner is being renewed. In the Christian life destruction and construction are simultaneous. The struggles of life may batter and bruise a Christian, but they will never break or burst him. He will never dry up and die spiritually because he has within him **“a well of water springing up into everlasting life”** (John 4:14).

## CONCLUSION

1. There is no such thing as religion by the year, or the month, or the week. Christianity is something day by day. We must daily bear our cross and walk with Christ, for **“as thy days, so shall thy strength be”** (Deut. 33:25).

2. How is it with your soul? Do you have within you a spiritual nature that is being renewed day by day? Or, will it be that when your outward man perishes your inward man will also perish? John 3:16 says: **“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.”**



# Lizzie Blake

## Part II

**“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”** (Matt. 16:24).

On a bright afternoon in early summer, five years after the occurrences had taken place which we described in the first part of our story, a young girl, between fifteen and sixteen years of age, stood looking in at the window of the shop at Hillsley. It was Lizzie Blake, now no longer a child, but a tall village maiden.

The shop window offered unusual attractions that day. Mrs. Cottrell, the proprietor, had been to London, and had celebrated her return by exhibiting such wonders in the way of ribbons, flowers, bonnets, etc., as were sufficient to turn the heads of half the girls of Hillsley. Lizzie's looks were directed towards a neat and simple straw bonnet, trimmed with a plain white ribbon. It was just such a bonnet as was in every way suitable for her to wear; and yet there was a strange look of indecision on her face as she stood there, evidently hesitating how to act.

A hand was suddenly laid upon her shoulder, and a voice exclaimed,

“Well, Lizzie, who would have thought of seeing you studying the fashions in this way? Are not those flowers lovely?” continued Rose Leigh, for it was she who spoke, pointing at the same time to some branches of artificial flowers in the window.

“Very pretty,” answered Lizzie; “but I was not looking at them.”

“I mean to do something else besides look at them before next Sunday,” said Rose. “I mean to coax mother out of some money, and you'll see how smart I shall be.”

“Have you heard that Miss Mortimer--at least, I mean Mrs. Hamilton that is now---is coming to Hillsley this week?” said Lizzie, without answering Rose's remark about the artificial flowers.

“Of course I have; and the schoolmistress says it would be so nice if all Mrs. Hamilton's old Sunday scholars were to be in the churchyard to greet her as she goes to church.”

“Yes, I know how nice it will be to see her again, Rose; it seems more than a year since she went away, does it not?”

“It does, indeed; and I do hope, Lizzie, you will have something decent to wear

on Sunday, or you will quite spoil the effect. You must have a new bonnet, you know, for the summer, and you can just as well get it now as later.”

“There is no ‘must’ in the case, that I can see,” said Lizzie smiling.

“Well, of course, what I meant was that unless you wished to look unlike any of the other girls of the village, you could not go on wearing that frightful brown thing.”

“Miss Mortimer gave it me before she went away, Rose.”

“It was well enough then, I dare say,” answered Rose, “but fashions change, you know.”

“I cannot afford to keep up with the ‘fashions,’ as you call them, Rose; and, as long as my things are tidy and clean, I do not care about being smart.”

Rose shrugged her shoulders, and walked on; Lizzie entered Mrs. Cottrell's shop. She took a little purse out of her pocket. There were nine or ten shillings in it. “Then she bought the straw bonnet after all,” we think we hear our young readers exclaim. Wait, and you will see. In about ten minutes time, Lizzie came out of the shop carrying a large parcel. It did not look like a bonnet though. Any one who had known Lizzie Blake in her younger days, would have remarked that, as she left the shop, there was the same bright smile on her face which had distinguished her as a child.

But it is time we should know a little of all that had happened during the five years which had passed away since Lizzie remained behind to do the schoolroom for Alice Parker. Five years is a long time. It is a fourteenth part of what the Psalmist tells us is the average length of human life, and many changes had taken place in Hillsley during that period. Miss Mortimer had married, and had left her native village to reside in a distant part of England. Lizzie's mother was dead, and the whole charge of a numerous family of young brothers and sisters had fallen upon Lizzie. Her father was not very strong in health, and was frequently laid up for two or three weeks at a time in the winter, so that they sometimes found it a hard matter to get on; and had it not been for Lizzie's excellent management, they never could have done so. There was so much to do in a cottage where there were many young children, that Lizzie found very little time for doing plain needlework; but in the summer mornings she managed,

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# Lizzie Blake

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by rising an hour or two earlier, to do a little, and the money thus earned was all that she had to purchase clothes for herself and her young sisters. She had promised her dying mother to do her best to supply a mother's place to her brothers and sisters, and well had she fulfilled her promise.

Mrs. Hamilton, knowing the life of toil and self-denial which Lizzie led, wrote kindly to her from time to time to encourage her to persevere in well-doing, and to give her advice; and these letters were the young girl's greatest earthly comfort.

It was great joy to her, therefore, to hear that she would soon see her kind and valued friend again; for writing to any one is not, after all, like speaking to her, and, since Miss Mortimer's marriage, Lizzie had frequently found the want of a friend to whom to go to in any little difficulty or trouble. Not that she was ever very unhappy--far from it. We believe it to be quite impossible for true Christians ever to be so. They may have their troubles. Our Saviour Himself told His disciples they must expect to have them. **"In the world you shall have tribulation."** But like as when the angry storm rages on the bosom of the deep, and all the time, far beneath the reach of the tempest, the waters are calm and still; so is the Christian's life. Trials and sorrows may assail him from without, and they who only look at the surface, will think that he must be unhappy; but in his innermost soul there abides all the while that heavenly peace **"which passeth all understanding,"** and which all the pleasures of the world alone cannot give, and which earthly troubles can never take away.

Lizzie's greatest friends in the village, now that Miss Mortimer had left, were Mrs. Parker and her daughter Alice. Ever since the day when Lizzie had acted a neighbor's part to Alice, the two girls had been a great deal together, and Mrs. Parker was only too glad for her daughter, who was easily led either to good or evil, to have found so good and steady a friend.

Willie Parker had left Hillsley some two years ago. His uncle was steward to a nobleman in Scotland, and, having no children of his own, had offered to take Willie, and instruct him thoroughly in farming, for which the boy had always shown a decided taste.

And what have we to say about Rose Leigh? "As the twig is bent, so will the tree grow," and Rose's mother had no one but herself to thank for the habits of extravagance and the love of finery which had grown with her daughter's growth, and strengthened with her strength. Rose was the youngest, as Lizzie was the

eldest, of a numerous family, and foolish Mrs. Leigh, vain of her daughter's good looks, had indulged her in all her whims, and had allowed her to dress far above her station, and far above what she could honestly afford.

Miss Mortimer had often spoken both to Rose and her mother on the subject, but without effect. All Mrs. Leigh's children, with the exception of Rose, were married and doing well, and each allowed their mother a trifle every week; so that, what with the sale of her garden produce, and having no rent to pay---for the cottage was her own---she might have lived very comfortably, if it had not been for Rose's extravagance. As it was, Mrs. Leigh was frequently in debt, and those to whom she owed money felt it hard, knowing, as they did, that the money which ought to have been paid them was spent upon Rose's dress.

Mrs. Leigh had lost the use of her right hand some years before, and Rose was, therefore, obliged to remain at home with her mother, who could not get on without some one living with her.

When Lizzie reached home with her parcel from the shop, a group of little ones ran out to meet their "sister-mother," as they called her. The two next in age to Lizzie were boys, one of whom had begun to work at a neighboring farm, while the other still went to the village school. Then came four little girls, and the youngest child, a boy, who was scarcely three years old.

"We have all been so good, Lizzie," cried little Annie, the eldest of the three girls, who had been left in charge of the others by Lizzie while she went to the village, "and little Joe is fast asleep, and Mary and I have swept up the hearth, and I have set the tea-things, and got everything ready for father when he comes home."

Then the young "sister-mother" kissed them all round, and told them how pleased she was to find she could trust them alone for a short time; after which she took off her bonnet and cape, and proceeded to untie the parcel she had brought with her.

The coming of a parcel was a great event in the cottage, and the little ones

crowded round their sister as she untied the string.

"What is it?" cried they, as they stood up tiptoe around the table. The string was tied in a knot, but it was too valuable a piece to be cut; so Lizzie patiently undid it.

"All in good time, Annie," she said, smiling. "You know who is coming to Hillsley this week, don't you?"

"Yes," replied the child; "and Maggie Stevens and both her little sisters are going to have new frocks to wear on Sunday, on purpose to see Miss Mortimer---Mrs. Hamilton, I mean; and we cannot go out then, because we have no shoes; and I do so wish that---"

"Hush, hush! Annie," said little Mary, a child, the expression of whose face recalled that of her sister Lizzie, when of her age.

"Lizzie can't help it, and father can't

exactly, a pair for each of the four girls.

"But where did the money come from?" said Annie.

Lizzie took her little purse out of her pocket. The children knew that their "sister-mother" kept in it what money she earned by needlework. It was now quite empty.

"We know now," they cried; "good sister Lizzie!"

"Every morning, long before father goes to work, Lizzie gets up to sew," said little Mary. "Once I thought it was a dream when I woke up, to see her sitting working at the window."

Then there was another little chorus of "Good sister Lizzie!" and she felt that it is, indeed, "more blessed to give than to receive," and she rejoiced that she had not been tempted to spend her money upon herself.

It had been a great temptation to her; for it was quite natural that, without being at all vain, she should wish to look nicely to welcome her kind friend, Mrs. Hamilton; and her brown straw bonnet, which she had worn for more than a year, was really getting very shabby. Her father had generally been able to help her with money for the children's shoes; but he had got behind hand with the rent during the weeks he was at home ill, and he had told Lizzie, only the day before, that all the money he could spare must go to pay the back rent. "The children must do without boots for another month or so, Lizzie," he said to her: "I am very sorry, but it cannot be helped."

"It cannot be helped," repeated Lizzie to herself, as she had gone to the village with the intention of buying a bonnet for herself. Then the question, "Cannot it be helped?" arose in her mind; and she felt that by denying herself the new bonnet, it could be helped, and that then all the children could accompany her on Sunday, which, otherwise, they would be unable to do.

"Miss Mortimer told me when dear mother died, that the children were left as a sort of trust to me; and that I was to try, with God's help, to be faithful to my trust. I should like them all to be with me when I see her on Sunday; it will seem as if I had been trying to fulfill my trust; as if I had not thought only of myself." So it ended, as we have seen, in the good "sister-mother" spending her hardly-earned money upon her younger sisters. Mrs. Cottrell owed her a trifle for some plain work which she had done, and that sum, with the ten shillings in her purse, was sufficient to buy a good strong pair of boots for each of the little girls.

"That's a good girl!" said Mrs. Cottrell to her husband, as Lizzie left the shop with her bundle of boots; "she has not had a new bonnet herself, to my certain knowledge, for nearly a year and a half; and now she has spent all her money upon her sisters, although I saw her

♦ (Continued on page 89)





# Lizzie Blake

(Continued from page 88) ♦

looking with longing eyes upon that white straw bonnet in the window.”

“I hope our Ruth may live to grow up like her, that’s all,” replied Luke Cottrell. “‘Handsome is that handsome does’ is my motto; and to my way of thinking, Lizzie Blake, in her plain dress, is worth a hundred such as Rose Leigh.”

“Rose Leigh, indeed!” replied his wife; “I should be very sorry that any girl of mine took after her; she will come to no good, I am afraid; and her foolish mother will have to blame herself greatly for it.”

“Let us put on our new boots this evening to show father, Lizzie,” said Mary to her sister; “we will watch for him when he is turning the corner by the old barn, and we can have them on in a minute.” It was done as they wished, and when their father entered his cottage that evening on returning from work, a merry little group, headed by Joe himself, who wore a pair of boots which his little sister had out-grown, were stamping with all their might round and round the table.

“Why, what’s all this?” he cried, as he glanced from the children to Lizzie, who sat smiling on the scene; “what does all this mean? You have not been running into debt, Lizzie, have you?”

“Oh no, dear father, they are all paid for,” said Lizzie, with honest pride, as she drew the bill from her pocket, and showed him “Paid” written at the bottom of it.

“It is all Lizzie’s money, father,” said Mary; “she earned it all by her work.”

Thomas Blake held out his hand to his daughter, and grasped hers warmly in his, while tears of joy and parental pride stood in his eyes.

“You are a good girl, Lizzie, and your mother’s blessing will rest upon you.”

He knew what Lizzie had intended doing with her money, for she had consulted him about it.

“I would rather have them with me on Sunday, father,” she said, pointing to her sisters, “than have all the new bonnets in the world.”

That evening Alice Parker ran into Lizzie’s cottage with an open letter in her hand.

“What do you think, Lizzie?” she cried. “Willie is coming home for a holiday. Uncle is so pleased with his good conduct, that he has given him money to pay for his journey, and he is to stay a whole month; and he will be here to see Mrs. Hamilton! Is it not delightful? And as for mother, I am sure she began to get better as soon as she read the letter; and you know how ill she has been lately.”

Lizzie rejoiced in her friend’s joy; and when the little ones were in bed, she accompanied her home for half an hour, to talk over the good news with Mrs. Parker. Afterwards both the girls went

over to the schoolhouse, to speak to the schoolmistress about the arrangements for the following Sunday; and before they left it was settled that all the school children, including those girls who had formerly been in Mrs. Hamilton’s class, should assemble at the school half an hour before service-time on Sunday morning, and that then they should all walk together to the churchyard, and take up their places on each side of the walk leading from the garden of the parsonage.

Rose Leigh was present when the arrangements were made, and as Lizzie was leaving the schoolhouse with Alice, she whispered to her,

“I have got the pink roses, Lizzie; I told you I would have them.”

The next day was Saturday---always a busy day with Lizzie, who liked to have everything tidy for Sunday, and who, following her mother’s excellent example, always managed to have as little cooking as possible done on that day.

What a difference it would make if all would do in like manner! “I have the dinner to cook,” is the excuse with very many for not attending the house of God on Sunday. Mrs. Blake generally made a meat-pie on the Saturday; then, if it was summer-time, they ate it cold for dinner next day; while in the winter, by putting it in the oven as soon as they came home, it was quickly made hot. A little contrivance will manage matters; and it should be remembered that while works of “necessity and mercy” are plainly allowed by our Lord Jesus Christ to be done on the day of rest, we must be careful not to abuse the liberty He has given us, and pretend that we do things on Sunday from “necessity” which, in reality, we do for own selfish gratification.

Lizzie did not go out all the day, for she had plenty to employ her in the house; but when her brothers came home to tea in the evening, they told her they had seen a carriage, with luggage upon it, drive in at the gate of the parsonage; so she knew that Mrs. Hamilton had arrived.

Later in the evening, Alice Parker ran in to say that Willie had just come, and that he had grown so much that they scarcely knew him.

“He is very tired, for he had to walk six miles from the railway station,” said Alice; “so he will not be able to come and see you tonight; besides which, I told him you would rather be without him when you were so busy; so you will see him tomorrow.”

“I am glad he is not coming tonight,” said Lizzie, “for I shall not have finished until quite late.” Then she took Alice up stairs, and showed her all the clean things put ready for the little ones to wear the following day. Everything was nicely ironed, and there was not a hole to be seen, so that although the clothes

were old and worn, they looked neat and clean, and did great credit for the young “sister-mother.”

“What are you going to wear, Lizzie?” asked Alice.

“I have a clean print gown,” said she, pointing to where it hung behind the door.

“And did you get your new bonnet, dear?” for Alice knew that Lizzie had intended doing so. “It will look very nice with that lilac print.”

“I must do without the new bonnet, Alice,” said Lizzie, “and make my old brown one do. I have ironed out the ribbon, and it really does not look badly.”

Alice looked at her friend with a compassionate expression on her face, and was just about to utter words of condolence with her upon her disappointment, when she was so struck with Lizzie’s happy look that she felt that any pity would be thrown away upon one who seemed the very picture of happiness.

“Willie always used to say you were an odd girl. I wish I could be like you,” added Alice, in a lower tone, as she kissed her friend and left the cottage.

The next day was as fine as could be wished.

The young girls and the school children all assembled in the schoolroom, as had been arranged, and shortly afterward they took their places in the churchyard. Lizzie held little Joe by the hand, as he had begged so hard to go, and had promised to sit quietly on her lap all service-time if she would but take him with her. Her little sisters stood by her on one side, and on the other was Alice Parker, in a new print dress and cape to match, and a neat white straw bonnet. Next to her stood Rose Leigh, with a large bunch of artificial roses in her bonnet, which was trimmed with pink ribbon, and looked altogether unsuited to her. Almost every girl there had on something new, except Lizzie Blake; and yet there was not a brighter, happier face in the gathering than that which looked out from under the brown straw bonnet.

The gate leading into the parsonage garden opened, and Mrs. Hamilton appeared, leaning upon her husband’s arm. Then every little face blushed with pleasure, and all the girls courtesied as their kind friend passed by, looking just the same as she used to do, and with a kind word for every child. When she came to where Lizzie was standing, she stopped, and told her how pleased she was to see her there with all her little ones around her.

“God has enabled you to be faithful to your trust, I see, Lizzie,” she said.

“I will come and see you tomorrow.” And then she passed on, leaving Lizzie with tears in her eyes; but they were tears of gratitude and joy.

“If I had had my new bonnet,” she

thought, “and the little ones had been left at home, Mrs. Hamilton could never have spoken to me as she did just now.” She took little Joe by the hand, and walked towards the church. A voice behind her said, “No, it never can be Lizzie,” and turning round she saw Alice, and what appeared to her a tall stranger lad standing by her.

“Why, Lizzie! I did not know you, you are so altered; why you look quite---” and Willie Parker stopped confused, for he was going to say “old.” Rose Leigh was standing by Alice, and there certainly was a great contrast between her and Lizzie Blake.

“You are also much altered, Willie,” said Lizzie quickly; “I should scarcely have known you.”

Lizzie had to bring little Joe out, in the middle of the service, as he complained of feeling ill. All the afternoon he seemed hot and feverish, and her father said he would walk over to the doctor, and ask him to come and see the child in the morning. So Lizzie sat nursing Joe, who would not rest quietly except on his sister’s lap. She had half promised Alice in the morning to go to church with her and Willie in the afternoon; but now she asked Mary to run round to Mrs. Parker’s cottage, and say they must not expect her, as she should not like to leave little Joe.

“Cannot I take care of Joe, Lizzie?” asked Mary. “You never go anywhere, and I would nurse him so carefully if you would trust me.”

“I would willingly trust you, Mary dear,” was the reply; “but, you know, he might be worse, and then you would not know what to do. No, I would rather stay with him than go.”

So Mary went with the message to Alice, and Lizzie sat upon the low chair, with Joe upon her lap, and her mother’s Bible open on a little round table before her.

Presently she heard the sound of cheerful voices, and, looking up, she saw Alice and her brother pass by the house. Rose Leigh was with them, and looked bright and happy.

“Poor Lizzie!” said Willie, as they passed by, “I wish she could come with us.”

“Oh, she doesn’t mind about it,” said Rose; “she likes a humdrum sort of life best. I never saw such a girl.”

The next day Mrs. Hamilton paid Lizzie a long visit. Joe was much better, and had gone out under little Mary’s care; so Lizzie was able to have a long quiet talk with her good friend. Thomas Blake came into tea while Mrs. Hamilton was sitting in the cottage.

“Your daughter seems to manage everything very nicely,” she said. “I have been telling her what pleasure it has given me to see her going on so well.”

“She’s as good a girl as can be,

♦ (Continued on page 91)

## The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

### 1. Please give a brief explanation of the parable of the wheat and the tares.

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**"Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvesters are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear"** (Matt. 13:36-43).

Who can explain this parable any better than the one who gave it, Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

Verse 37: **"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;"** - It is Jesus Christ, very God of very God, who saves His elect and plants them in the world. Christians are not taken out of the world (John 17:15: **"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."**) but are left (planted) in the world that they should bear fruit. (See John 15)

Verse 38: **"The field is the world."** That speaks very plainly for itself. **"The good seed"** (planted by Christ) **"are the children of the kingdom; but the tares"** (planted by the devil) **"are the children of the wicked one."**

Verse 39: **"The enemy that sowed them is the devil,"** also speaks for itself. **"The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels."** The parable speaks to the end of the age and about the "kingdom of God"; i.e. professing Christianity, not the local church which we know as "The Lord's Church."

It is perhaps here where the questions and applications get confused. Throughout the "kingdom" there will

always be the mixture of true believers, pseudo believers and actual "enemies of God" who infiltrate the kingdom. This, by the way, is one of the prime reasons that the Lord's Churches be careful to practice both sound church discipline and ecclesiastical separation. The restraint on "pulling the tares" (vv. 28-29) is not to forbid church discipline because the parable does not directly apply to the church, but to the "kingdom of God"; that *pseudo* church which so many call the "mystical, invisible, universal church."

That "church" is a mixed bag of: true believers who because of lack of understanding, lack of commitment, or lack of obedience have not joined themselves to a proper New Testament church; sincere but misled unbelievers who are still trusting in their own merit or something they did for salvation; and deliberately planted false believers who in actuality are no more than the **"false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage"** who Paul speaks of in Galatians 2:4.

The local church is to practice discipline within the church because, as the "tares" could not be known until the bore fruit, the pseudo believers or disobedient believers are often undetected (like Simon in Acts 8) until they bear fruit. Church discipline does not affect a person's salvation! Some disciplined members come to repentance and return to the church. Some may still be bone fide believers but stubbornly cling to their sin. Others are indeed unsaved false believers and must be put out of the local church in order to maintain a regenerate membership.

But the separation judgment spoken of in this parable is **"in the end of this world"** (v. 40) and what a horrible judgment that will be! **"There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."**

Even with the best of examination and discipline, the "righteous" do not always stand out as we wish they would, but in that day they will. **"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"** (verse 43).

**"Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."** Let us each, therefore, follow the timely advice of Paul, in I Corinthians 13:5, and Peter in II Peter 1:10. **"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?... give diligence to make your calling and election sure."**

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I suppose the question asked is not what do the tares represent, or what the field is, or who are the wheat, so I will briefly explain the time in which the Son of man, being Christ, is speaking of. The end of the world spoken of here by the Messiah is just before the eternal state of mankind whether saved or lost. What is the eternal Kingdom of the Father? Heaven. What is the furnace? Hell.

This parable is not a proof text for pre-trib, or post-trib, or the church, and/or discipline or anything of the sort. Christ explains exactly what He has ordained from the beginning, the end of the world.

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The parable of the wheat and the tares is set forth in Matthew 13:24-30. The disciples specifically asked Jesus the meaning of the parable of the tares in verse 36. The Lord Jesus then interpreted and explained the parable in Matthew 13:37-43. From the disciples' question about the tares of the field it appears that they were concerned about their role in the judgment of the wicked.

Jesus makes it clear that the man who sowed the good seed is the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus Christ is the one who is active in planting His people throughout the world through the power of His grace. The good seed planted by the Lord are brought to life by the miraculous power of His Spirit, and they grow to maturity and bring forth fruit as represented by wheat.

The field is not the church as some falsely suppose. The field is the world of mankind. Christ owns the world and is Lord over all. Christ plants the good seed (believers) throughout the world by the working of His sovereign grace. The tares are the bad seed who are represented as the children of the wicked one, otherwise known as Satan. All lost men in the world are under the dominion of Satan who has enslaved (II Tim. 2:24-25) and blinded them (II Cor. 4:3-4) from the glories of Christ and the Gospel.

In the present age, the wheat and

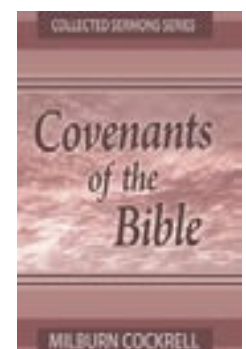
the tares in the field grow up together. There are believers and unbelievers throughout the world. There are more tares than there is wheat. Now is not the time for judgment. It is the time for sowing, praying, and proclaiming the Gospel of the grace of God.

There is some speculation regarding the exact timing of the judgment of the tares when the angels shall gather the unsaved for the purpose of judgment at the end of the world or age. We know that Christ will be accompanied by glorified saints and angels when He comes back to earth in order to set up His millennial reign (II Thess. 1:7-9; Matt. 25:31-46; Jude 14-15; Rev. 19:11-21). When Jesus comes back in the Second Advent the tares will be gathered, judged, and cast into Hell to await the resurrection of the unjust dead when they will be summoned before the Great White Throne Judgment. It is this judgment which will determine their punishment in the Lake of Fire. According to Revelation 20:7-15, at the end of the thousand year reign of Christ upon the earth, Satan will be loosed from the bottomless pit to deceive the nations one last time. Satan and the unsaved will be defeated by the power of Christ. The devil will be cast into the Lake of Fire. The unsaved will be resurrected to stand before the Great White Throne, at which time they will be cast into the Lake of Fire. Thus, there is a judgment of the tares at the end of the Tribulation Period and a judgment of the unbelievers at the end of the Millennium. One judgment occurs in conjunction with the dawning of the Millennial age, the other occurs at the end of the Millennium and the dawning of the eternal age. One thing is certain, all the tares will be judged by the Almighty and cast into the everlasting Lake of Fire. Those declared righteous through faith in the precious blood of Christ will reign with Him in the Millennium and throughout the eternal ages.

TOM ROSS



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## The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Does regeneration precede repentance and faith? If not, explain how a dead sinner can believe.

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Regeneration precedes repentance, always, always, always (John 3:3). Regeneration means new birth i.e., we being born again by the power of the Holy Spirit to repentance to God and faith towards Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:1, Acts 20:21).

Look at all the verses that contain the words repentance and faith together and they will always be in that order... repentance then faith always, always, always.

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Absolutely! There must be spiritual life before there can be spiritual activity. All men are dead in trespasses and in sins (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 5:12). All sinners are born with only a fleshly nature which is incapable of producing spiritual activity (John 5:40; Rom. 8:7-8). The Holy Spirit of God must impart spiritual life in regeneration, at which time He grants the newly born again the gifts of repentance and saving faith. It is interesting to study the order of John chapter three. Jesus makes it clear that the Spirit of God must perform the new birth before the sinner is able to believe (John 3:1-16). Christ must be in you (regeneration) before you can believe He is for you (justification). Spiritual life comes before saving faith.

Regeneration is entirely a work of the Holy Spirit. As soon as the Spirit regenerates the elect, He immediately gives the newly born again the gifts of repentance and faith. Regeneration chronologically occurs prior to conversion, but there is no measurable lapse of time between the new birth and conversion. As soon as a person is born again they immediately repent and believe the Gospel of the grace of God. The idea that a person is born again but not converted is preposterous and

heretical. As soon as the Spirit gives life, He also gives the sinner the grace to believe. II Corinthians 4:6 declares: **"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."**

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**"The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live" (Ezek. 37:1-5).**

This question is an easy question to answer even though most "free will" (falsely so called) advocates will still stubbornly resist the logic. Just as those well known dry bones could not come to life on their own until the Lord worked a miracle, a dead sinner cannot come to life until God gives him life! A dead person can not hear or understand anything. Did you ever try to convince a corpse of anything?

Paul wrote: **"And you hath he quickened (made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph.2:1) and again in verse 5: "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"** Notice how much Paul emphasizes grace in this chapter!

I certainly cannot explain how a dead sinner can believe. That explanation must come from the Arminian theologian.

RAY BENNETT



## Lizzie Blake

(Continued from page 89) ♦

ma'am," replied Blake, "and so modest and humble-minded all the time, that she never seems to think she has done anything worthy of being praised. I can never be thankful enough to God, ma'am, for giving me such a daughter."

This conversation passed between Mrs. Hamilton and Lizzie's father, while Lizzie had gone out into the meadow behind the house to fetch in her little brother for Mrs. Hamilton to see.

"Lizzie is humble-minded," said Mrs. Hamilton, "because she knows from Whom comes every good thought and action of our lives. And it is one of the first proofs of the Holy Spirit dwelling in any heart when pride and self-conceit give place to that humility which is one of the surest evidences of a Christian spirit. Lizzie was always remarkable as a child for unselfishness."

"And so she is now, ma'am. Only yesterday she spent all her little savings on boots for the young ones, instead of buying a bonnet for herself, which she had made up her mind to do. I was a little behindhand with my rent, and could not give her any money for the children's shoes, and so she went without her bonnet, in order that the little girls might have new boots."

"I heard something about that from Mrs. Cottrell this morning," said Mrs. Hamilton, "and I need not tell you what pleasure it gave me. Poor Mrs. Leigh! She has a very different story to tell. She wept bitterly today when she spoke to me of her daughter Rose, who, I fear, is growing up a vain, heartless girl. It seems her mother was seriously ill yesterday afternoon, notwithstanding which, Rose insisted on going out with some companions, although she knew how helpless her mother was."

"Yes, ma'am, and my Lizzie remained at home, and refused to go with them because her little brother was ill. There is a difference between those two girls, to be sure; but then, Rose has not such a mother as my Lizzie had," added Thomas Blake, with a sigh, as he thought of his dead wife.

That evening Mrs. Cottrell's good-humored face looked more happy than ever, as she put into a box the very self-same straw bonnet, trimmed with white ribbon, which Lizzie had so much admired as it hung in the shop window. Then she called for her daughter Ruth, and bade her take it to Thomas Blake's cottage. The box had written upon it,

"For Lizzie Blake; from her friend Mrs. Hamilton." And the bonnet was a present from that kind lady to the unselfish, self-denying young "sister-mother." - (Conclusion in the next issue)



## The Transformation of the Graveyard

By J. H. Jowett  
(1864 - 1923)

**"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1).**

"Dead through your trespasses and sins, . . . you did he quicken." The transition is like passing from a graveyard into a sweet meadow in which the children are playing! But this illustration is very imperfect, and in order to make it in any way an adequate analogy of the apostle's thought we must conceive the transformation of the graveyard itself. The graveyard must be converted into a sweet and winsome meadow, and its dead must emerge from their graveclothes in the brightness and buoyance of little children. It is not a transition from the cemetery to the sweet pastures; it is the transformation of the graveyard itself. "Dead through your trespasses and sins, . . . you did he quicken!" Or we may change the figure and regard it as the passing of winter into spring. There is winter, cold, bare, flowerless, and fruitless. Then there is a feeling of spring in the air. Everything is vitalized and begins to manifest the signs of growth and increase, and we behold the welcome beauties of the genial season. And here is another winter; "dead through your trespasses and sins." Everything is cold, insensitive, barren. And then comes a vital breath, the vitalizing wind of the Spirit---"you did he quicken." The once dead life begins to manifest evidences of the quickening, and clothes itself with the beauty and glory of the Lord. And **"lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come"** (S. of S. 2:11).

Winter! "Dead through your trespasses and sins." And what are the deadening ministries which create this appalling condition? The apostle mentions two, **"the course of this world,"** and **"the prince of the power of the air."** These are the two mighty forces ever at work upon the lives of men, producing paralysis of the higher powers, benumbing and impairing the finer sensitiveness, and sinking all the worthy things in the life to degradation and death.

Here is the first of the deadening ministries, **"the course of this world"** (Eph. 2:2). And is there anything more deadening than the ordinary course and custom of the present world? Look at the world's way of thinking. How deadening

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## Graveyard

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is its influence upon the perceptions of the spirit! The thinking of the world always runs on low planes. It is ever in search of compromise. There is nothing lofty and ideal in its aim and purpose. It seeks purely temporal and transient ends. No man can come under the influence of the world's manner of thought without losing the fine edge of his spiritual powers, and rendering himself insensible to the glorious things of the Spirit. And look at the world's way of speaking. It substitutes gossip for gospel. Its conversation is not seasoned with salt. There is nothing in it to preserve it from corruption. No man can put himself under the influence of the course of the world's speech without reducing his powers of spiritual apprehension. Let a man spend the entire day under the corrupting ministry of worldly speech, and in the evening time he will find that the difficulty of communing with God is incredibly increased. And look at the world's way of doing. The course of this world is always egotistic, emphasizing the interests of self; it is therefore always combative, assuming an attitude of antagonism to one's brother. Now, all these are deadening influences. They work upon the loftier powers of man in sheer destructiveness, and bring his better self to ruin. Men are degraded and sunk into spiritual death by **"the course of this world."**

And the second of the deadening ministries is **"the prince of the power of the air."** We are confronted with a personal power, who is ever at work in the realm of evil suggestion and desire. There is a great leader in the hierarchy of evil spirits. He is the antagonist of men's welfare, and seeks to destroy the finer faculties by which they hold communion with God. He is **"the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"** (Eph. 2:2). When some little flame of carnal desire is kindled in the life, **"the prince of the power of the air"** blows upon it, and seeks to fan it into fierce and destructive fire. Who has not experienced his influence? It is painfully marvelous how the spark of evil thinking so speedily becomes a devouring heat! The prince of the power of the air is ever at work blowing upon these incipient fires, in order that in the intense heat of a greater conflagration he may scorch and burn up the furniture of the soul.

Now, see how these two deadening ministries work. The apostle declares that they seek to determine our manner of "walk," and also our manner of "life." They seek to subject us to a bondage in which we shall "walk according to the course of this world," and in which we shall "live in the lusts of the flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Now, to influence ones walk is to

determine one's conduct; to influence one's life is to determine one's character. By our walk I think the apostle means all the outer movements and activities of the life---what we call our conduct; and by life I think the apostle describes the abiding inclinations and resting-places of the soul---what we call our character. These deadening ministries seek to establish us in the ways of the flesh, to make us choose our dwelling-place in the outer halls and passages of the life, and to neglect the secret and inner rooms where we could hold spiritual communion with God. They lure us into the snare of the bodily senses, and hold us captive there, and so deprive us of that larger life of the spirit which is found in the secret place.

Now, when men's conduct is determined by **"the course of this world,"** and their life is limited by the will of **"the prince of the air,"** all the higher powers in the life languish and drop and at length pine away in paralysis and death. The deadening ministries complete their work, and man is **"dead in trespasses and sins."**

Spring! **"You did he quicken."** It is well to read the earlier verses of this great chapter, and to go slowly through its description of the winter time, until we are pulled up by this great and hopeful word: **"But God!"** the antagonistic word introduces the Lord of the spring time, who is about to break up the bonds and chains of the winter season. And see how graciously the spring is introduced. **"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)"** (Eph. 2:4). Could anything be more gloriously rich in genial and gracious evangel? All the biggest words in the New Testament are introduced in this verse of Holy Writ. Here we have "grace," and here we have "love," and here we have "mercy," all co-operative in the ministry of breaking up the winter. Grace is the grand, glorious good will of God. Love is grace on the march toward us, speeding on a crusade of chivalrous beneficence. Mercy is love arrived, distributing its gifts to those who are enslaved and winter-bound. Surely, here is a rich and all-efficient atmosphere, in which even the firmest tyranny can be melted away. Now watch the ministry of the spring. **"Hath quickened us together with Christ"** (Eph. 2:5). He hath made us alive again. He hath released the appalling grip of the despotic master, and the deadened faculties are alive again.

The quickening is sometimes a painful experience to the one who is being revived. I am told that when a drowning man is brought to shore, and is resuscitated, the renewed flow of life, as the blood current rushes again through the half-dead and contracted channels, is attended by spasms of agony. And in the life of the spirit I have known the awakening to

be a time of keen unrest and pain. But, shall I say, it is only a "growing pain," and is significant of spiritual recreation and expansion. We are acquiring a new sensitiveness toward God and man, and a new capacity both for joy and pain. "And hath raised us up together with him." We are not only quickened, we are lifted out of our graves. We are taken away from the places where we have been living, the realm of tyranny where we have been enslaved.

What shall we say then, one to another, when God has lifted us out of the graves? Let us urge one another not to go back to the cemetery, not even to look upon it, lest we stumble into the grave again. It is a strange and harrowing thing how frequently even saved men will go perilously near to the grave out of which they were redeemed. It is altogether a wise and healthy and secure thing to keep a great space between us and the place of our old enslavement.

"And hath made us sit together with him in the heavenly places." Said an old Puritan, "A man is where his head is." Of course he is! And as the Christian's head is in Heaven, so he is with the Lord in the heavenly places. Here, then, in the coming of the Lord we find our resurrection, **"You hath he quickened":** our ascension; **"and hath raised us up together":** our enthronement, **"and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."** But in every case our redemption is accomplished "with him." It is all done **"together."** To choose Him is to have Him; to be willing to have Him is to receive Him. And to receive the Lord is to admit into our life the great Emancipator; Who will convert our winter into spring, and turn the life of barrenness into a garden of spiritual fertility and glory.



### THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

#### UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST PROMOTES CONTRACEPTIVE DISTRIBUTION IN THE SANCTUARY

(EP News)--According to the HIV and AIDS Network of the United Church of Christ (UCC), condoms should be distributed at places of worship, but the announcement was met with outrage by the conservative Institute For Religion and Democracy (IRD). The March 19 statement also called for making condoms available at faith-based educational settings. According to UCC executive Michael Shuenemeyer, "The practice of safer sex is a matter of life and death. People of faith make condoms available because we have chosen life so that we and our children may live." IRD Vice President for Research and Programs Alan Wisdom said, "Parents concerned about schools distributing condoms might assume that the church would have their backs, reinforcing the traditional Christian ethic reserving sex for marriage. In the case of the UCC, that assumption would be wrong."

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#### UNWED BIRTHS REACH 40 PERCENT, CDC REPORTS

(EP News)--Births to unwed mothers in the U.S. reached an all-time high of about 40 percent, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported March 25. While the number of teen births is up 1 percent, it's women in their twenties who account for the majority of unwed births. David Popenoe, founder and co-director of the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University, said,

"Children born out of wedlock tend to have a much harder time in life on average than children born in wedlock. I wish we as a nation were speaking out more forcefully against this trend. We know that those people are going to break up at a much higher rate than married couples."

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#### MINNESOTA INTRODUCES MARRIAGE AMENDMENT

(EP News)--Minnesota House members will introduce an amendment this week to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman. The move comes after gay activists boasted same-sex "marriage" would be legal in three years. Tom Prichard, president of the Minnesota Family Council (MFC), said, "We're very concerned, and we realize that we need to begin to work now to educate legislators on the importance of this issue and ensure that they are supportive of protecting marriage. People need to be involved, vigilant, and be engaged with your state senator and representative. They need to know where you stand." Gay activists have introduced several bills and filed a lawsuit pushing for recognition of same-sex marriage.

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#### REP. BARNEY FRANK CALLS JUSTICE SCALIA A "HOMOPHOB"

(EP News)--Massachusetts Rep. Barney Frank called Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia a "homophobe" in an interview released March 23 on a gay news Web site, and said

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he hoped a challenge to the federal marriage law will not be heard before the high court until new justices are seated. Frank, who openly identifies as a gay man, was responding to a question about the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). The 1996 law defines marriage as the union between one man and one woman and prevents states from being forced to recognize same-sex “marriages” from other states. “At some point, (DOMA) is going to have to go to the United States Supreme Court,” Frank said. “I wouldn’t want it to go to the United States Supreme Court now because that homophobe Antonin Scalia has got too many votes on this current court.”

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## TEXAS APPEALS COURT UPHOLDS MOMENT-OF-SILENCE LAW

(EP News)--A federal appeals court on March 16 upheld a Texas law that allows public school students to observe a 60-second moment of silence following the Pledge of Allegiance. A three-judge panel from the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans ruled the moment of silence – one minute for students to reflect, pray, meditate or engage in silent activity – is constitutional. In 2007, some parents sued, claiming the requirement to observe a moment of silence “causes harm” to their children and violates the First Amendment. David Cortman, senior counsel for the Alliance Defense Fund, said no student is compelled to pray under the Texas law. “A moment of silence is not a government endorsement of religion just because someone might use the time for prayer,” he said. “The 5th Circuit was right to uphold the district court’s determination that the law is not an establishment of religion.” Twenty-six states have moment-of-silence laws.

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## GAINESVILLE, FLA., VOTERS SUPPORT GENDER-IDENTITY ORDINANCE

(EP News)--Voters in Gainesville, Fla., decided March 24 to keep in place a gender-identity ordinance the city commission passed last year. The ordinance provides special rights based on gender identity, defined as “an inner sense of being a specific gender ... with or without regard to the individual’s sex at birth.” In other words, a male with an “inner sense of being” female can enter most public female restrooms with full legal protection. In Kansas, the Senate recently sent similar legislation back to committee, where it’s likely to stay. Colorado passed similar legislation into law last year.

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## AIDS, HIV RATES IN WASHINGTON, D.C. SURPASS WEST AFRICA

(EP News)--Nearly 3,000 of every 100,000 residents in Washington, D.C. over age 12 have HIV or AIDS. A recent report from the George Washington University School of Health and Health Services said it only takes 1 percent to reach a “generalized and severe” epidemic. The report shows the leading method of transmitting HIV/AIDS remains men having

sex with men, followed by heterosexual sex and injection drug use. Shannon Hader, director of D.C.’s HIV/AIDS Administration, told The Washington Post the district’s rates are higher than West Africa. The report also admits the actual number of people currently infected and living with HIV is unknown and certainly higher than the report indicates.

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## MAJORITY OF TEENS LOOK TO PARENTS AS ROLE MODELS

(EP News)--Just over half of U.S. teens say their parents are their role models. That is according to a poll conducted by Junior Achievement Worldwide and Deloitte. The telephone survey asked 750 12- to 17-year olds to choose one role model. Friends were chosen by 13 percent of the teens, while teachers or coaches finished third, with 6 percent of the votes. Stephanie Bell, director of marketing and media relations at Junior Achievement Worldwide, said it is critical for children to see their parents as role models. “Your kids are always watching what you are doing and saying,” she said. “It becomes more incumbent upon parents to model appropriate behavior.”

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## NEW YORK’S HIGHEST COURT WILL HEAR SAME-SEX ‘MARRIAGE’ CASE

(EP News)--The New York Court of Appeals, the state’s highest court, agreed March 31 to hear two appeals filed by the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) regarding lawsuits against officials who have attempted to recognize out-of-state same-sex “marriages” in contradiction to state law. “New York state and local officials shouldn’t recognize the laws of foreign jurisdictions when they conflict with state law,” said Brian Raum, senior legal counsel for ADF. “These officials have overstepped their authority in order to forward the agenda of special interest groups.” ADF sued in August 2006 after Westchester County Executive Andrew Spano ordered county agencies to recognize out-of-state same-sex “marriages.” The second suit came in May 2007, after the New York State Department of Civil Service redefined the term “spouse” in order to extend marriage benefits to same-sex couples “wed” outside the state.

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## TEXAS ALLOWS EXAMINATION OF EVOLUTION

(EP News)--The Texas Board of Education voted March 27 to allow critique and full examination of evidence relating to scientific theories. The debate centered around how the theory of evolution should be taught. The board had voted against a similar measure earlier in the day, but after a flood of calls and e-mails, the board apparently decided to give Texas children a chance to discuss all sides of popular scientific theories. Jonathan Saenz, legislative affairs director for the Free Market Foundation, said the board action was “a huge victory for school students and validation that the people of Texas and the State Board of Education reject censorship in the classroom and embrace open and critical discussion in the science classroom.”

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## FEDERAL LEGISLATION WOULD

## STOP ABORTION BASED ON RACE, GENDER

(EP News)--Rep. Trent Franks, R-Ariz., reintroduced the Prenatal Nondiscrimination Act today, which would ban sex- and race-selective abortions. It is estimated that 50 percent of African-Americans babies conceived in the U.S. are aborted, compared to an estimated 15 percent of white preborn babies. Steven H. Aden, senior legal counsel for the Alliance Defense Fund, commended Franks for his leadership. “No one should be allowed to decide that an innocent life is worthless, least of all because a child isn’t of the preferred sex or race,” Aden said. “There is nothing constitutionally protected or medically necessary about an abortion that takes place because a child is not the preferred sex or race. “And there is nothing in the law or the Constitution that prohibits America from joining other civilized nations in prohibiting such barbaric procedures.”

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## RETIRED OFFICERS OPPOSE HOMOSEXUAL MILITARY SERVICE

(EP News)--More than 1,000 respected retired Flag & General Officers for the Military, including 47 four-star leaders from all branches of the U.S. military, have taken a firm stand in support of the so-called “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy. The 1993 act prevents openly homosexual men and women from serving in the military. On March 31, their open letter was delivered to the White House, Pentagon and members of Congress. Elaine Donnelly, president of the Center for Military Readiness, said gay activists are trying to wrap their agendas in the banner of national security. “With little or no respect for military culture,” she writes, “some ideologues keep demanding that our military assume higher risks of social disruption that would hurt morale, discipline and overall readiness.” A recent Military Times survey showed that most active-duty service members oppose the repeal of the policy.

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## CHRISTIANS CONTINUE TO GIVE DURING TOUGH TIMES

(EP News)--In these hard economic times, churches and other Christian ministries are rising to the challenge. “We’re hearing that giving has continued regularly,” said Dan Busby, president of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. “And some churches are reporting that giving is up.” Ron Blue, president of Kingdom Advisors, said the recession could change Americans for the better. “We have already seen a switch from a negative savings rate to a positive savings rate, and we also have seen a decline in personal debt,” he said. “Those are changed behaviors. I suspect they may be permanent.”

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## COURT EMPLOYEES CAN RESUME LUNCHTIME BIBLE STUDY

(EP News)--San Diego Superior Court employees will resume their lunchtime Bible study after reaching a settlement. Robert Tyler, founder of Advocates for Faith & Freedom, said he was intrigued by the case. “We had the opportunity to bring a lawsuit against the

court itself,” he said, “to try to force the court to recognize First Amendment principles that protect religious liberty.” In denying employees access to empty offices, Tyler said the court misunderstood the Constitution. “It’s there to protect religion and to protect various faiths,” he said, “not to discriminate against them.”

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## FAA EMPLOYEE WINS RELIGIOUS-SPEECH CASE

(EP News)--A Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) employee disciplined for discussing his religious views at work will no longer face punishment, following a federal civil rights lawsuit filed by the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF). “Government agencies have no right to harass and threaten employees who choose to express their religious faith in a manner that does not disrupt the workplace,” said Kevin Theriot, senior counsel for ADF. “We are pleased the FAA has taken steps to ensure that all employees’ First Amendment rights will be respected.” On March 3, 2005, Larry Dombrowski, who works in the FAA’s civil service as a supervisor, received a letter of reprimand from his regional manager. The document accused Dombrowski of engaging in “unbecoming conduct” for friendly conversations he had had with co-workers regarding his Christian beliefs. Dombrowski was punished with a seven-day suspension without pay and a forced relocation. The settlement clears Dombrowski’s record and requires the government to pay attorneys fees.

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## PRO-LIFE LAWMAKERS TAKE A STAND

(EP News)--Pro-life members of the U.S. House of Representatives gathered for a special meeting March 31 to discuss the fight to protect life. Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, led the Pro-Life Special Order on the House floor and was joined by Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J. The hour-long discussion covered Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s recent award from Planned Parenthood, pro-abortion Justice nominee Dawn Johnsen, the pain felt by the preborn, and when life begins.

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## PRO-LIFE LEGISLATION MOVES THROUGH TENNESSEE HOUSE

(EP News)--Four times, the Public Health Subcommittee in the Tennessee House has defeated a proposed constitutional amendment that would overrule a pro-abortion state Supreme Court ruling from 2000. That changed on April 7, when the full Health Committee voted 20-7 in favor of the amendment. SJR 127 recently passed the Senate for a fifth time and could go to the House floor within two weeks. “The outstanding result today is a first step toward getting on the ballot, but it is a step that pro-life supporters had not yet been able to take,” David Fowler, executive director of the Family Action Council of Tennessee, wrote to supporters. After the state Supreme Court ruled that the state constitution protects the “right” to abortion, several pro-life regulations have been struck down. This amendment would reverse the court ruling and allow incremental regulations on abortion.

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## PRO-ABORTION LEGISLATION FIZZLES IN ILLINOIS HOUSE

(EP News)--The Illinois House of Representatives failed to vote on HB 2354, which would have nullified the state's parental-notification law, in addition to funding thousands of abortions with taxpayer dollars. Eric Scheidler, communications director for the Chicago-based Pro-Life Action League, said pro-lifers came together as never before to oppose the bill — Illinois' version of the Freedom of Choice Act. "This is a great victory for life and a blessing from God, but that doesn't mean we can sit back and take it easy," Scheidler said. "This victory only energizes our pro-life work — including defending health care conscience protections and saving babies slated for abortion in cities and towns all across the state of Illinois." President Barack Obama has promised to sign the federal Freedom of Choice Act, which would eliminate virtually every federal, state and local measure that limits abortion.

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## DOCTORS REFUSE TO HELP PATIENTS KILL THEMSELVES

(EP News)--Doctors in Montana are refusing to cooperate with a court decision allowing physician-assisted suicide, saying their role is to care for patients, not help them kill themselves. In December, a District Court judge ruled that physician-assisted suicide is a constitutional right. The Montana Medical Association, however, said it "does not condone the deliberate act of precipitating the death of a patient." Bill Toffler, the national director of Physicians for Compassionate Care, said when a state medical association takes a stand against physician-assisted suicide, it has a tremendous impact. "It's very important for a medical association to take a strong stance because the public looks to doctors and their organizations for guidance," Toffler said.

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## NORTH CAROLINIANS SUPPORT MARRIAGE PROTECTION AMENDMENT

(EP News)--The North Carolina Family Policy Council said 73 percent of North Carolinians support an amendment to the state constitution defining marriage as only between one man and one woman. The results of the poll were announced at a press conference at the General Assembly. Bill Brooks, president of the North Carolina Family Policy Council, said, "The results confirm what previous polls have shown, which is that the overwhelming majority of North Carolinians would vote in favor of a Marriage Protection Amendment if given that chance by our lawmakers. It is time for our legislative leaders to listen to the voice of the people of North Carolina, whom they represent, and allow the 'Defense of Marriage' bills to get an up or down vote."

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## ECONOMIC PROBLEMS LEAD TO INCREASED ABORTIONS

### NATIONWIDE

(EP News)--The nation's economic problems are causing a record high number of abortions in some locations. If the anecdotal evidence is true across the board, then the United States could easily see a nationwide increase in abortions for the first time in over a decade. An Associated Press report indicates abortion practitioners in some locations are reporting abortion increases. Planned Parenthood of Illinois CEO Steve Trombley did not provide exact numbers but indicated his abortion centers did an all-time high number of abortions last month. AP noted Planned Parenthood's St. Louis-area abortion centers also reported the number of abortions jumping seven percent during the last six months of the year last year compared with the same time in 2007.

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## TEXAS PROCLAIMS APRIL ABORTION RECOVERY AWARENESS MONTH

(EP News)--Texas Governor Rick Perry proclaimed April as Abortion Recovery Awareness Month. In a statement released at the signing of the proclamation, Perry said, "Ending a pregnancy through abortion interrupts the natural birth process and creates significant trauma and stress for those involved in the pregnancy. An abortion is a tragic ending, not only because of the loss of a life, but also because of the physical and psychological trauma caused by the procedure itself." Perry pleased pro-life groups by affirming that abortion "often leads to lasting emotional and mental health problems for the mother, father and other involved family members. Peer-reviewed research has shown that women who obtain abortions are often plagued by feelings of anger, fear, sadness, anxiety, grief and guilt due to the procedure," Perry said.

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## HILLARY CLINTON RECEIVES AWARD FROM ABORTION GROUP

(EP News)--Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton was given the Margaret Sanger Award by Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion group. In her acceptance speech, Clinton said: "I have to tell you that it was a great privilege when I was told that I would receive this award. I admire Margaret Sanger enormously, her courage, her tenacity, her vision." Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, was openly sympathetic to Nazi Germany's eugenic practices and was strongly committed to preventing black people and the poor from reproducing. Sanger once said: "Many of this group are diseased, feeble-minded, and are of the pauper element dependent upon the normal and fit members of society for their support. There is no doubt in the minds of all thinking people that the procreation of this group should be stopped."

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## STUDENTS TAKE A STAND ON DAY OF TRUTH

(EP News)--Students across the country stood against the homosexual agenda on April 13, the fifth annual Day of Truth. The initiative, which is sponsored by Exodus International

and the Alliance Defense Fund, comes three days after the pro-homosexual Day of Silence. Scott Davis, vice president of education at Exodus, said: "Students are hearing a very one-sided message in the schools, a message that unfortunately more often than not attacks Biblical concepts of sexual morality and the meaning of gender." Many students who have spoken out against homosexuality have either been censored or punished. "The truth is," Davis said, "tens of thousands of individuals have found freedom from homosexuality by choosing to follow after Christ and to submit their sexuality to God."

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## COLLEGE SETTLES LAWSUIT, ALLOWS FREE SPEECH ON CAMPUS

(EP News)--The City College of San Francisco will allow Jews for Jesus to distribute literature and express its Christian message on its campuses, following a lawsuit by the Alliance Defense Fund. "Christians shouldn't be arrested for expressing their beliefs on public college campuses," said ADF-allied attorney Frederick Nelson of the American Liberties Institute. "We are pleased the college will allow free speech on its campuses in accord with the First Amendment." While distributing literature at the college's Ocean Campus in 2007 and early 2008, Jews for Jesus employee Robert Wertheim was told he needed a permit to hand out literature. When Wertheim returned to distribute literature in April 2008, he was arrested and handcuffed. The charges were dropped the next day.

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## AMERICANS SUPPORT MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS' FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

(EP News)--An overwhelming majority, 87 percent of American adults, believe it is important to "make sure health care professionals in America are not forced to participate in procedures and practices to which they have moral objections." The poll, conducted by WomanTrend on behalf of the Christian Medical Association, found support for that statement among 78 percent of those who consider themselves "pro-choice," and 80 percent of those who voted for President Barack Obama. The results were presented in Washington, D.C., as doctors, nurses, pharmacists and medical students gathered to request a meeting with the White House over their right to practice medicine according to their morals. President George W. Bush put regulations in place in December to reinforce federal laws that protect medical professionals from being forced to participate in abortion and other anti-life practices. Obama wants to overturn them.

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## VERMONT REDEFINES MARRIAGE TO INCLUDE HOMOSEXUAL COUPLES

(EP News)--Thanks to several legislators who changed their votes at the last minute, Vermont has become the first state to radically change the definition of marriage through the legislative process. The Vermont House voted 95-52 to legalize same-sex "marriage" — five votes short of the number needed to override

Gov. James Douglas' promised veto, which came April 6. But when the veto override vote came up in the House, the House voted 100-49, following a Senate vote of 23-5. Three states — Massachusetts, Connecticut and Iowa — have been forced by their state courts to redefine marriage. Forty-three states have laws that protect marriage as the union of one man and one woman, including 30 with constitutional amendments. Gay activists have made no secret of their goal to legalize same-sex "marriage" in six New England states by 2012.

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## IOWA SUPREME COURT ALLOWS SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

(EP News)--The Iowa Supreme Court unanimously decided that a law declaring marriage to be between a man and a woman is unconstitutional, making its state the first in the Midwest to approve same-sex marriage. Iowa's court ruled that same-sex marriage would become legal on April 24, and the law would apply to any couple who wanted to travel to Iowa. The county attorney who defended the law said he would not seek a rehearing. The only alternative for opponents appears to be a constitutional amendment, which would be considered in 2011 at the earliest.—*Laura Stidham*

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## CALIFORNIA'S "GENDER IDENTITY" LAW GOES ON TRIAL

(EP News)--A trial to determine the constitutionality of a California law that provides special status based on "gender identity" is set to begin April 14 in Sacramento. SB 777, which went into effect Jan. 1, 2008, prohibits teaching or any activity that "reflects adversely upon" or "promotes a discriminatory bias" because of sexual orientation or gender. The effects of the legislation are playing out in schools across the state. In one Northern California school, a boy was forced to change clothes in a boys' locker room where a girl was dressing. In another Northern California school, students will return from spring break to find a teacher who left school as a woman returning in men's clothes.

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## INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS BRITISH WORKER SUSPENDED OVER CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

(EP News)--A charity worker has been suspended after telling a colleague about his Christian beliefs on homosexuality, the London Times Online reported. David Booker, 44, who works at a Christian hostel in Southampton, England, was asked about his faith by a colleague last month. He reportedly told her he was opposed to same-sex "marriages" and to homosexual clergy. The next evening, Booker was suspended from his job, which he had held for four years. The hostel reportedly told him the action was taken for "events that happened last night." A few days later, he was told he had "seriously breached" the charity's code of conduct, "and action had been taken "to safeguard both residents and staff."





# Jonah and the Gourd

By J. W. Porter  
(1863 - 1937)

**"And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered"** (Jonah 4:6-7).

This book has been the battleground for the destruction critic. With peculiar pleasure the destroyer of the faith has aimed his poisoned arrow at the story of Jonah and the great fish. Here he seems to fancy that he has found a vulnerable spot in the Book he hopes to destroy. Strangely enough, the critic claims to believe in Christ, and at the same time deny the authenticity and authority of the book of Jonah. He seems all unmindful of the fact, that the truth of the miracle was verified by Christ in the following:

**"The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here"** (Matt. 12:41).

Strangely enough, in these latter days, those who have denied the possibility of a fish swallowing a man have been put to utter confusion by a fish recently captured on the Florida coast. This fish is now in the National Museum, at Washington. Its weight was a little more than 30,000 pounds; its circumference thirty-three feet nine inches, with a diameter of eight feet three inches, and a length of forty-five feet. The mouth and throat of this monster is sufficiently large to easily admit the entrance of two men at the same time. Now, then, that the entire plausibility of the story has been scientifically demonstrated, what have the carion critics and sacreligious scoffers of God's words to say? Possibly, they will answer that in the time of Jonah there was no fish of such dimensions, but through a process of evolution this great fish has been developed. At all events, the fish is preserved in the museum, where it may be seen, and that, too, to the everlasting discomfiture of the enemies of the cross. It would seem providential, that God in His own good time has thus put to flight the armies of the aliens. Surely the Word of the Lord endureth forever. To deny this miracle is to deny the truth of all miracles, and make false the words of Christ. Somehow, those who are disposed to deny the truth of miracles seem to experience no difficulty in imagining themselves miracles of learning. Only man is necessary to the skepticism of scholasticism, or the ignorance of



superstition.

It should be noted that God prepared a gourd. It was not an accident that the gourd was there. God grew the gourd for the occasion, and it was to play its part in the drama of a disobedient life. To deny God's control of nature is to deny God a place in His own universe, and to place natural laws above Him, Who created them. Surely, the Creator is capable of controlling His own creation. The gourd was not the result of the survival of the fittest, but was made to fit a place in the purposes of God. Not even a single flower was born to "blush unseen, and waste its sweetness on the desert air." Its sweetness was not wasted. Though it bloomed far from the eyes of man, it was seen by the eye of Him, Who decked it with beauty and endowed it with fragrance. In nature and grace, God is God, and there is none other beside Him. We may trace His steps amid the flowers, and His glory in the growing gourd. In the beginning was God, and all along the way is God, and at the end will be God.

The gourd was specially prepared for Jonah. Special agencies are prepared to meet special situations. God knew, and provided the very thing that Jonah required to teach him the needed lesson. Suffering from the heat of a tropical sun, he needed something to shelter him from the burning sun. God knows what we need, and when we need it, even before the need exists, and He Who knows our needs will richly supply them, according to the riches of His grace. God knew that His poor spoiled child was weary and discouraged, and He grew for him a gourd of rest and gladness. God manifests Himself, often in a peculiar manner that our doubts and discouragements may disappear. Even a gourd may become an angel of love, on a mission of mercy. He, Who hears the ravens when they cry, will withhold no good thing from His own children. He Who is the giver of every good and perfect gift, is the giver of the gourd. Happy the man who can make a gourd his school teacher, and find a textbook in the faded leaf. Happily, Jonah found his spiritual education compulsory.

The same God that prepared the gourd also prepared a worm to destroy the gourd. This may seem a divine contradiction, and it must be granted that appearances are often against God, and circumstances sometime seem to contradict Christ. Yet God's plan is one---

*"His purposes will ripen fast,*

*Unfolding every hour,  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.*

The worm was God's authorized agent, and had come to the kingdom for such a time. The worm has a mission that neither man, nor angel can fulfill. The fact that everything has a part to play in God's program of the ages, lends dignity to all existence. Why wonder at the worth of a worm. Man, compared to God, is but a mere worm.

*"Poor worm of the dust,  
Dearly ye pay for your primal fall,  
A few flowerets of Eden ye still may inherit,  
But the trail of the serpent is over them all."*

The worm in fulfillment of its divine mission, gnaws into the sensitive plant, and quickly it withers away. Thus perishes the cherished joy and comfort of this peculiar man. Sorely displeased and dejected, he complains to God of his disappointment. How soon he had forgotten, that he had grievously disappointed God. He was quite ready to chide God for killing his gourd, all forgetful of his own cowardice and criminal conduct. How natural to forget the joy, and remember the sorrow. How natural to recall cloud, not the bright sunlight.

How foolish his words: **"It is better for me to die than to live"** (Jonah 4:8). He might have at least given God the credit for being able to rightly determine his days. The Lord Who gave us life, surely knows best when to require that which He has committed to our keeping.

Despondency may make us wish to die, but it takes courage to live and do our duty. Surely life is short enough at longest, without wishing for an untimely departure. Would that this sorrowful man might have realized, that He Who inhabits eternity makes His abode in the broken heart. Because the gourd was gone, it did not mean that God was gone. The leaf may wither, the vine may die, but the Author of Life is from everlasting to everlasting. One, by one, our dearest dreams and brightest hopes are dashed to death.

*"Twas ever thus from childhood's hour  
I have seen my fondest hopes decay,  
I never loved a tree or flower,  
But it was first and sure to fade away.  
I never nursed a dear gazelle,  
To glad me with its dark fond eye,  
But when it came to know me well,  
It was first and sure to die."*

Afflictions sanctify our affections. We are saved from death, by death; from the grave, by the grave. Shall not God do what He will with His own?

"Sweet are the uses of adversity," and in its school life's most valuable lessons are learned. God was teaching Jonah just the things he needed to know. His life had been incomplete and inconsistent, and he must have the discipline of disappointment. Like the gourd, all human joys are short lived. The flower no sooner reaches its full fragrance than

it silently drops into death---

*"Pleasures are like poppies spread,  
Touch the flower, the bloom is dead  
Or like the snowflake on the river,  
A moment white, then gone forever."*

Thank Heaven; there is a land where flowers never fade, and where the vine grows on in trellised splendor. Beyond this land of burning heat, and bitter cold, are the green hills far away, where the worm never comes, and the vine never dies.



## Nicodemus

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body. From this membership we know that he occupied a high position among his fellow-citizens; that he was of mature age, a man of culture and influence, possessed of wealth and reputation. Jewish writers make frequent mention of a Nicodemus who lived during this period in the Holy City, was a ruler, and one of the three richest men in Jerusalem; so rich, they say, that upon her marriage, he gave his daughter "a dowry of a million golden denarii." But, they add, he subsequently became so poor that his daughter had to beg bread---a result plainly explicable upon the theory that he was identified with the Nicodemus of the New Testament, who, we believe, became a Christian, and if so, his property would be one of the very first objects of the confiscation which was general during the persecution which followed the death of Stephen.

The next thing concerning this man which interests us is *his position as a religionist*. Three sects at that time were dominant among the Jews. The Essenes, who were chiefly monks or hermits; the Sadducees, who denied the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, rejected all traditions, and professed to receive the Old Testament; and the Pharisees, who were the most numerous, popular, and influential, tenacious in their adherence to traditions, and pompous in their almost ceaseless ceremonies. They fasted twice a week, on Thursdays, when they said Moses went up into the mount, and on Monday, when he descended. As a general truth, they were the most haughty exclusives in society; most arrogant in their pretension to superior sanctity, and sure to occupy the chief places in synagogues and at feasts. Nicodemus was a Pharisee; and from this fact you see how much light is thrown upon his character as a religionist.

At the time he is introduced to us, Jerusalem was agitated by a great excitement. Jesus of Nazareth, Who had been heralded as the Messiah by John, the fame of whose miracles, the importance of whose claims, and the sublimity of whose doctrines, had spread through the land, exciting curiosity to its highest pitch,

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# Nicodemus

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came to make His first official visit to the Holy City. The citizens were astounded at His first public act. It was a bold and daring one. Surrounded by a few poor followers, He had gone into the gorgeous temple, and finding it occupied by money-makers---men who sold oxen, sheep, and doves for the sacrifices---with a scourge of small cords had driven out the impious intruders, poured forth the changers' money, overthrew their tables, and, with a voice of indignant authority, said, **"Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise."** The news of this bold deed quickly spread through the city; and our Lord followed up this first movement by a succession of miracles which confounded His enemies, greatly strengthened His friends, and awakened a general interest in His person and purpose.

These facts reached the thoughtful Nicodemus, and deeply impressed his cultured mind. Perchance while passing in Pharisaical dignity along the street, he has seen the mildly majestic form of the stranger of Galilee, and heard that voice which spake as **"never man spake;"** (John 7:46) or, in other circumstances, has met and conversed with persons who themselves have experienced his miracle-working energy. It may be that he has long been dissatisfied with the empty forms of his sect, and the general hypocrisy of its members.

It may be that in calm hours of meditation his heart has yearned for something purer, nobler and more satisfactory than its dead traditional dogmas. It is certain that he is familiar with the ancient prophecy and promise of a Messiah, and since the evidence of the miraculous power of Jesus has accumulated until it has reached the character of positive demonstration, he has not been able to resist the impression that it is at least possible, in spite of all opposing considerations, suggested by the poverty of His origin and humility of His surroundings, so unlike what the popular expectation anticipates, that this is Israel's deliverer. The arrow of conviction is in his heart, anxiety in his eye, and trouble on his brow. He can not feel the interest he once did in the business of the Sanhedrim. The peace of his gorgeous home is disturbed. His dreams by night and his thoughts by day all point to the Nazarene. He is conscious of a strange drawing toward Him, until at length he feels that he must solve the mystery, ascertain the truth. But how shall he do this? He is not prepared to compromise his position by publicly attending the ministry of Christ, and after much reflection decides to go and see Him personally, but it shall be during the night, so that if no good comes to himself from the interview, at least no harm shall come to his positional reputation. At this

interesting crisis Nicodemus occupies a representative position, and while he is preparing for an interview with Him Who embodied not only a divine nature, but the highest type of humanity ever seen in this world, allow me to digress for a moment, by calling your attention to the personal interviews of a few other representative characters, found on the pages of history.

Thus met Montezuma, in whom was vested the barbaric glory of the new, and Cortez, the representative of the hoary civilization of the old world. Thus met, on Scotland's storied soil, Sir William Wallace, the representative of her wild patriotic valor, and Robert Bruce, the embodiment of her ancient regal dignity. Thus met, the garden of the Tuilleries, Mirabeau, the impersonation of the revolutionary spirit, and Marie Antionette, the representative of fallen royalty. A similar meeting occurred, in an Italian dungeon, where Galileo was incarcerated, because he had affirmed truths which an ignorant and bigoted priesthood had pronounced heresy. One day a young Englishman, whose name is now familiar as a household word throughout the civilized world, was admitted to see him. That young man was John Milton, and that personal interview between Italy's martyr to science, and England's patriotic scholar must indeed have been thrilling. In them the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries met; the despair of the one and the hope of the other; the wasted night of the former and the opening morning of the latter. But the personal night interview we shall now witness between this representative of the dissatisfied and inquiring moral element in the universal human mind, and that wonderful personage who embodied within himself an interest superior to a thousand Montezumas, or Cortezes, or Wallaces, or Bruces, Galileos or Miltons, possess an interest vastly higher and more profound than these, or all similar personal interviews recorded on the pages of the world's history!

Resume now the thread we dropped. Nicodemus is determined to carry into effect his slowly-reached purpose. How he has discovered where Jesus tarries, in that street, in what building, I do not know; but the day has dawned at whose close he is resolved to meet and make personal inquiries of the new teacher. Slowly pass away the tedious hours, until at length the sun has set and night ascends the throne of the world. It is April. The air is soft as that of our summer, and balmy with the perfume of oriental flowers. The Passover moon, which lights pilgrims to their far-off homes, now silvers the majestic temple, and flecks with deep shadows the white marble palaces of Jerusalem.

Gradually the hum of the busy city ceases, and places of amusement and business are closed. Wrapping himself in his costly robe, behold the ruler emerge, unattended, from his home, quietly thread his way through the silent streets, and

proceed toward his destination. How his heart throbs! How alert is every faculty! And as he approaches the point where new truths of startling magnitude, of momentous, eternal interest are to burst upon him, I can not but believe that his own nature is intuitively conscious of the shadow of their coming. He reaches the dwelling, enters it, and is ushered into a room, where, as if awaiting him, sits alone the great Teacher he has sought, Who, recognizing him at once, as he did Nathanael before, kindly receives him, and with unexpected suavity makes him feel at ease in His mysterious presence. With the characteristic politeness of a cultured gentleman, Nicodemus commences the conversation by saying, **"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him"** (John 3:2). Mark the immediate reply. It may seem strange to you, but rest assured that Jesus knows His guest better than he knows himself, and therefore He responds, **"Verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God."** Surprised, the ruler asks, **"How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"** Calmly the Saviour repeats, emphasizing what He has said, and adding thus to it: **"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."** Amazed and perplexed, the inquirer exclaims, **"How can these things be?"** In order to humble his Pharisaical pride, Jesus answers, **"Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"** And then, after a few words upon the difficulty of a man in his condition being able to comprehend these spiritualities, He proceeds in the plainest possible manner to open thus the gospel, by a reference to Jewish history with which Nicodemus was familiar: **"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness**

**rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."**

Such is the whole record of this interview. We have no evidence that the inquirer uttered another word. The whole gospel scheme was placed before him, and his mind seems to have been stunned by the force of the aggregated, unexpected truths which came rushing in upon him. Silently, thoughtfully, he departed through the night gloom to his palace, certainly a far wiser man than when he left, and I confidently believe that subsequently he became experimentally acquainted with the truth, which, with even unwonted fidelity, our Lord taught him. That belief rests mainly on two facts.

When, more than two years afterward, Christ was arraigned as a prisoner before the Sanhedrim, Nicodemus defended him there so earnestly that his coadjutors looked upon him with suspicion, and said, "Art thou too a Galilaean? See to it" (Mark 14:70). And after the crucifixion, when Joseph came to take down from the cross the dead body of the crucified Lord, the record says that Nicodemus came with him, bearing precious spices; and we are left to imagine what must have been his thoughts and emotions as he gazed upon that very form which sat with him alone on that memorable night, full of life and superhuman beauty, now pale, dead, covered with ghastly wounds and clotted with gore! Did he not remember the words which had fallen upon his ears so strangely, **"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so also must the Son of man be lifted up"**? And O, as he stood and gazed upon this literal fulfillment of these prophetic and now attesting words, must not his faith have been confirmed? Surely, he had faith in Jesus, else wherefore came he to Calvary when the execution was over? Wherefore came he there bearing spices to embalm that dead body? In all pictures of the crucifixion he figures conspicuously, and the highest art has made him a weeper at the sepulcher. If he did not do what he ought to have done, support Christ's cause while He lived, he did do all he could for Him when dead. From this point we see no more of him on the historic page, but I think there is ground for confidence that the subsequent events, the resurrection from the dead, the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the success of Christianity, nourished the seed which had been planted in his soul by the divine hand, and that it brought forth fruit abundantly. This historic sketch of character suggests the following points, to which I ask your attention.

1. Nicodemus acted the part of a candid, intelligent man, when he became an inquirer of  
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*Christ concerning the truth of Christianity.*

In proof of this, consider his position in relation to it. Christianity was brought within his reach, and it was either true or false. If true, it certainly was of the first importance that he should know it, for then it would stand related most intimately to his present duty and eternal destiny. If false, it was also important that he should know that, in order to intelligently repudiate its claims and successfully oppose its progress. How could he certainly know whether it was true or false without investigation? There were many circumstances in his case unfavorable to such an examination. Occupying a lofty official position, he had the responsibilities of his office to meet and all the prejudices of his own education to overcome. Moreover, the temptation to lay aside the troublesome question by accepting the declared judgment concerning it of those who were the most learned of his people, and therefore seemingly the most capable of judging correctly, was such as would have been too strong for an ordinary mind, influenced too by all the power of self-interest. But, tell me, would it have been the part of a candid, intelligent man, to have allowed either the cares of private or public business, either his own or the prejudices of his associates, either apparent temporary interest, or any other consideration, to have deterred him from fairly inquiring into the claims of Christianity? Assuredly not.

Consider further *the manner in which he prosecuted the inquiry.* He did not form an opinion concerning Christ from "what his enemies said of Him, nor allow his judgment, as to the truth of His doctrines, to be influenced by the external circumstances surrounding the great Teacher---the fewness and poverty of His disciples, and the fact that they almost exclusively belonged to classes of society far beneath his own positional level. His love of justice and fair dealing---a noble development of which was made in the Sanhedrim when, during a consultation in regard to the course to be pursued with reference to Christ, he nobly said, **"Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?"**--forbade his doing that. Therefore he resolved personally to go to Jesus and hear from His own lips a statement of His doctrines. He resolved to go at a time when he knew he could see Him alone, and therefore he went **"by night."** Many have blamed him for this; but I beg you to observe that our Lord found no fault with him on this account, and I submit to you that we ought not to. If it exhibited caution, and perhaps timidity, still you are to bear in mind that he was merely an inquirer, not a believer, and then judge whether it was not duty for him to pursue

such a course with regard to what was in his mind an undecided question, since, if Christ had proved to be an impostor, the step he took would, if it were known, have brought disgrace upon himself and his position. Now, in this inquiry, and the manner of its prosecution, I affirm that he developed intelligent and manly wisdom. But alas! how seldom is Christianity thus treated! There are multitudes of men who never even trouble themselves to inquire whether it is true or not; who, immersed in business during the week, go to church on the Sabbath, but still have no settled, intelligent convictions in regard to that religion which they treat respectfully, and politely neglect. Thus they treat it with as much absolute indifference as they would if they knew it were merely an abstraction, an unreality, having no vital relation to their interests, and unworthy of their immediate personal attention. To become a religious inquirer, and take the time requisite to prosecute such an inquiry, in their view involves neglect of obvious duties, if not a betrayal of positive weakness. Is this manly, just, or right? Can it be that a system like Christianity, with its grand history, its authoritative sanctions, its solemn and momentous claims, is unworthy of the close attention and careful investigation of any man? Assuredly not. Such are blinded, deluded by the god of this world.

There are others who assure us that they have an opinion, that they do not believe in Christianity, that they reject the Scriptures. We ask them, Sirs, have you ever for yourselves, laying aside all prejudice, candidly and thoroughly examined the evidences of the divinity of the Scriptures, and the Christianity they teach? Have you ever in your hearts said, "O God, I want to know the truth; if the Bible and its religion are true, I want to know it; if true, I will receive and obey them," and then assiduously availed yourselves of the means of knowing? In ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, such persons are compelled to answer in the negative. What then is their opinion worth? What is the value of the verdict of a jury who have not heard the evidence? Therefore it is that the wide-spread skepticism and infidelity of this age are the most flippant and superficial things the world has ever known. They are made up of ignorance, prejudice, and exploded argumentations. Their weapons are gibes and jeers. Their food is the faults of Christians. Their clothing is the filthy rags of self-righteousness. Tell me, now, is it the part of a candid, intelligent man thus to treat that religion whose claims have been sealed, not only by the blood of martyrs, but by that of the Son of the eternal God, which has ever been the herald of good to man kind, the originator and nourisher of private charities and noble public reforms; that religion whose claims to divinity have been satisfactory to the profoundest minds of the world, to man most eminent in

every department of science; that religion which is the safe guide of wayward youth, the strong girder of manhood's energies, the rectifier of wrong, the dispenser of light and love, the planter of hope in despairing hearts, the giver of joy to the sorrowing, of knowledge to the ignorant, and wealth to the poor; that religion which is the staff of tottering age, the softener of dying beds, the illuminator of the tomb, and the opener of a heaven of immortal blessedness to poor, sinful mortals?

2. *In prosecuting his inquiry, Nicodemus discovered far more than he anticipated.*

Such has been the experience of all real investigators in every department of truth. You can not fail to remember that their biographies show that when they got upon the right track, and pursued it vigilantly, in almost every instance greater results were reached than they expected. It was while Swartz was making chemical experiments for a different purpose that he produced gunpowder, that terrible instrument of physical power, which has blown up kingdoms and exploded dynasties. It was merely an inquiry as to why an apple fell from its parent bough which led "the star-eyed Newton" to the discovery of the existence of that great principle which binds together the vast material universe. It was while Columbus was merely endeavoring to find out a new route to the Indies that his ship came in contact with a new, and before unknown world. Thus has it been also in the realm of intellectual and moral truth. Thus emphatically was it with our religious inquirer.

It is not difficult to see the exact attitude of his mind, as exhibited in the brief record of him in the gospel. His attention has been arrested by the wonderful career of Jesus of Nazareth, and his curiosity is thoroughly aroused. He has felt a growing dissatisfaction with his own condition and position. Maturer experiences and deeper insight have revealed to him the inefficiency and positive emptiness of those hoary dogmas and imposing forms of Judaism which enkindled and enchanted his youthful imagination. He is perhaps too cautious and non-committal, but he will see and hear for himself the new teacher. His motives are doubtless mixed. There is a blending of speculative curiosity, and perhaps ambition, together with an honest and determined desire and purpose to find out the truth. Observe the cautious and indirect manner in which he opens the conversation, its polite and apparently studied generality, as if he had merely called to make some general inquiries, and hold converse with our Lord, such as any other man might have deemed it a privilege to enjoy. *But he has placed himself in the right position, he has come to Christ.* He is alone with the great Revealer, and unconsciously stands where revealings such as he has not dreamed of can burst upon him. He has come merely to find out the truth concerning Jesus; he should

learn the truth about himself. He whose calm, keen eyes are fixed upon him, with their majestically mild and searching gaze, knows him and his position thoroughly. Mark, therefore, the first words He utters. They are in no way responsive, but putting aside all secondary issues, He reveals to the inquirer the necessity of a new birth in order to "see," that is perceive, comprehend and enjoy the spiritualities of God's kingdom. Nicodemus gives proof of this statement by taking these words in a physical sense. But now he is told still more; for, after explaining that the birth is a spiritual one, Jesus adds that in order to "enter" His visible kingdom and enjoy its immunities, he must be born both of the Spirit and **"of water;"** that is, he must not only have a change of heart wrought by the Spirit, but by baptism make a public profession, and thus be publicly recognized as His disciple. The amazed inquirer learns still more that he did not expect, for Jesus revealed to him more clearly than He ever did to any other individual, or on any other occasion, the doctrine of atonement, and of salvation through faith in that product and method of the Father's love. It is indeed a remarkable fact, that it was during this private interview that our adorable Lord uttered to this astonished listener the most concentrated and yet comprehensive statement of the gospel found in the whole Scriptures. To him He said, **"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."**

Thus He honored this inquiring man. And by the record of this, it appears to me evident that He designed to specially encourage all those who desire to know the truth to come directly to Him. Just as He said, when on the last great day of the feast He stood and cried, **"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."** And, as a matter of fact, an experience similar to that of Nicodemus has been realized by all those who have ever gone to Jesus, and sought honestly and earnestly to know the truth---*they have learned more than they anticipated.* They may have commenced, as he did, with but little consciousness of spiritual need and knowledge of spiritual truth; but, as they sought by faith, they found; as they knocked, it was opened unto them. Tell me, Christian friend, was not this your experience? You may have commenced seeking the Lord with comparatively slight sense of your spiritual necessities, a poor apprehension of the infinitude of divine love, and of the wondrous adaptation of the gospel to your exigencies. But as you sought by prayer and study of the "word of Christ," did you not discover yourself to be a more guilty, helpless sinner than you had supposed? Did you not discover the nature and reasonableness of those personal prerequisites to the comprehension and enjoyment of the

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# Nicodemus

(Continued from page 97) ♦

spiritualities of Christianity, which before seemed almost as strange to you as they did to Nicodemus? Did you not discover a wondrousness in the grace of God, a beauty and glory in the person and work of Christ, an efficacy in His atonement, a reality and power in the work of the Holy Spirit, and a blessedness in Christianity of which you had not dreamed? Could you not say, with Sheba's queen, **"the half was not told me?"** So, friends, shall it be with all of you, if candidly and honestly you will seek of Christ to know yourselves, your necessities, duties and privileges. Be not afraid to go, by humble prayer, to the omnipresent Jesus. He invites you to come. He awaits your coming. The Spirit and the Bride say **"Come."** Go, then, as this inquirer did--- go alone to Jesus, and you shall learn the truth; yes, you shall be amazed, as he was, at the magnitude and grandeur of the spiritual revealings which shall burst upon you.

3. *The difficulty of comprehending the nature and necessity of regeneration which Nicodemus felt, is the common experience of men.*

Remember that he was a ruler, a gentleman, and a scholar; a man of lofty and pure character; doubtless, amiable, kind, and benevolent. History records no blot as resting on his reputation. Indeed his standard of mere moral character was higher, than that which prevailed either in his class or nation. In this regard he was above reproach. Even Christianity, perhaps, could have made no very important change in his exterior life. In this regard, the all-knowing Christ uttered no breath of condemnation. But in true fidelity He at once informed him, that whatever might be his intellectual culture or moral integrity, he could not **"see the kingdom of heaven"** unless he was **"born again."** And how the immediate reply of the inquirer demonstrated the truth, Jesus had just uttered! He talks about a natural birth, and when his mistake is corrected, exclaims, **"How can these things be?"** Does not this remind you, of what you have often heard from intelligent and worthy persons? Have you not heard them say, "What is this new birth of which you are for ever talking? We do not understand it." Such speak the truth. They do not understand regeneration, because, like a large class of other facts, *it can only be known by experience.* It is a change of heart, producing a change of will and conduct. How many changes of the body can only thus be known! --- changes from youth to age, from sickness to health and health to sickness, from life to death. How many intellectual changes can only thus be known! Oh, in the inward world of our souls---that world within the veil of flesh, that sanctum sanctorum of humanity---how many realizations there

are, which can be known only to those who experience them! Ought it then to be a matter of surprise that this most radical and permanent of all changes should be a thing known only through a personal experience? But while the nature of regeneration can only thus be known, its reality is demonstrable, as are other classes of facts, by its effects. How do you know that there is such a thing as wind? You never saw it; but you have seen its power exerted, and on that account you are satisfied in regard to its existence. Hence Jesus said, **"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."**

Moreover, there was one word spoken by the great Teacher on this occasion which must have grated harshly on the ear of this man---the little word **"must."** Nicodemus was not accustomed to be thus addressed, and his face doubtless flushed when he heard it. But calmly and firmly Jesus repeated, **"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."** In the pride of their hearts, men dislike this language now, as much as Nicodemus did then. The very form is obnoxious. It is so authoritative, imperative. It does not leave the matter optional. It does not merely advise that a change of heart is desirable, and that we would do well to seek it. Nay, but with the earnestness of a God, and the solemnity of eternity, the Revealer of truth declares to all, whatever may be their position or character, **"Ye must be born again."**

But observe *in order to what* He told Nicodemus this change was essential. He did not say it was essential in order to secure worldly good, nor to a form of religion, but in order to **"see"** and **"enter"** His kingdom on earth, and secure an interest in the kingdom of Heaven. He taught that if there is no change of heart now, there will be no true religion here or bliss hereafter. Friends, does this appear to you to be an arbitrary arrangement? If it does, you are mistaken. It is a great moral necessity. It could not, from the nature of things, be otherwise. **"How can two walk together except they be agreed?"** How can you love a holy God while you love and cherish sin? How can you at the same time love the world, and the world-crucifying Christ? How can you appreciate or take delight in exercises for which you have no relish? How can you be a loyal subject to King James while in rebellion against him? How can you enjoy the companionship of regenerate souls with whom you have no affinity? Then think of the great hereafter---of Heaven. How sweet is that word! It is the condemned expression of beauty, bliss, glory. All want to go thither at last. But do you know that Heaven is a perfectly holy world, a purely religious place, a vast temple of incessant worship? Do you know that all its inhabitants from

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earth are regenerated people, its joys are the joys of holiness, its songs are the praises of redeeming love, its activities are the sweet obedience of loving hearts? Tell your own conscience honestly, if you were taken there just as you are, without a thorough change of your affection, would not its very air be oppressive, its services tedious, its employments irksome? Could you sing its songs? Could you shout praises unto Him whom you have despised on earth? Verily not! That polluted heart within you would writhe amidst the blaze of infinite purity, and cry out, "This is not my place: I am a stranger to all these persons and enjoyments; I am not adapted to them." Yea! We may all sing in mournfully solemn tones.

*"Had I a throne above the rest,*

*Where angels and archangels dwell,  
One sin unslain within my breast  
Would turn that heaven to hell."*

Ah! then the loving, faithful Saviour utters a grand moral necessity when He says to us, **"Ye must be born again!"** God give you grace to see it, feel it. God grant that you may now be impressed as you have never been before with this fact, so big with everlasting interest; that whatever other experiences you may have of joy or sorrow, of prosperity or adversity, you must, must have this. God grant that the words, **"Ye must be born again,"** may ring in your ears and toll their solemn cadences through every avenue of your being until you cry out, "Holy Spirit! Change my heart. Work thy work of grace in me." Then it shall be done, and thou shalt stand up regenerated, redeemed, disenthralled, in all the dignity and bliss of "a new creature in Christ Jesus."



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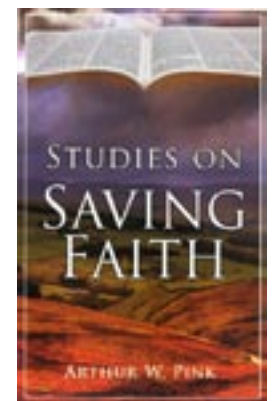
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Faith Baptist Mission of Cadillac, MI was organized into the Cadillac Baptist Church on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, under the authority of the Faith Missionary Baptist Church of Traverse City, MI.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Lord's Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Eagle, AK will be hosting a three day preaching service starting on Friday July 24<sup>th</sup>.

There are several men scheduled to speak. All are invited to fellowship and attend.

For more information please contact Pastor Gary Howard at (907) 547-2256.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Bethel Bible Baptist Church, PO Box 85, Mansfield, LA is in need of a pastor.

Any interested elder should call Connie McMellon at 318-872-1647.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Grace Baptist Church of Rural Hall, NC would like to invite all in the area, and any who can, to be with us during our spring meeting. The meeting will begin on Wednesday evening May 13 through Sunday the 17th. The service times will be 7:30 each evening Wednesday through Saturday and on Sunday at 9:45; 10:45 and after lunch provided by ladies of the church around 1:00 PM. Elder Matthew Stepp, pastor of Big Creek Baptist Church of Wayne, West Virginia will be preaching for us during this time. Please come if possible and pray for the meeting that God will be pleased to make it a true revival in the life of Grace Baptist Church and each member in particular.

For any information regarding this please call Pastor Gene Kiger at (336) 377-9808.

\*\*\*\*\*

Elder Larry Killion, pastor of The Lord's Baptist Church in Tacoma, Washington, would like to announce that he has completed two books that might be of interest to our readers.

Traveling for God is a personal journal of missionary trips that the author made to Siberia, Philippines and one that was planned to the Ukraine.

The Thessalonian Doctrine is a serious study of an important doctrine in Christianity. He writes with a "matter of

fact" style and presents the Thessalonian Doctrine of the Second Coming of the Lord from a Pre-mill, Pre-trib point of view using the King James Bible as the final authority on the matter.

Both books are available from <http://www.xlibris.com/Killion.html>.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Landmark Baptist Church of Collinsville, IL is in need of a pastor.

Any interested Elders may call (618) 288-4236 for more information.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Berea Baptist Church Bookstore is in the process of moving and updating the books available on the internet. Our new store can be accessed from our regular website or at [www.bereabaptistchurchbookstore.com](http://www.bereabaptistchurchbookstore.com).

\*\*\*\*\*

The Berea Baptist Church has reprinted and added several tracts to those that are available. Anyone wishing to receive a sample pack of those that are currently available need only to request one.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST  
Financial Report

3-1-2009 to 3-31-2009

Beginning Balance .....\$12,074.81

RECEIPTS:

Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....	225.00
Berea M. B. C., West Point, TN .....	50.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY ...	100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY .....	100.00
.....	475.00
TOTAL .....	12,549.81

EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time .....	810.00
Tape Production.....	170.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES .....	980.00
.....	\$11,569.81
Interest .....	+1.01
.....	11,570.82
Less Corbin, KY des. ....	-1,370.92
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$10,199.90

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance .....\$1,690.92

RECEIPTS:

.....	1,690.92
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EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time .....	320.00
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$1,370.92

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER  
Financial Report  
3-1-2009 to 3-31-2009

Beginning Balance .....\$6,341.14

RECEIPTS:

Amazing Grace B. C. , Stockdale, TX...	25.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL .....	21.18
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Sovereign Grace B. C., Wake Forest, NC. ...	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA .....	25.00
Walnut Creek B. C., Centerburg, OH... ..	25.00
Subscriptions .....	184.00
Anon.....	141.00
Dividing Checks .....	150.00
Sub Total .....	\$3,396.18
TOTAL.....	\$9,737.32

EXPENDITURES:

Printing.....	581.71
Postage .....	775.18
Supplies .....	405.91
Wages .....	2,000.00
FICA .....	153.01
Dividing Checks .....	150.00
Total Expenditures .....	4,065.81
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$5,671.51

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# Truth

**"LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? . . . he that speaketh the truth in his heart" (Ps. 15:1-2). "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).**

Truth, glorious truth, of heavenly birth and fair,  
In simple majesty array'd, is there;  
Her right hand holds the faithful mirror clear,  
Where all things open as the light appear:  
Her left, upon the sacred page reclines,  
The world's false mask she tramples down with scorn,  
Adorn'd the most, when she would least adorn.  
As her own temple on the margin seen,  
Stands forth reflected on the silver stream;  
So what by her is thought, or said, or done,  
Appears conspicuous as the noonday sun;  
Truth is the image of our God above,  
That shines reflected in his sea of love.  
All hail, bless'd Truth! thou daughter of the skies,  
Reign thou on earth, and bid earth's sons arise;  
Bid Virtue lead, and Justice hold the scale,  
For thou art mighty, and wilt soon prevail.

Truth is represented in the person of an artless female. She is attired with simplicity. In her right hand she holds a mirror. As the mirror reflects objects that pass before it as they are, without addition, alteration, or diminution, so Truth presents every thing just as it is. The left hand rests on the Holy Bible. This is to show that it is from thence she derives the principles which regulate her conduct, the source of unadulterated truth to mankind. She is seen trampling a mask beneath her feet. It is the mask of hypocrisy, which she rejects with scorn, as being utterly at variance with her principles and



feelings. In the background stands the Temple of Truth, the image of which is plainly reflected by the clear, placid stream that glides before it.

Truth, in an evangelical sense, is all-important. It alone will give character to an individual, more than all other qualities put together. It is of itself a rich inheritance, of more worth than mines of silver and gold. It is more ennobling than the highest titles conferred by princes. Everybody loves to be respected, but an individual to be loved and respected must be "known." He only can be "known" who speaks the truth from his heart, and acts the truth in his life. We may guess at others, but as we do not know we can not respect them, for like pirates they

oftentimes sail under false colors.

"Nothing is beautiful except Truth," is a maxim of the French, although it has been most deplorably neglected. Nevertheless, the sentiment is correct. Truth is glorious wherever found; Jesus, Who is "the truth," is the altogether lovely, and the fairest among ten thousand. Truth is the glory of youth, and the diadem of the aged. But Truth is "essential to happiness, both in this world and also in the next. For **"what man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile"** (Ps. 34:12). Lord, who shall dwell in Thy holy hill! He that **"speaketh the truth."** It is related of Cyrus, that, when asked what was the first thing he learned, he replied, "To tell the truth." Cyrus must have been very fortunate in having such good instructors.

"Seize, then, on truth where'er 't is found,  
Among your friends, among your foes;  
On Christian, or on heathen ground,  
The plant's divine where'er it grows."

**"Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: so shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man"** (Prov. 3:3).

**"The lip of truth shall be established forever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment"** (Prov. 12:19).

**"Buy the truth, and sell it not"** (Prov. 23:23). **"Lie not against the truth"** (James 3:14). **"Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth"** (Zech. 8:16).

**"Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight"** (Prov. 12:22).

## THE BAPTIST CLASSROOM

### Jesus Our Friend

By John Pruitt  
of Maysel, West Virginia

**"And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul"** (I Sam. 18:1-3).



How many friends do you have? I mean real friends; not fair weather friends or those fly-by- nighters who pat you on the back with one hand and stab you with the other. A true friend is one who will stick by you in the good times as well as the bad. A true friend will love you regardless of what you have or

what you may do. A true friend is one who is a friend for life. **"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity"** (Pro. 17:17). Though you drift apart over time, a true friend will never forget you.

The Lord Jesus is just that kind of friend to both sinner and saint. Friendship is the highest form of human love and the closest form of human relationship. **"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"** (John 15:13). If you have been born again, you can take consolation and assurance that you have been saved from the wrath of God because of your friend Jesus Christ. Jesus was a friend to the lost sheep while He hung on the cross of Calvary and shed His own precious blood, suffered at the hands of wicked men and died for their sins. **"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"** (Rom. 5:7-8). Everyone of God's elect are sinners; yet, the Lord Jesus is their friend. Jesus is not a friend to the world or of the world, but He is a friend of sinners.,

We are told not to be friends of the world. **"Love not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"** (1 John 2:15). The world is certainly not your friend. Many Christian religions today are compromising with the world in order to make friends. The devil will not compromise and to make friends with the world is to make friends with the Devil. The Bible says to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God. **"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before [it hated] you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"** (John 15:18-19). He is sly and subtle, and will make you think that he is your friend, but he is really the enemy of both sinner and saint.

The following verse is usually applied to the Lord Jesus Christ and rightly so; however, I believe that the principle can be applied to the saint as well. **"A man [that hath] friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend [that] sticketh closer than a brother"** (Prov. 18:24). So, here are some

self-examining questions: I know without a doubt that He is my friend, but am I His friend? Am I His friend in the bad times as well as the good? Am I always willing to stick close to Him? Most men, I trust, would become very angry and insulted for someone to put down or in some way openly show disrespect to their wife. It would be natural for the faithful husband to defend his wife, or for the faithful wife to defend her husband. When someone makes fun of the Lord or takes His name in vain, do I stand up for Him? Are you insulted when someone shows disrespect to Him? Yes, we should be His friend as much as He is ours. Jesus is a friend both to sinner and saint. He proved His love by paying the ultimate price, His own life. We are not necessarily asked to die for Him, but to live for Him; as Paul has said, present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is our reasonable service. Even if you feel that you have no earthly friends; as David once stated, **"...no one cared for my soul"** (Ps. 142:4), remember that He loves His own with an everlasting love and He will always be your friend in the good times as well as the bad.

