

The Berea Baptist Banner

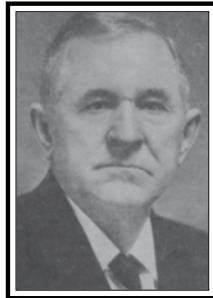
"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" Ps. 60:4

The Danger of Delay

By J. W. Porter
(1863 - 1937)

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25).

Judge Felix had probably heard much of Paul's wonderful sermons, and their effect upon the people. Out of sheer curiosity, and perhaps for the purpose of being entertained, he sent for



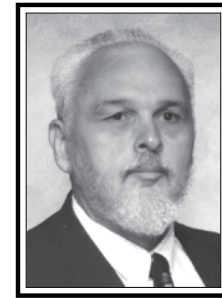
Paul. Many people have peculiar ideas of the province of the preacher. Some seem to believe that he is foreordained to adorn an afternoon tea-party, and that his chief work is that of the professional entertainer. He is generally esteemed a man whose mission is that of peace, and that under no circumstances is he to

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Are You Ready?

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma

Religious groups and their schools of all sorts - from the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) to the Southern Baptist Convention to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Erskine College (and others) are promoting taking a stand - some more and some less. Their stand is that lesbian and homosexual behavior is a sin according to the Bible. Their stand is that marriage is between one man and one woman. A



brief perusal of individual church web-sites shows that a considerable number of congregations are including statements in their confessions of faith about what Biblical marriage is. At least one U. S. Christian law association is providing suggested wording and model resolutions as guidelines for churches who want

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The Church at Sardis

By Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.



R e m e m b e r therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis

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Mankind Is Sick

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

"And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and



sinners? When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:15-17).

My sermon is centered on the
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**Do a thing at once,
and you won't forget it.**

Very sage counsel. Some of us have very poor memories; let us not trust to them, but get things off our mind by getting them done.

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The purpose of the Berea Baptist Banner is as follows:

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

Danger of Delay

(Continued from page 1) ◊

denounce anything, or offend anyone. We sometimes forget that the most peaceful place is the cemetery. It is sometimes the preacher's place to raise the Devil, and then whip him. Felix got far more than he expected, in sending for this Gospel preacher. Instead of trying to entertain this heathen judge, Paul thundered the Gospel message to the very citadel of his soul. Paul had not spoken long until the prisoner and the judge exchanged places. Felix becomes the condemned criminal, and Paul the judge. There can be little doubt that he was fully convinced of Paul's innocence and the entire truth of his contention. As Paul reasoned of righteousness and judgment to come, Felix was brought face to face with his record, and his conscience, and his God. The picture presents the three usual steps in the history of every lost and ruined soul. Conviction, delay, and death.

As Paul reasoned of righteousness and judgment to come, Felix "**trembled.**" Certainly he was not moved by any fear of Paul. To every Roman officer was pledged the imperial power of the world's greatest nation. A word from him, and Paul would have been placed in prison or executed. It was not fear of man that agitated this wicked man, but fear of the God of all the earth, before Whom he must stand in judgment. In a measure, at least, he was convinced of his sins that were passing in solemn and awful review before him.

Oh, that he would have played the man for a moment, and confessed the truth of the Gospel as preached by Paul, and asked the man of God to pray for his lost soul. What better chance for

receiving Christ could he have ever hoped for? The door of mercy was wide open, but he refused to enter. Surely, procrastination is the thief of time.

*"Procrastination is the thief of time,
Year after year it steals;
And to the mercy of a moment leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene."*

Paul was never to pass his way again, and the Gospel would probably never be heard by him again. It is worthy of note that it is not of record that his wife "trembled," or was in any way moved by the Gospel. A false sense of chivalry has, perhaps, prevented us from denouncing sin in woman with equal severity that we denounce it in man. The heart of woman may become as cruel and callous as that of the most sinful man. Many preachers were prevented from attacking the vicious vagaries and sinful life of the author of Christian Science because she was a woman. The alluring lust now displayed in woman's dress escapes severer censure because of her sex.

He knew his duty, but deliberately refused to do it. Like countless thousands, he delayed. In saying, "**Go thy way for 'this time'**" (Acts 24:25)(emph. JWP), he bid goodbye to the only time he could claim as his own. The past, with all its mistakes and sins, is gone, and cannot be recalled. From its caverns of silent clay only the voice of memory may be heard. In the warp and woof of the unknown future we cannot tell what may be woven. God only knows, and it is better so. In God's grammar there is only one tense, the ever-living, swiftly passing present. Today is the day of destiny, and the present moment the only moment of promised mercy. God makes no promise to the sinner for tomorrow. Now is

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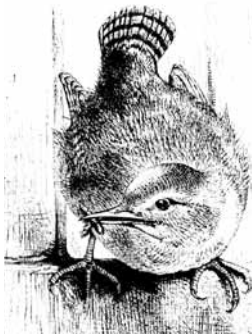
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Danger of Delay

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the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation.

Remorseless time:

*Fierce spirit of the glass and scythe,
What power can stay him in his silent course,
Or melt his iron heart to pity."*

Today is the day of destiny---
**"Today if ye will hear His voice,
Harden not your heart"** (Ps. 95:8).

You have all before you that you can ever hope for, to cause you to come to Christ. What more can you expect? You have an open Bible to point you the way; a crucified Christ, who has paid the price of your redemption; and the long-resisted Holy Spirit that pleads with you to flee the wrath to come. Unless these shall move you to repentance you must die in your sins, and be cast into outer darkness---there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth!

The reason for Felix deferring is plainly stated in the record: **"He hoped also that money would be given him"** (Matt. 13:42). He rejected God for the hope of gold, and was willing to exchange Christ for a cash consideration. As a nation, and as individuals, we are money-mad. Alas, we have seen the honour of man, and the virtue of woman, go down before the heartless god of gold. The mighty wave of crime and debauchery now sweeping our nation is largely due to the greed for gold. But while the dollar is mighty, we may thank God it is not Almighty. Had this poor, deluded man received the money he was expecting it would have been as the poisoned shirt of Nessus. It would have burned his pocket and his soul, and one day, like Judas, he would wish to return his ill-gotten gains. What would have been the value of the bribe in a dying hour.

What is it worth in the presence of Him, with whom justice never miscarries, and when "Eternal Justice lifts aloft her scale?" There are yet the thousands who have not, and will never, bow the knee to Baal. It is cause for rejoicing that in the cruel conflict for getting, there is more unselfish giving than ever before. There is an ever-increasing number of bright and shining examples of men and women consecrating their lives and their all to the cause of Jesus Christ. In the wild scramble for material wealth, the elect are rapidly learning that the silver and the gold, and the cattle on a thousand hills, are His, who created and committed them, for a little while, to our keeping. When a prominent business man was dying the minister was urging upon him the duty of preparing to meet his God. Instead of giving heed to the words of the preacher, the dying man was talking of his business. In the period of unconsciousness, just preceding death, he was talking of his stocks and bonds, though he was to soon leave them forever.

So far as the record goes, Felix never **"trembled"** again, though we may well surmise that he trembled when he stood face to face with death. With the realization that he must soon stand face to face with the man he had cruelly mistreated, and, above all, with the Saviour he had rejected and despised, we may feel assured that he trembled again.

The **"convenient season"** never came, and he never called for Paul or the Christ, that Paul so faithfully preached. It is never convenient for the man who loves sin more than Christ to surrender his sins and come to Christ. It is the broken heart that, in spite of all difficulties, seeks and finds the Saviour.

Some years since, in a small town in Indiana, a man made a balloon excursion. His balloon was made fast with three ropes. When the captive balloon had reached the limit of its flight he deliberately cut one of the ropes. The anxious crowd below shouted to him not to cut the ropes. In a moment he cut the second rope. Horror stricken, the crowd shouted, "Don't cut the last rope." A moment later and he had cut the last rope, and he soon dashed down to his death. It may be that at this fateful moment you are cutting the last rope that makes safety possible, and dashing to death the last hope of eternal life; God Almighty forbid!

Even had he called, God might not have answered. The day may come when God will laugh at our calamity, and He who sits in the heavens may hold us in derision. The time may come when the ghost of departed days may whisper, "Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'" The dying man, when urged to give himself to Christ, replied: "I would, but He will not have me." Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation!



Church at Sardis

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which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 3:1-6).

The Ephesian Church had left her first love. The Smyrna Church

was opposed by Satan from outside. The Pergamos Church consisted of a mixed membership--the church and the world were sadly mixed together. The Thyatira Church had "womanitis." The Sardis Church in today's lesson was a dead church.

THE CHURCH (v. 1)

As to the founder of this church there is no historical record. It was possibly the fruit of the labor of Paul or some of his missionary team. We can be certain from this epistle sent by Christ to them that there existed a church in A.D. 96 and some considerable time before, seeing worldliness destroys a church by degrees and not all at once.

This church may have had a glorious beginning, but it soon left its faith and lost its spiritual power and influence. The Sardis Church was greatly influenced by the community which surrounded it. She was a worldly, wealthy church like the city in which she resided. As a general rule, most wealthy churches are worldly churches. Whenever you find wealth you will almost always find worldliness.

THE CITY (v. 1)

Sardis was about 30 miles from Thyatira, about 60 miles from Pergamos and east of Smyrna about 50 miles. It was founded as early as the beginning of the Iron Age. It was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, and was situated at the foot of Mount Tmolus. in a fine plain watered by the Pactolus River. This river rolled its golden sands through Sardis, and gold mines in the neighborhood furnished the city with such a quantity of treasures as made their riches proverbial.

The city of Sardis was the capital of King Croesus, whose name is a synonym of extravagant

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wealth. It is said when Cyrus captured the city from him in 548 B.C. that he found treasures to the enormous value of \$600,000,000. This event fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Cyrus: **“And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places. . .”** (Isa. 45:3). The city of Sardis eventually passed into the hands of the Romans, and under them sank in wealth and importance. Sardis was destroyed by an earthquake in the time of Tiberius, but the emperor ordered it rebuilt and himself offered a personal gift of some \$400,000 to aid in rebuilding the city. The city rose from ruin, but it did not ever equal its former glory.

THE CHRIST (v. 1)

The Speaker introduces Himself by saying: **“These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.”** It is to be observed there is an omission of **“the seven golden candlesticks”** mentioned by Christ in Revelation 1:20. Why is this? Did Christ find it difficult to point to the church at Sardis as a fit representative of Himself as the Light of the world?

What are we to understand by **“the seven Spirits of God”**? Revelation 4:5 refers to **“seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”** In Revelation 5:6 Christ is said to have **“seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”** I believe this is prophetic language which describes the one Holy Spirit in His sevenfold office work (Isa. 11:1-5). It means the Holy Spirit in all of His perfection and fullness.

Here it is said that Christ has **“the seven Spirits of God.”**

This means that Christ has the fulness of the Spirit. John 3:34 declares of Christ: **“God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”** Jesus Christ only has the Holy Spirit in all the plenitude of His gifts, manifestations and operations. In this verse Christ affirms that He also has the seven stars, which in Revelation 1:20 is said to be the pastors of the seven churches. The seven stars are mentioned after the seven Spirits of God, showing it is Christ alone Who gives spiritual power to His ministers.

At the outset Christ presented Himself to this dark and dead church as the true Source of light and life. Without Christ no church has either light or life; with Him no church lacks either. There is no need for a church to be dead and dark for Christ stands ready to pour out the power of the sevenfold Holy Spirit upon them. The difference between a dead and dark church and a live and light church is the power of the Spirit of God.

THE CENSURE (v. 1)

Christ censures this church by saying: **“I know thy works, that thou hast a name that livest, and art dead.”** Observe there is no commendation for good works--a dead church has no good works. Rather, Christ complained because their works were so bad. He has nothing but unmixed criticism for this worldly church. Their works were all “dead works.” They were active in religious matters but void of spiritual vitality.

This church was like savorless salt (Matt. 5:13). She had a dead man in the pulpit, dead people in the choir, dead deacons, dead Bible teachers and pews filled with corpses. This church had no discipline or real Bible teaching. She saw no souls saved, for her

members did not witness for Christ. Her singing was of a worldly type, which appealed to the head and not the heart. The church at Sardis was in a low, flat and languishing state, even though she had a name among the other churches as being a lively church. She was so impotent until false teachers did not even bother with her. Christ pronounced no condemnation on the Sardis Church, for there is no need to condemn a thing after it is dead!

The Sardis Church was a living corpse; she professed to have true, spiritual life, but it was in name only. Her membership in the main consisted of nominal believers. Many of them had their names upon the church roll, yet their names were not in the Book of Life. These so-called “live wires” were simply “dead fish.” This church lived on its past reputation without its former life and experience. Sardis was a sham and a mockery. My friend, is the church you attend like this church?

Dear church member, are you what you claim to be? Or do you live on reputation alone? Perhaps you are not altogether dead, but are you what you profess to be? You claim to read the Bible, to pray, to tithe, and to deny yourself. Do you really do these things? Would the world accept you as a Christian if they really knew you for what you are? Would they recognize you as a preacher, or deacon, or Sunday school teacher, or even as a church member? You have the externals and you go through the motions, but are you real?

THE COMMAND (vv. 2-3)

In verse 2 the Head of the church gives them a direct command: **“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not**

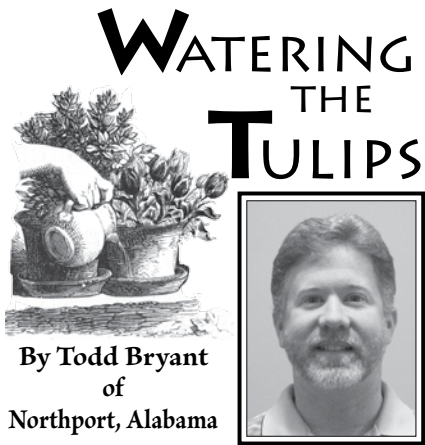
found thy works perfect before God.” The city of Sardis had a reputation for impregnability, but it was captured twice at night because of a lack of watchfulness. The church in this city needed to learn a lesson from this neglect. Hence the Lord Jesus said: **“Be watchful.”**

This church is commanded to rouse out of its slumberous state and to give heed to that which alone can save it from complete extinction. They were dead so far as concerned the manifestation of life and to a perilous extent even the possession of life. The church as a whole was not wholly dead, but it was about ready to die. Therefore, Christ sounds the alarm in hopes that He may save the church from utter ruin. The Savior is patient with His erring churches and is slow to cast off one of His churches.

Their numerous religious activities were sadly defective: **“I have not found thy works perfect before God.”** They were not fulfilling the purpose for which Christ instituted His church. They were not properly representing Christ before the world. They had not complied with the Divine requirements justly expected even of fallible human beings in a New Testament church. The members of the Sardis Church were a hindrance to Christ’s cause and an argument for infidelity.

Would our modern churches stand up to the examination of Christ any better than the Sardis Church did? Are our works perfect **“before God?”** Our churches today have a lot of outward activity and show but precious little spiritual life. They make progress in numbers and material matters of which men greatly approve, while in the eyes of Christ they are spiritually

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By Todd Bryant
of
Northport, Alabama



Daily Benefits

“Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah” (Ps. 68:19).

What a marvelous verse of Scripture! So great is this thought that the psalmist directs us to stop and think about it – **“Selah.”** Our God is our Savior. Surely, salvation is the work of the only true and living God. But, He has given us even more. We are **“more than conquerors through him that loved us”** (Rom. 8:37). Our Heavenly Father watches over us daily and **“loads us with benefits.”** He does not give them to us sparingly. He **“daily loads us with benefits.”**

The psalmist later says, **“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits”** (Ps. 103:2). Have you failed to take notice of the benefits that God daily bestows on you as His child? Have you noticed the nice night of rest, today’s breath of life, your substance, your clothes, your job, your family, etc.? This list could go on and on. The Lord has greatly blessed you with things that you have not even noticed for sure. How many things has He saved you from that you have never known? How many things have you nearly missed, but the God of providence made sure that you did not? The blessings of God are

many on His children. How often do we get so busy that we fail to notice what God is doing for us all of the time every day?

Once again, the psalmist proclaims, **“What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me”** (Ps. 116:12)? How can we pay God for His benefits? Obviously, nothing we could ever render to Him could repay what He has done for us. But, we owe Him our **“reasonable service”** (Rom. 12:1). Let us ever be clear – this is not for the purpose of earning our salvation. We could never do that. Good works are not performed in order to be saved. They are performed because we are saved. Because God has been so good to us...because He **“daily loads us with benefits”** because He has saved us by His marvelous grace, we cheerfully serve Him with a willing heart.

Child of God, have you forgotten how good the Lord has been to you? Have you day by day stopped taking notice of God’s wonderful benefits in your life? Stop today and acknowledge all of the wonderful benefits you have as a child of God. Do not forget His benefits. Thank Him for the many benefits that He has even loaded on you this very day.



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dead. A church may have a splendid building, a robed choir, a standardized Sunday school, a magnetic pastor, and yet be filled with worldliness, indifference, and a lack of love and humility. Many are serving their own pride and fleshly desires under the cloak of service to Jesus Christ. Only some of those few and scattered

churches the religious world speaks of as being “behind the times” are alive and spiritual in our day.

Since the church was so near the grave, should not the members give it up and allow the Devil to have a thing nearly dead? No! Christ told them to **“strengthen the things which remain.”** She was to cultivate all existing graces and to nourish all the love of the truth which lingered. A dead church can be revived. People would consider it criminal to desert a man ready to die. Then surely it must be highly unscriptural to desert a church ready to die. The members of Sardis needed to preserve the little life left and to cause it to gain its old strength again.

Jesus said: **“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.”** This points back to their conversion experience. Christ calls upon them to remember their own former lost, undone, helpless, hopeless state, when they saw nothing between themselves and Hell, save the all-sufficient blood of Jesus Christ. They needed to remember how Christ had saved them by His glorious grace. They must remember their early days of faith and pardon. It was so necessary that Sardis return to the faith they had departed from in belief and practice. They must return to the old paths and the old landmarks; they needed to put life in their religious exercises.

THE CAUTION (V. 3)

In the latter part of verse 3 Christ gives a severe warning: **“If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”** The language implies it was possible that the Sardis Church would not regard His warning. They might

assume they would be safe if they refused to give attention to this caution. We know from history that they did, for the Sardis Church is no more, nor does the city exist. From this we learn that the removal of a true church from a city brings about its ruin.

Some apply this to the second coming of Christ, and others to His coming in swift judgment upon this church. I believe the expression is broad enough to include both ideas. How awful to contemplate Christ coming in judgment upon the church which is His body! How tragic for a church to be found in the condition this church was in at the Rapture in spite of the warnings given in the Bible of His speedy coming.

“In Ephesus, where love was cooling, Christ’s Coming is set forth in the sense of fear (2:5). In Symrna, the suffering church, it is the time when crowns will be given (2:10). In Pergamos, in which there was much worldliness, it is used in the sense of dread (2:16). In Thyatira, where is terrific struggle with temptation, it is connected with coming blessing (2:25). In Sardis, the posing, dead church, it is dread again (3:3). In Philadelphia, where they are holding fast amid trial, His speedy coming brings hope (3:11). In Laodicea, the lukewarm, nauseating church, He is at the door already to judge (3:20). Thus we have different attitudes toward this doctrine determined by the spiritual condition in each one” (CHRIST’S LAST MESSAGE TO HIS CHURCH by William Evans, p. 171).

THE CHRISTIANS (v. 4)

The vast majority of the members of the church at Sardis had become entangled with the evil world systems; they had

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defiled their garments. They had become lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. This church was popular with the evil world because the world was in the church. The Sardis Church had permitted the world to drag it down to a low, ungodly level. What a tragedy! But is not the same true of all too many churches in our day?

Pure church members of an impure church are kept separate in the eyes of Jesus Christ from the hypocrites. It seemed as though Jesus Christ looked over the membership roll of the Sardis Church and said: **“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.”** The few names are not given. They were probably not people of great influence in either the church or the world. They were the “few” among the “many.” This faithful few had not defiled themselves by coming into contact with the profaned and the polluted. They hated **“even the garment spotted by the flesh”** (Jude 23). They were like persons walking in white in the midst of the defiled.

Those who kept their garments uncontaminated on the earth would receive the appropriate reward of walking in white raiment with Christ in Heaven. This thought foreshadows the perfect union into which the Lord will bring His elect. How glorious to contemplate wearing a white robe and walking together in perfect mutual communion with our Redeemer. Oh, God, hasten the day when your faithful followers shall be privileged to walk with the Saviour in glory, honor, and purity.

The faithful church members shall enjoy this, **“for they are worthy.”** They have shown themselves worthy to be regarded as followers of Christ and possessors of a new nature which overcomes the world. Worthiness is required to have this white raiment. This attire is their reward for faithfulness. Such loyal disciples shall be a part of the virgin bride of Christ, Who is **“arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints”** (Rev. 19:8). May the Lord help us to keep white down here so that we may wear white up yonder.

THE COMFORT (v. 5)

There is a threefold comforting promise in verse 5 to the overcomer: **“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”** This promise is not limited to the church at Sardis, but it is to all in every age and every land who overcomes sin and the temptations of the world. However, this promise is to the overcomer and no other.

First, Christ promised they **“shall be clothed in white raiment.”** This looks back to verse 4. What they sought to keep white on earth will be made perfectly pure in the glory world. These have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb and kept themselves unspotted from the world. Hence they shall stand in Heaven clothed in a white robe, dazzling with brightness and splendor, permanently and forever.

Second, Christ promised: **“I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.”** The city of Sardis kept a list of great soldiers and famous men. These

names remained there during their lifetime, providing their behavior was good, in case of bad deportment their names were blotted out. The church at Sardis was anxious about having a name to live. By over-coming their worldliness they could be assured that their names were in the Book of Life and would remain there forever. Let Sardis overcome and she shall be given strong assurance of an imperishable and immortalized name. Can a name once written in the Book of Life be blotted out? Can an elect become a non-elect? The possibility of being saved or lost or having our name written in the Book of Life and then blotted out is not in question in this verse. We are plainly told that Christ shall in no wise do this. Jesus Christ in this verse makes it plain that it can not be blotted out.

Third, Christ promises **“I will confess his name before my father, and before his angels.”** It was a custom in the city of Sardis to read publicly before the citizens who lived a noble life. The men of the city strove to obtain this honor, but such earthly honor is not worthy to be compared with having your name read out by Christ before the Father and the numberless angels. How honorable it will be to be led down the golden streets to the Father’s incomparable throne by the Saviour Himself. How proud we will be to hear Him say, “Father, here is one of Thine elect that I died to redeem. He has been loyal to us while he lived on earth. He kept his garment white in a dirty world when others turned aside after Satan. He stood up for the faith.” Then the Father will smile and say, “Well done thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of thy Lord.”

May God grant that you and I

shall be a part of this wonderful scene. **“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”**



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to legally safeguard themselves. Safeguard themselves from what? Why from both lawsuits and the forced incorporation of homosexual men and women as members and or employees. The Southern Baptist Convention has had information online for some time – information to help their congregations protect themselves from legal actions against them for refusing to receive homosexuals and lesbians as members. At this moment in our history, it seems that U. S. churches and religious institutions have the right to include such articles in their organizational papers. But for how long?

We ask the question in our title, “Are You Ready?” The reason we do so is this: at this moment in time the highly organized and well funded lesbian and homosexual groups are lambasting those who do not approve of their sinful behavior as being “hateful” and “bigoted.” Three hundred and seventy nine American businesses have come out in favor of same-sex “marriage” as they call it. They have joined together asking the Supreme Court to support same-sex “marriage.” The name calling of those who oppose such sin will probably get worse. Polls show that most Americans – well over fifty percent – approve of what they call “gay marriage.” As an example of religious groups favoring the homosexual/lesbian agenda, the Nashville, Tennessee

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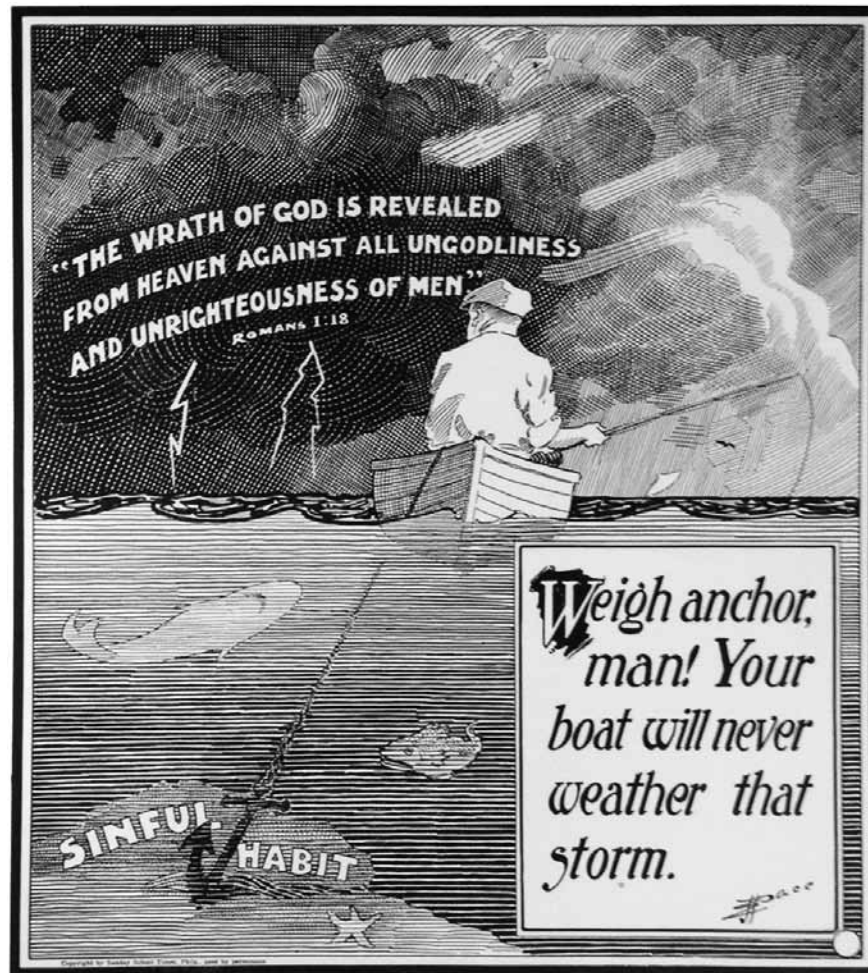
American Baptist College leadership has recently invited three active proponents of same-sex “marriage” to speak and lead worship at upcoming annual lectures as well as to preach at worship services there. One of those invited is United Church of Christ Bishop Yvette Flunder, who is legally married to another woman. A group of pastors in the largely Black National Baptist Convention are opposing the school’s plans, but at this writing the group has not succeeded in stopping the move by their college. Other so-called Christian religious schools and groups favor and even ordain practicing homosexuals and lesbians. One Reformed Jewish organization has installed a lesbian as president of their group. Can things get worse? We think they can, and will.

God’s elect people are going to be hated. Jesus Himself said so: **“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). Here we are told that God’s election to salvation of some is enough to make the enemies of Christ hate those so elected. Why? Because following election comes salvation – all that God does in conforming His children to the image of Christ and thus making them different from the world. Salvation includes working in His children so that they love and stand for the truth of the Bible. And the Bible condemns sexual activity outside of marriage and also teaches that same-sex

intimacy and unions (falsely called marriages) are wicked sins. As Paul wrote in Galatians 4:29: **“But as then he [Esau] that was born after the flesh persecuted him [Isaac] that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.”** These United States and a few other places have been unique in that old-time laws still on the books have kept down overt persecution of the saints, but that is changing and changing fast. The various levels of government in this country are taking the stand that you can believe whatever you want to believe, but you cannot practice your religion, if for instance, you might hurt the feelings of those who disagree. This has already been seen in the case of at least one bakery and one florist on the west coast. In these two instances if you own a small

business you must bake for same-sex “marriages” and you must prepare flowers for their ungodly “weddings.” If you do not approve of same-sex-sin you must keep quiet about it and cannot operate your business according to your faith.

The Lord Jesus in praying to His Father said of His disciples: **“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”**



And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:14-21). Jesus prayed not only for those of His disciples who were alive back then, but for us also. The true “latter day saints” shall be hated as were Christ’s “early day saints” because they are one in faith and practice with them. Holiness is always hated by the unholy. **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”** (II Tim. 3:12).

In John 15:20 the words of the Lord are these: **“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”** And Paul, in Romans 12:14 wrote, **“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.”** We are in what began in the days of our Lord’s sojourn on earth. He called these days the **“beginning of sorrows,”** in Matthew 24:8. The word translated “sorrows” there is the word also translated “travail” and means birth pains. This world, like a woman in labor, is going down into the valley of death as it were, not knowing what it shall bring forth. But we know! This world is facing a birth – the establishment of Christ’s earthly millennial kingdom in which He shall rule the Gentiles with a **“rod of iron”** (Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). But before that time will come, first will come the time of **“Jacob’s**

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trouble” when Israel shall suffer great tribulation, (Jeremiah 30:7). We pre-tribulation rapturists do not believe that the Lord’s people of this church-age shall even enter that time of Jewish suffering. But leading up to that terrible time is this present day in which we find ourselves. Days of “sorrows” for the Lord’s followers. Days of labor pains! And while we oppose much of what goes on in this world, we are to bless those who persecute us for Christ’s sake.

And so we ask “Are You Ready?” Ready to be called a hate-monger? Ready to be accused of hate crimes? Ready for a time when great courage will be required to say what the Bible says about marriage and the sins of practicing lesbians and homosexuals? Ready to have your church and pastor investigated? Are you ready to have your church’s name smeared in the press as an identifiable hate group? If not, maybe you ought to move your membership immediately! Ready to have your relatives – perhaps your own children and grandchildren – turn against you if they choose to practice homosexual and lesbian sins and you speak against such things? Do not think it cannot happen to your family! Satan and this world are engaging in the biggest “evangelistic effort” ever seen: an evangelistic effort to convert men and women to homosexual practices or at least to the approval of such sins. And, left unchecked, rotten human nature – the “flesh” – falls right in line with the devil and his crowd. The homosexual/lesbian agenda is making use of the public school system to set forward their sinful acts, calling them an “alternate lifestyle.” With media,

business, academic, political and government support, the homosexual/lesbian agenda is galloping ahead.

Remember our Lord forewarned us, saying, **“Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law”** (Luke 12:51-53). This is not an endorsement of hatred or wrong treatment of those who have made themselves enemies of Christians and of the Bible. They are our enemies, but we are not theirs. We do not wish them harm. We wish for a real work of God in them and in their lives. We do not endorse mistreatment of them. We are becoming more and more aware that we live in difficult times unless... unless you compromise by saying nothing against sins such as are now approved by the majority of Americans. If you will just keep quiet and go with the flow – even a dead fish can float downstream – if you will do this, you may, perhaps, escape persecution. If you choose your friends, church affiliation and words and actions carefully enough – just maybe... maybe you will not suffer. But do you really want to escape by being on the world’s side? Are you that far gone?

Things have changed. This preacher cannot find evidence that these United States were ever a Christian nation. But our country was founded as being

based upon, at least in part, those Jewish-Christian teachings and morals found in the Bible. Now we face the lawlessness of unbridled sexual immorality on the one hand, and the prospect of Islamic Sharia law on the other. Both these extremes are against Biblical Christianity and those Christians who believe in and stand for Bible truth.

No doubt you are familiar with the saying “forewarned is fore-armed.” Paul wrote reminding the saints in Thessalonica that he had forewarned them saying, **“For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know”** (I Thess. 3:4). In this text Paul wrote **“we told you before that we should suffer tribulation.”** And we, too, like them should be forewarned and thus forearm ourselves. We here in the U.S. have lived in unusual circumstances for many years because of the Biblical heritage of this government. In the past, professing Christians with some modicum of morality have been in the majority. That is fast changing before our eyes. No, it has already changed! The world, and these United States, are not the same as those into which this preacher was born. The Bible, Biblical Christianity, and the true Children of God are regarded as irrelevant, out of step, narrow, ignorant, haters of that which the world accepts and consists. And the current view is that whatever the majority thinks is right must be right. The true children of God are on the opposite side of the fence from those whose whole realm of existence is this present evil world. That phrase, “present evil world” is a Biblical one. Paul wrote of it in Galatians 1:4. He penned these Words speaking of Christ: **“Who gave himself for**

our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.” Are you feeling at home in this world? Feeling at home with evil? Look again at that last quotation. How can you feel comfortable with this world and know Christ as Savior? The One who has delivered His people and is delivering them from this present evil world. How can a true child of God take sides with the world and be living **“according to the will of God and our Father?”** How can a child of God look, dress, talk and act like the world without being a traitor to the Lord’s cause? Are you ready – to be different? Are you ready to be persecuted? Are you ready to be slandered? Are you ready to be mocked? Are you ready to speak out against sin? Are you ready to have friends and family members turn against you? Are you ready to be harassed by your own government? Are you ready for so-called Christian leaders and the media to speak of you as a religious fanatic and worse?

Only the grace of God can and will sustain the Lord’s people and the Lord’s churches in these days and in future ones as things progressively worsen. “Will they worsen?” someone asks. Yes, the Bible specifically says that very thing: **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived”** (II Tim. 3:12-13). Think of those who have walked this way before us: think of those mentioned in Hebrews 11:36-12:6 There we read: **“And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were**

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sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Brethren, we need chastening and scourging! Standing in the ranks with those mentioned in this last text are those “anabaptist” forefathers – the successors of the first century churches – and our ancestors if we stand connected by that chain link succession of

churches to them. (There cannot be a succession or a perpetuity of churches if there are no links!) They, too, suffered for their faith – the faith – our faith. Why should we not likewise partake in such sufferings? Are we better than they?

Those faithful men and women in the last Biblical text quoted shall not “**be made perfect**” without us! That last text says that God has “**provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect**” or complete. The suffering that is coming is a purifying or chastening kind of suffering. Suffering saints are pure-living saints. Suffering congregations are pure congregations. With ease and plenty comes complacency, compromise and sin. The gross sins of Sodom were brought about at least in part by ease and plenty. The Bible says so and condemns those things that produced their homosexual sins. Ezekiel 16:49 says: “**Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.**” You would think that God would have listed the gross sins of the citizens of Sodom, but He spoke of “**pride, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness.**” The citizens of Sodom and her daughter cities ran to excessive and gross sins because they were soft, had plenty, and a great deal of idle time. In their pride they thought that whatever their town majority allowed as acceptable behavior was indeed right. And they cared nothing for the needy among them. Our government throws millions of financial bones at the poor, but does not strengthen their hands enabling them to make their

own way. Can you not see that these same things have happened right here in these United States? Americans, including her professing Christians, have grown soft and accustomed to ease. That is why most professing Christians in these United States look, live, talk and think like the world, for the most part – Oh perhaps they are a tad behind the world, but follow the same broad way that leads to destruction.

Consider our Redeemer, our Shepherd, our Savior. The text above says, “**consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.**” Keep Christ foremost in your minds! It is our minds that must be fortified. Being forewarned in our minds forearms the child of God. Are you ready? Are you forewarned? Are you forearmed? Peter wrote: “**Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy**” (I Peter 1:13-16). In Biblical times a man would gather up the skirts of his robe and bind them in his belt or sash. In this way his garment did not get in his way as he labored or battled. Peter here speaks of gathering up the loose ends of our minds: of preparing our minds for labor and battle ahead of time. Are you ready? Have you got a single mind? Is your purpose pleasing God by living for Him or are you partying with the world? Oh, this preacher has heard it all before. We must be like the world in

order to win the world. We must join in clubs and associations with them in order to witness to them. Most American Christians have succumbed to “Country-Club-itis.” We must allow our children to socialize with worldlings in sports, music, school, etc. so as not to be too different. Too different? Hogwash! Where did you ever read in the Bible a warning about being too different from the world? That is not where the battle is! God never called His people to be like the world! We are in the world, but not of the world! A light in a dark place is not of the darkness. It is not like the darkness. It is at odds with the darkness. It reveals what is hidden in the darkness without being a part of the darkness. And God has called us to be light in this world, regardless of the consequences. To efficiently chop wood you must “let the chips fall where they may.” Be busy chopping wood, so to speak, and not be busy worrying about the chips. So it is with following the Lord and standing as a light in this dark world. Let the rays of light shine where they may. Let them reveal what God wills without regard to consequences. Let the oil God has put into our lamps of clay shine forth even as the oil is consumed. Are you ready? Do you hear and do you understand?

The prophet Jeremiah penned one of the most appropriate of verses for our times although it was doubtless aimed at his own people in his own time. Jeremiah 12:5 says: “**If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of**

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Jordan? Christian friend, have you compromised and remained silently complacent rather than bring down criticism and opposition upon your head? We, here in these United States, have had it easy as Christians in bygone years. Baptists have been buttered up by the world. Colonial Baptists were considered the off-scouring of the world just like Baptists in Biblical days. But now Baptists are “respectable.” But no more shall it be that way if we take a stand. And if we have not been able to keep up with foot soldiers (as our last quote says) what shall we do when we must contend with enemy fighters on horseback? We have lived **“in the land of peace”** and been overcome. What shall we do when Jordan overflows her three sets of banks? Some think that the **“swelling of Jordan”** refers to the seasonal flooding of the three different sets of banks of that river. When the waters reach the level of the trees and brush along the higher banks it drives out the lions and other predators. What shall we do when the flood fully comes upon us? What shall we do when the waters rise and the predators walk our streets and sit in high places of government? Are some of them not already prowling about our towns and cities? Are not the enemies of Biblical Christianity already in the halls of government? But Jordan has not yet reached her highest and third set of banks! When this world’s lions are free to prowl among the followers of the Lamb because they hate our strict lives and our teaching and preaching of God’s Word, how shall we stand? Are you ready? Prepare your minds! Settle it: you will serve God regardless.

Remember our Lord’s words to the congregation in Smyrna: **“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”** (Rev. 2:10). Those words were addressed to a church in this present church-age. Can we expect less? Let us be faithful even unto times of government harassment, prosecution, slander, gossip, imprisonment and death if necessary. Amen.



Mankind Is Sick

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gospel message which we ought to be delivering to all of the world. The simple message is this: “Mankind is sick.” This is a message that the world does not much hear – even from the voices that represent Christianity. In order for there to be healing, there must first be a knowledge of the sickness, and a desire for life and health! We must inform the world of the needs of mankind, and remind the lost of the danger and the damnation that confronts them!

In our text passage we find that Jesus Christ has called out and saved a man by the name of Levi. This man named Levi, is also known as Matthew (See Matt. 9:9). Of course, Matthew would become one of the famous men known as the twelve apostles of our Lord. After the Lord calls Matthew to follow Him, Matthew takes the Lord Jesus Christ into his house, and he serves Him a supper. As events play out, we find that many of Matthew’s friends and acquaintances are also

called to the supper. Of course, many of Matthew’s friends would be publicans – since that was his occupation. However, in the eyes of most of the Jews, we find that publicans were looked down upon, and they were condemned as sinners – since they were essentially the tax collectors for the Roman Empire.

But, this is not all: we find that the scribes and Pharisees who must have been following the Lord Jesus Christ in order to find occasion against Him also attended this supper. So, we have quite an array of persons who are participating in this supper; and, of them all, we must say that they were sick and dying. Humanly speaking, they were the best and the worst that the Nation of Judah had to offer, and yet there was not one worthy soul that could, on his own, justly stand before the Righteous God of Heaven and earth. Mankind is sick! We all need a Saviour. But, what we will find out from this sermon is that most folks will live all of their lives not acknowledging that they are sick and in need of a Healer; but, a few will be led to acknowledge their needs, and these few will be healed and saved by a Gracious Saviour.

MOST DO NOT KNOW IT

The scribes and Pharisees mentioned in our text passage, did not have a proper understanding of sin, nor did they possess a proper understanding of their own guilt, sin, and wickedness. If they did have a proper understanding of the position that they were in and the sickness and death that plagued them, then they would have fallen down at the feet of this Great Physician, and they would have cried out for mercy and healing! But, instead of turning to Jesus Christ, they would rather condemn the few publicans and sin-

ners here. And they would rather look down on these sick and repentant ones, instead of joining them in their supplications.

Isaiah delivered a description of sinful Israel, which was applicable in the land of Palestine in the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry, and, which is also applicable today: **“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah”** (Isa. 1:2-9). The awful and sickly description of Israel is applicable on a universal level. There are no good, whole, and healthy members of humanity! The sickly de-

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Mankind Is Sick

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scription is also applicable on a personal level – even in the life of every single person. Each of us is altogether sick, wicked, and putrifying according to the measure of our sinfulness in the flesh. There is not any goodness or wholesomeness in any one of us! **“For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue”** (Psalm 5:9).

The malady that afflicts us all, is the destruction and death that sin has brought to the race of Adam. We are sick, and we will not – on our own – admit it. Paul said, **“What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes”** (Rom. 3:9-18). The terrible condition of mankind is well-chronicled in the Scriptures, but hardly recognized in the world.

The same is true throughout the history of mankind. The vast majority of mankind is perfectly willing to live in the sin and degradation that this world has to offer.

Sure, men may complain about the sin. Sure, men and women may sometimes try to make things better after the flesh, and may even seek to establish a sense of morality. But these are all self-satisfying notions, and in no wise do these feeble attempts signify an acknowledgment of our own wretched sinfulness, and the utter depravity of mankind – both in a general and a singular sense.

The scribes and Pharisees were always the foes of Jesus Christ. They did not want to submit to the Gospel and the Word of God which He and His disciples proclaimed. They did not want to admit their own sinfulness, but desired, instead, to dress themselves up in robes of self-righteousness, and pretend to be pretty, clean, and healthy. But the Lord knew them for who they were! They were miserable sinners, headed for Hell, and dragging multitudes into the abyss with them! (See Matthew 23:13-33). If you travel to any place or any time in the history of mankind, the result is always the same: the majority of folks do not care about the poor condition of their own souls, nor are people inclined to listen when the truth of their condition is declared to them. Instead, the world of men will ignore the sin that afflicts them – or else they will look for their own remedy and count on their own abilities to save them.

A FEW DO KNOW IT

In our text passage, the scribes and Pharisees condemn the Lord Jesus Christ for eating with the **“publicans and sinners.”** Then, Jesus, as He refers to these **“publicans and sinners,”** says this: **“... They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”** (Mark 2:17). It is ob-

vious, then, that this Great Physician does not see these folks as **“mere” “publicans and sinners.”** Rather, Jesus Christ sees these folks as **“sick”** – who need healing; and as **“sinners”** – who need repentance.

This same (or a similar) scenario has been repeated countless times throughout the history of mankind. Sick and repentant souls will come to Jesus Christ, as their only hope and their only relief. Though the vast majority of mankind may reject any sense of a need for a saviour; and though the vast majority of men and women may seek some alternate means of salvation; still, there are **“publicans and sinners”** of every age who have come to dine with Jesus Christ. When others will look down on them; when others will deride and deny the One True Saviour; when others will be seeking other methods of healing, and other sources of salvation, the truly sick and the truly repentant will be found kneeling in the presence of Jesus Christ.

“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 in-

iquity. 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 Jews were the first to hear the Gospel; yet, for the most part, they rejected Jesus Christ and the Gospel. The Gentiles were the last to hear the Gospel; and yet, the Gospel itself, and the Church of Jesus Christ has been perpetuated through the years, mostly via the Gentiles. The world is full of **“workers of iniquity,”** many of whom are dressed up in the robes of religion and self-righteousness. These will all be plunged into Hell, unless the Holy Spirit and the Word of God will lead them to repentance.

One time the Lord Jesus Christ said, **“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”** (Matt. 11:28-30). The few souls who are made to know their sickness and the spiritual death to which they have previously been subjected, will joyfully and happily come to Jesus Christ. There will be tears shed over our sins; but there will be peace and reconciliation found in Jesus Christ! **“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed”** (I Pet. 2:24).

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Why do some have a problem with what is called "children's church?"

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Good question! And I will be the first to raise my hand as one that not only has a problem with it, but also disagrees with it totally. And before I answer, let me first say that I believe that the church building should be used as often as it can be. I believe the church is a teaching institution. If it (the church) has the facilities to have a Baptist school then by all means get a school started (not all parents can home school, so who better to teach, reading, writing, and arithmetic than the church)! We really need better than the public school system we have today. I do not have a problem with Bible school (I prefer Bible School, not Sunday school) on Sunday morning as long as it is done the proper way (the Biblical way). I am not crazy about VBS either, but if children are idle during the summer when school is out of session and the proper instructions are given to the children, than I am not totally against it. But as already stated, I do have a problem with "children's church."

The reason I am against "children's church" is first of all it is not Scriptural. Many at that saying will jump up and down and pitch a fit and say Jesus said in Matthew 19:14, "...Suffer little

children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Yes that is what He said. But He never said to go out and gather up the little children to reach their parents. Nor did He say on the Lord's Day to separate the children from their parents and have someone else instruct them while the preacher is preaching the message God gave him to preach to all. Three things that this practice of "children's church" hinders: One, (and I will give Scripture for this in a moment) it takes away from the parents responsibility to **"train up a child."** Second, the child (most likely lost) will never get to hear the message from the messenger that God has called and ordained. **"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine"** (II Tim. 4:2). And third, who is leading "children's church?" Most likely an adult, and in some cases a husband and wife. What about their spiritual needs, how do they hear the pastor's message? And do not give me the argument, "well, they can listen to a recording of the message!!" That is so lame I will not even comment on that statement.

People can argue this all day long, but I will tell them that if they believe that there is nothing wrong with "children's church" they do not have a leg to stand on Scripturally and there is no validity in their argument. The bottom line is the parent is the one responsible to train up a child, NO ONE ELSE. Children

should be taught by their parents to sit quietly in the pew with their parents and listen to the preacher break forth the bread of life each and every Sunday and not leave it up to someone else to do. Many times "children's church" is an excuse for the parent not to have to deal with a fussy and unruly child.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:6).

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

If Baptist folks want to take on what the Arminians and Protestant groups have adopted, with the philosophy that if we get the kids to come to church than we can draw in the parents, then that will be on their shoulders as going against God's order of things. People are always inventing new ways to improve on God's ways instead of just doing what He says, and they cause themselves more grief by their disobedience. There is NO better way than God's way; you can not improve on what He says, so why try?

There is a tract, *What's Wrong with the Kids Today?* by the late Milburn Cockrell and it can be obtained through the Berea Baptist Church Bookstore. I suggest every Baptist obtain a copy and read it. Though Brother Cockrell does not specifically touch on "children's church," but he has this to say, "What can be done about crimes committed by teenagers? The policeman's club and the jailor's cell will

not solve the problem. Neither will nine o'clock curfew laws, nor reformatories, nor orphan asylums. Church-sponsored ball games or parties are not the solution. What we need is some parents who love their children, who will take time to train them in right and wrong, who will teach them the Bible, and who will discipline them for misconduct. We need parents who set a good example before their children and who regularly go with them to Sunday school and church."

Others may have different reasons why they have a problem with "children's church" but these are mine. **"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"** (John 8:32). God Bless!

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The Scriptures never refer to the idea of a "children's church." A Baptist church is a local, visible, called out assembly of baptized believers who agree together to carry out the Great Commission as set forth in Matthew 28:18-20.

The modern day invention of the "children's church" concept was born out of what many large churches with bus ministries consider as an absolute necessity. Children are often bussed in without the presence or supervision of their parents. After their graded Sunday School classes are over, rather than having them attend the regular worship service of the church, they go to another service. The children's church service is

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. How long should a church wait before disciplining a member?

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All of the members of the church should be disciplined- ALL THE TIME! The first level of discipline/discipling is TEACHING! "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). Selah! Think about it!

The second level of discipline/discipling is correction and it needs to be done ASAP (as soon as possible!). "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matt. 18:15-16). "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20).

The third level of discipline/discipling is excisive or purgative. Its purpose is to purge out of the body a recalcitrant, unrepentant rebel, "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the

church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matt. 18:17). "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:6-8). Selah! Think about it!

The timing of this last and most drastic form of discipline will depend upon the infraction. Excisive discipline can be for two broad categories: heresy, or immorality. Immorality and ungodly living should be dealt with IMMEDIATELY. At the very next assembling of the church after the 2-3 witness mandate has established proof, a motion, second, and vote should be taken to purge the body of the unholy member. "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you...And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already...In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together...To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved" (I Cor. 5:1-5). The pure reputation of the church and Jesus Christ is at stake! Act immediately!

Heresy is a different matter, as it may vary from immaturity or ignorance to apostasy and hardened heretics. Matthew 18 discipline is seen in action in Titus 3:10, "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject." The results of James 5 (above) is hoped for, but if heresy is still adamantly propagated, then execution must follow the second admonition. The next weekly meeting of the church is appropriate for a purgative disciplinary action.

A third division, which spans both categories above is "departing from the faith." "Beloved, ... it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). The most common form this error takes is "nonattendance." Circumstances may vary, but the Big Creek Baptist Church (for example) has voted to mark such negligent individuals that have missed services for 60 days, and to schedule a visit from concerned church members to encourage attendance and proper worship of our God. If after 30 more days of nonattendance, a second visit is scheduled (per Titus 3:10) and then if such visits are unsuccessful in restoring the member, excessive discipline is in order at the next regularly scheduled business meeting of the church.

ALWAYS, church discipline should be for the purpose of maintaining the purity of the body of Christ and the edification/tough love/long-term good of the rebellious member. "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person"

(I Cor. 5:12-13). "Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (I Tim. 1:20). "While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear" (I Peter 3:2). "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:11). Selah! Think about it!

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That is left up to each individual church to make that determination. Regardless of the length of time, great care should be taken and all efforts should be exercised to restore one before any discipline takes place. "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:15-18). Following all rules and examples of the Bible should always be first and foremost when considering

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Forum #1

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usually supervised by a youth pastor that generally speaking is simply a larger extension of the Sunday School without graded classes. This set up keeps unruly and unsupervised children from disrupting the regular worship service of the church.

A majority of the children that attend our church come with their parents or grandparents, or with friends. We have regular graded Sunday School classes for everyone at 10 am. At 11 am we have a regular worship service where everyone gathers together to sing, pray, worship, and receive preaching instruction from the Word of God. I personally believe it is important for children to gather with their parents and grandparents in the worship service. All children need to learn how to behave themselves in the house of God. It takes time and discipline, but children learn how to sit quietly, listen attentively, and participate in the worship service.

I have never been in favor of the children's church concept. I do not like the idea of separating children from their parents and grandparents during worship services. I think it is important for the entire family to worship together and hear the preaching ministry of the pastor. With that said, I have never been a member of a church that employed the children's church concept. If a church votes to have children's church it is their prerogative as an independent, autonomous body of Christ. I personally have no right or desire to dictate to another church what they should or should not do. If you are a member of a church that has a children's church I do not

believe you should cause division. You either learn to live with it, or quietly begin to search for a church of like faith that does not have a children's church.

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The church is an organized assembly of her members. It is also called a body, in Scripture. It is never fully assembled, or complete, unless all of her members are present and/or accounted for. Selah! Think about it!

If the church splits into classes for teaching purposes, it is not appropriate to say the "church" is assembled or met to worship. Perhaps it is mere semantics, but it would be much more suitable to call such divisions of the church "classes." The adult class, the teen class, the elementary class, or whatever the church desires to call them. None of these can be correctly called adult church, teen church, or children's church! Essentially, they are divided PARTITIONS of the church! Selah! Think about it!

We should never allow members of the body to think that they have completed their worship duty to our Lord and Master if they have only attended a class of the church, rather than a public worship assembly of the church. Regardless of what else the different churches choose to do in accomplishing the Great Commission, they cannot bypass the direct commandments of the Lord in His Holy Writ! **"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the**

assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25). The commanded **"provoking"** can take place in many different manners, venues and works, but the **"assembling"** can ONLY be when the church is fully met together as the Body of Christ!

It must be remembered and maintained that each and every church is fully autonomous, and has thereby every leeway to carry out the Great Commission within the guidelines of the Holy Bible. No other church, pastor, or outsider has the right to judge the Baptist churches. Only God has the authority to do so, and He certainly will! If a church decides that the physical needs of the church is taking the pastor away from his studying, praying, and preaching, then by all means ordain as many deacons as are needed! **"Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly"** (Acts 6:2-

7). The authority, and also the responsibility is inherent in EVERY church to take care of the Biblical needs of her membership!

If those needs are teaching and they need additional hours of teaching time- No problem! The authority is there to vote to authorize Bible classes for men, women, boys and/or girls and appoint the appropriate teachers for those classes! These can be on Sunday mornings, afternoons, or weekday evenings. The priority here, is to fulfill the commandment of our LORD to **"teach them to observe all things."** The Apostle Paul was our example, thusly in Acts 20:20, **"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house."** Public worship and classes, but also private classes might be necessary in different churches.

Women are commanded to teach the younger women. **"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: ...The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, ...teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children"** (Titus 2:1-4). This is impossible to fulfill, by just the example of a couple hours on Sunday and one on Wednesday, any more than it is possible for a pastor to complete a full teaching in those hours. One-on-one teaching and/or class teaching is imperative for the growth of the church members. Whatever the church needs to do to teach, preach and go "into all the world," please vote to do so! The authority cannot be denied! Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



Forum #2

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church discipline.

Some churches have a six month period for absenteeism. When it comes to offenses they will make an effort to see the one being considered for discipline, or the offender, at least two to three times before bringing them to the church for consideration or exclusion. This gives the person ample time to see the error of their ways and repent.

I believe the exception would be for open sin where there is no doubt of guilt, and then the offender should be dealt with immediately as is the case of the man who committed fornication with his father's wife in I Corinthians 5:1-13. It seems everyone was aware of this man's sin and they were doing nothing.

But by no means should a church wait for long periods of time to get the process started. I have seen churches put matters for discipline on the back burner for years and that just causes more problems. They should be dealt with promptly and as lovingly as possible. **"Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"** (I Cor. 5:6)?

People do not realize also, that church discipline is an act of love. **"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in**

subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:6-11). God Bless!

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It really depends on what they are being disciplined for. Every case of discipline should be considered individually. Nine times out of ten discipline is usually for non-attendance. It is up to the church to decide how long they let people go before starting the discipline process for non-attendance.

Other cases, usually involving public immorality of some kind, like drugs, drunkenness, sexual uncleanness, extortion, etc. should be dealt with more swiftly. As soon as the evidence is in discipline should be faithfully and immediately carried out. We are commanded to practice faithful church discipline in I Corinthians 5:4-13.

In cases of personal offense between brethren a simple process is set forth in Matthew 18:15-17. The process will either yield repentance and reconciliation, or it will result in purging out the erring brother or sister.

The bottom line is that each case of church discipline should be considered separately. Churches

and pastors need to pray for guidance and courage to carry it out scripturally with compassion and conviction.

TOM ROSS



Mankind Is Sick

(Continued from page 11) ♦

Those of us who were once sick and even dead in the spirit, are now made alive and whole and healthy through the Person and the Work of Jesus Christ. **"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"** (II Tim. 1:9-10).

MINISTERING TO THE SICK

We can see in our text passage that Jesus Christ was a minister and a physician. We can see in our text passage the tender heart of Jesus Christ, as He beheld and ministered to the publicans and sinners. I suppose that if there is to be any salvation in this world – if the world of men is as completely sick and undone as the Scriptures claim – then there must also be a person or persons who will give of themselves to minister to this sick world, and who will present the necessary cure and remedy to the sick and dying masses of humanity.

Of course, in our text passage we find that Jesus Christ is both the minister and the remedy for the sick and dying persons that He tended to. Is it not a marvelous thing that the Lord and Cre-

ator of all the earth would humble Himself to dine with wicked publicans and sinners? Is it not an incredible and awesome thing that the God of all men – the Righteous and Holy One from Heaven – would deign to tend to such a people and such a motley collection of miserable persons? And yet, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His own Words, said, **"..They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"** (Luke 5:31-32).

On a later occasion, when Jesus Christ ate in the house of Zacchaeus, He said, **"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"** (Luke 19:10). I think that the life of the Lord Jesus Christ is an example to those of us who are saved today. In the life of Jesus Christ we see the example of God, manifest in the flesh, stooping to minister and preach to the sick and the dying. This should be our desire as well. This ministering and preaching should be the pattern of our lives as well. If Jesus Christ was not too good to preach and teach the publicans and sinners, how much more should you and I (who come from the same teeming masses of wicked humanity as did the publicans and sinners) be willing to preach and teach and minister to the sin-sick souls which surround us today?

The ministry that we have today is to tell the world about Jesus Christ. We tell the world about the need that each man has, and the guilt that is ours by virtue of Adam's sin and our own sinful behavior. The world of men is sick! There is no healing to be found amongst us; the only hope that we have must come from outside of natural man! Jesus Christ is our only hope, and the only heal-

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Mankind Is Sick

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ing for our sickness. **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”** (II Cor. 5:17-21).



The Errors of Elihu

By Matthew Stepp
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CHAPTER 32 OF JOB

V. 1: This first verse of the chapter is a stand-alone type verse. Almost like chapter 32, all by itself, and verse 2 would start a 33rd chapter for Elihu’s entrance. After Zophar declined his 3rd accusation, Job made his closing remarks in chapter 31. And the inspired writer of the book, fills in the silence of the three accusers.

The fact of Job’s conclusion, in that **“he was righteous in his own eyes”** indicates a peace of mind that passes understanding of any but a child of God. If anyone has any idea of calling

Job “self-righteous” because of this verse, please read Psalm 112:1-10, I Corinthians 15:10, I Samuel 12:3-5, or Numbers 16:15. This righteousness of Job (even in his own eyes), is but a reflection of his knowledge of his standing before God, in the grace of Jesus Christ. As Job’s sermons have shown repeatedly, his trust is in his Saviour, Redeemer, and High Priest, not in any of his own works. Romans 5:1-2: **“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”** Romans 8:1-2: **“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”** If Job is condemned by this first verse, then condemn all Christians, including the Apostle John along with him---**“Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God”** (I John 3:21).

Vs. 2-3: Verse 2 begins the thoughts, if not the words, of Elihu. The focus of his attack is noted from the beginning: He thinks that Job has justified himself, rather than justifying God. Do not take this verse out of context and cite it as an indictment against Job, because that just simply is not true! This is indeed the first and primary error of Elihu. For never once in this book has Job not justified God. From the first chapter to the 31st chapter, his theme has been the sovereignty of God to do what He will with His own. That is what Job told his wife in 2:10 and throughout, it has been the

focus of his words and it is what he mentions nine times even in the most recent, previous chapter of his defense. It has not changed. See 31:2, 4, 6, 11, 14, 15, 23, 28, and 35 for proof that Job considered God’s justification in determining his own justified standing before that Dread Sovereign. Cite vs. 28 for proof: **“This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above.”** Job does not deny the authority and righteousness of God!

It is of utmost importance to understand these first two verses of this chapter. It is where most commentators come to base their “opinions” of Job and Elihu. Simply put, these verses must be lifted out of context for any commentator or reader to condemn Job, because God certainly does not. Job 42:7 **“. . . the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.”** Absolutely, Job justified God! Elihu is dead wrong!

V. 5: Temper/Anger/Wrath. These are words that accompany Elihu’s dissertation throughout. These are not Christian traits. When you compare Job’s response to ugly attacks and patronizing advice, you see Job as ranging from kind pity (16:4-5), to frustration (13:4-5), to extreme sarcasm (12:1) at the most! But Elihu is dead wrong!

Vs. 4, 6-22: False modesty. I have seen folks write that they were impressed by Elihu’s humility in waiting, as a young man, for his elders to finish. I am not so impressed! His waiting was more dictated by custom and protocol, than humility. That becomes fairly evident, fairly quickly, as he trashes the reputation of any that

cross his egotistical path.

V. 14: Elihu claims that he will be different from the 3 friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophor), but in reality, his six chapters are mostly a rehashing of their fruitless accusations and postulations. Several of these will have their own listing later, but note 33:8-12, 31-33; 34:8, 26, 30, 33, 35-37; 35:5-8, 16; 36:5-16. In each of these verses (and more), the attack that Elihu uses is found previously by one of the other three. It was ineffective then (and ultimately condemned by God), and it is equally so now from the mouth of Elihu. If you are looking for the condemnation of Elihu (outside of chapters 38-39), read the kindred postulations he has with the three friends, who clearly are condemned, and Elihu’s doctrinal thesis will ultimately receive the same stinging rebuke.

Vs. 10, 17: Elihu is trusting in an opinion of his own, instead of facts and beliefs based on Job’s righteous standing before God. Knowing “nothing” of God and Satan’s dialogue in the first two chapters, Elihu is basing his words on “his own opinion.” Dangerous and ultimately it is to his own destruction. Sovereign grace is the fundamental teaching of this Book of Job and Elihu “never once” mentions grace.

Vs. 18-20: Full of baloney, rather! Elihu’s stated purpose is to relieve his own bursting of arrogance and self-importance! Those attributes are noted through-out this first chapter of his harangue in particular. Everyone else needs to know his vaunted opinion.

CHAPTER 33 OF JOB

V. 3: Why do so many jump all over Job for speaking of his personal uprightness (validated by God at first, last, and in between), but Elihu gets a free

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Errors of Elihu

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pass? Not from this writer! Elihu's heart is **"deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"** according to Jeremiah 17:9. Never in this book does God validate any righteousness of Elihu. The heart is the wrong source for knowledgeable words, as Elihu hopes to purport. Go to the Word, Elihu!

Vs. 6-7: This is about as blasphemous as a feller can get! To pose himself in the stead of God! Arrogance in the highest form! It is a dangerous assumption to say that our words are God's WORDS! Even the Apostle Paul was careful to make a distinction therein: I Corinthians 7:6,12,40. If these words of Elihu, (like the Apostle Paul's) were validated by God at any point in the book, is one thing, but the utter contempt God shows Elihu in "ignoring" everything he says (except **"words without knowledge"** 38:2), shows that Elihu's ascension to divine positions of judgment is blasphemous arrogance. In this matter, as all others, Job sees no difference between Elihu and the three friends. See 13:7-8 where Job answers Zophar and company. **"Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him? Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God?"**

Vs. 8-9: If Elihu is to be taken seriously as a rebuker unto wisdom (Prov. 9:8-9), it is imperative that he stick to the truth and quote Job's words at least close to verbatim. Not to add/detract and put his own slant on the matter. But instead, Elihu misquotes and ridicules Job here (and constantly) and takes Job's words out of context! In this particular instance, the accusation of Elihu is ridiculous! Job "never"

claims to be sinless! In chapters 7:20;9:2-3,12-15,20,30-31;10:12-15 etc. Job either acknowledges his sinful nature in the eyes of a Holy God, or brings out clearly the total depravity of ALL men, including himself! 9:20: **"If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse."** Every instance of Job claiming to be "innocent," is of the perceived "great sin" that caused the calamity, and is twisted and turned against him by this accuser, Elihu (I almost typed the devil, Elihu).

Vs. 10-13: In this "key" passage, we see the central theme of Elihu's argument. That Job has been so bold, so "bold," as to come before the throne of God demanding answers and the fulfillment of the Promises of Grace really grates on Elihu! Elihu (and other more modern detractors) would deny Job the right of approaching the Mercy Seat of Christ! One of the prevailing themes of the Book of Job is the courtroom analogy that is used by Job, particularly in chapters 7;9;10;12;13;21;23;24;31. Chapter 31, in particular is a summation of Job's defense akin to early Eastern Courtroom customs. (The Defense Rests!)

While Job recognized God as the source of his affliction, he never considers Him to be his enemy, as Elihu puts it. God can be adversarial to the flesh of Job, in ordaining this calamity, but certainly Job clings to God as his Unseen Ally and Only Hope! 23:10: **"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."** 19:26-27: **"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and**

not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

V. 14: Elihu claims that man cannot perceive when God is speaking or revealing something to man. Obviously, Job disagreed, and so do I! Job has had a personal salvation experience and trusts in the Word of God. Elihu, having never experienced the Person of God, in the next few verses will look for supernatural revelations rather than plain experiential knowledge of God in our daily lives. (Sometimes, yes, calamities!)

Vs. 15-17: Elihu says that God's normal delivery of knowledge is through supernatural revelations of visions. This will go well with many Charismatic beliefs that will pop up in his later speeches, regarding a gospel of health and prosperity. Eliphaz already tried this tactic back in 4:12-21.

V. 23: This verse is prefaced by a description of the affliction of Job in verses 18-22. Then, in line with Elihu's Charismatic predilection already seen, he claims that Job will need an angel (messenger) of God to interpret to Job the purposes of God.

Vs. 24-30: Now, Elihu goes a blasphemous step further and offers to be that angelic messenger or intermediary intercessor for Job! The intercessor that would claim a ransom? What? By his own ability or authority will he command God to deliver Job's soul? To take the place of Jesus Christ, our High Priest? Elihu's understanding of salvation is "totally" based upon works and his advice and sermons are lacking the Sovereign Grace that saturates Job's wonderful sermons of the previous chapters.

Vs. 31-33: The summation of these three verses is: "Shut up, Job! Unless you are going to say what I tell you to say!" "My wisdom" is all you need and then

you will be justified in the eyes of God and man. For shame, Elihu! For shame.

CHAPTER 34 OF JOB

Vs. 2-4: The mocking of Elihu here is evident. Sarcasm drips as he calls Job and his three friends **"wise"** and **"knowledgeable."** He even mockingly repeats the proverb of Job from 12:11 in verse 3. Job in that chapter was telling Zophar that the knowledge of a God, even THE God was something that should be obvious to all of us. Elihu, using the same proverb here is saying that it was obvious to all that Job is "not" a righteousness man at all, but a great sinner. And that is what he will attempt to bring out in the next portion of Scripture. But, the righteous God knows his righteous saints (Ps. 1:6; II Tim. 2:19)!

Vs. 5-6: This is an especially telling passage that contrasts the thought processes of Job and Elihu! Elihu here quotes Job's words of 27:1-6. If one goes back to read that chapter (really great passage to preach on), Job is glorifying the sovereignty of God in His authority and privilege to afflict and mold His children (1:21;2:10) and reiterates those early, electrifying passages with a present and enduring acknowledgment of God, as both the "source" of his affliction, but also the "rescuer" in his affliction. **"My lips shall not speak wickedness"** and Job will not go back on his integrity and trust in God. He will not give an inch to his miserable comforters and he closes this particular passage as he normally does: with an avowal to cling to his righteousness in Christ Jesus and "not let it go." Romans 3:22-28: **"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all**

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Errors of Elihu

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and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

Now we can argue all we want about whether Job was self-righteous, but the evidence stacks up throughout this Book, that Job is "not" trusting in self-righteousness, but the righteousness of God, by faith (Ps. 112:1,3,6,9,10)! Elihu understands none of this! The only righteousness he can conceive is righteousness by works. Just like the three friends before. Even his quote, "**For Job hath said,**" I find eerily reminiscent of the deceiver in the Garden of Eden, "**Yea, hath God said**" (Gen. 3:1). And then cast the truth away and spin your own twist on God's truth.

V. 7: More vile mockery! The worst part is, that the man who denounced Eliphaz and friends so fiercely, is using the same tactics that he had promised not to! In 15:16, Eliphaz accused Job of "**drinking iniquity like water**" and here comes Elihu with the "same" accusation! Personal attacks against the integrity of this

man of God! "What man is like Job?" I will tell you "not" Elihu, that is for sure! David, Paul, and Moses (more like) are men to be likened unto Job.

V. 8: A mudslinging verse! Totally unmerited and beneath any, except the lowest scoundrel, which Elihu here proves himself to be. Do not be caught off-guard here! Yes, Elihu is referring to Job! The one that fears God and eschews evil, according to God Almighty!!! No evidence anywhere to support this attack of Elihu, except when the "same" mudslinging tactics were used by Zophar in 11:1-3; 20:5-29 and particularly the stunning turnaround of Eliphaz from 4:3-4, where he acknowledges Job's purity and 22:5-9 where out-of-the-blue he fabricates lies that would make a Democrat blush! If we had no other verse, how could Elihu "ever" regain any validity as a Christian rebuker after such a statement as this? The evil associations of Job? The wicked buddies of Job?

Vs. 9-10: Elihu again misrepresents and denies Job's sublime relationship with God. This is just stupid! Job would be the last to deny that there are great delights in the service of his God, Elihu! Job would be the last to charge God with wickedness and iniquity. That indeed is what the intent of Satan was. To get Job to falsely accuse God of injustice and repudiate his love for his Lord! Job 2:3: "**And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect man and an upright man, and one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.**" And

even to the end of the book, the LORD God Almighty, Himself is on the opposite side of the ledger from your vain attacks, Elihu! "**My servant Job**" has spoken "**the thing which is right.**"

Even at his lowest points in chapters 3, 6, and 9, Job may curse the day of his birth, but never his God! Chapter 23 is an eloquent example of Job's hope and faith in the unseen hand of God. In 23:10 he again states his dependence upon God's grace to see him through: "**But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.**" Even further, this thought of God's persevering grace is in 23:11-12, while His preserving grace is in 23:13-14. What an "awesome" text on grace! But again, one that Elihu is blank concerning---as we see in the next passage.

Vs. 11-15: "**For the work of a man shall he render unto him.**" Elihu's god is no different from the projected god of 3 Amigos! God predicates His actions upon the works of men? Not hardly! Elihu spends the next verses claiming God will not do wickedly, nor pervert judgment? By what? By allowing the calamity of Job to come upon an innocent man? Why does that argument sound familiar? Because of Bildad's exact same argument in 8:2-6! Come on, Elihu! I thought you had something original to add to the conversation? Eh?

V. 16: Again, I have searched the previous chapters for Job's assertion of such things. Not there, Elihu! Even more terrible than the thought of Job saying to God: "You are ungodly, wicked and I should rule instead of You" is the "fact" that Elihu is "accusing" Job of saying it. No where! If Elihu would desire to be a righteous judge, please stick to the facts.

Vs. 20-30: Like the three friends, Elihu cannot restrain himself, but as he waxes eloquent about the glory of God (many things true) he lumps Job in with the wicked (v. 26) that God openly smites (calamity, anyone?) and (v. 30) the hypocrites (Job, your good days are over, now that God is revealing the "real" you). Elihu demonstrates yet again his belief in the theory of Divine Retribution, which he will bring out further in the next few verses.

Vs. 31-34: Elihu has advice for Job in this segment. Advice that would be good for Pharaoh or even David, after he had sinned with Bathsheba. After an affliction of God, based upon sin in our lives. And because Elihu "mistakenly" believes that to be the case with Job, he puts his foot in his mouth, yet again.

Say this, Job, Elihu demands: "I will not offend anymore." "I have done iniquity, I will do no more." What are you hiding, Job? "Speak what thou knowest." Elihu, just like Bildad and crew, "assumes" the original sin that is the root cause of the calamity in 18:21;8:3-7,13,20;15:6-13. It is not there, buddy! God, Himself is witness to that in the first two chapters, "**without cause**" and "**hast thou considered my servant Job.**"

One marvelous point to make on verse 33 is Elihu has heard Job boldly cry out for God and it has stuck in his craw that Job actually expects God to answer him. Time after time the four antagonists have assured Job that God is too high and mighty to be concerned with such a puny hypocrite as they considered Job to be. But just like blind Bartimaeus, Job keeps crying out for Jesus Christ, the Son of David to come alleviate the pain and sufferings of this life. Elihu says tellingly: "**Should it be**

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according to thy mind?" then continues with virtually, "Job, God will do as He wants, whether you choose or refuse."

But that is "not" the God of Job, is it? Job's God has made promises that Job is clinging tightly unto. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!" (Heb. 12:5; Deut. 4:31 etc.) Job 13:14-18: **"Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand? Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him. Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with your ears. Behold now, I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified."** It shall be according to Job's mind, because it is set on the promises of God Almighty! Praise Him!

V. 35: Another direct, personal attack by Elihu, **"Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom."** I am shaking my head, because as I have preached through the Book of Job, the "wise" words of Job have resonated in the lives of myself and my congregation here at Big Creek Baptist Church. As my family and my members have gone through trials of our own, we have found comfort from Job's trust in his God. His knowledge of a wonderful God of Grace has taught us so much. God will eventually vindicate Job as the orator of words that have **"spoken of me the thing that is right."** Elihu rephrases what Zophar has already accused Job of in 11:2-3. But the sobering thought that comes across is that God is listening to Elihu, and when he begins his rebuttal of Elihu's

harangue in 38:2, God brings these words back into memory and makes application of them to Elihu. (Be sure your sins will find you out, Elihu!)

V. 36: In this verse we see the true, vindictive nature of Elihu. **"My desire"** is that Job suffer every bit that he has coming to him. Perhaps, like the Pharisees, he thinks that Job will break under the pressure and finally admit hypocrisy. Or like the Roman Catholic Inquisition, he perchance thinks that Job will renounce his God of Grace and submit to the theology of Elihu, Catholicism, and every other works-based salvation. Even if we stretch the imagination and give Elihu the benefit of the doubt and claim that all he wants is to purify Job, which Job acknowledges of God in 23:10; I just do not think Elihu's motives are as pure as God's certainly are. **"My desire"**. . .? I can almost see the gloating in Elihu's eyes. I remember a dear saint in Christ detailing a year of affliction in his own life. His words are well-known, but they have stuck with me. Unlike Elihu, this man said of his affliction, "I would not wish it on my worst enemy, but I would not trade it for the world." Elihu certainly has no problem wishing it upon Job.

Again, Elihu inserts Job into the company of **"wicked men."** Where would any commentator find room to excuse Elihu of this gross and unjust charge? Where has Job answered for "wicked men?" Maybe in Elihu's past, some judgment was passed by Job that offended Elihu, and the grudge is still there in the heart of Elihu. Anyone that opposes the "Mighty Elihu" is necessarily wicked, I suppose? Where are these wicked men, Elihu?

V. 37: Again, that elusive original sin is referenced. Job **". . .addeth**

rebellion unto his (original) sin. . .? I can almost see Elihu shaking his head in wonder. What will the man claim next? Innocence, in the face of such a clear indictment of God's judgment? Presumption, to claim that God will validate him? Blasphemy, in claiming that God has afflicted him without cause? **". . .he clappeth his hands among us. . ."** US! The self-righteous Pharisee friends that we are! God has not afflicted US! Come on, Job! Fess up!

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The Short Pews



Brief
Articles
by Curtis
Pugh

WHAT IS GOD DOING?

God is doing many things right now as He brings this age to a close. He is allowing wicked men to take this world farther and farther down the path toward human ruin. In Daniel 4:35 the king said, **"...all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"** Isaiah 46:9-10 records God's own words as follows: **"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."** God is in control!

One thing God is doing is

revealed in Acts 15:14: **"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."** God began this work during the time of the apostles as stated by Simeon. Prior to that time, God had been dealing almost exclusively with the Jews. But during our time, as Paul said: **"...blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in"** (Rom. 11:25). Not many Jews are being born from above during this age. Instead, the Jews have been blinded **"in part,"** or partially. This blindness is **"until"** or temporary and will continue until all of God's elect Gentiles are saved. So then, God is at this present time "visiting the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." It is not God's purpose to save everyone. He is not trying to do that. If He were trying to save everybody, He would be a failure.

During our age **"...the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"** (Rev. 22:17). **"Whosoever will"** may come. The problem is that because man's unregenerate mind is **"enmity against God"** (Rom. 8:7), men will not come. So they cannot: their minds will not let them. They do not want to come to Christ. They may come to religion. They often want a fire escape to avoid their just punishment in eternal fire and so will do all sorts of religious things if somebody convinces them of an escape route by means of their own works. But they will not come to Christ in repentance and faith until and unless God draws them. That is why Jesus said, **"No man can come to me, except the**

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THE BIBLE 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.

WEST VIRGINIA LAWMAKERS OVERRIDE GOVERNOR'S ABORTION BILL VETO

(WNS)--West Virginia's state legislature successfully voted in March to override Gov. Earl Tomblin's veto of a fetal pain bill passed in February. Starting May 26, abortion will be illegal in the state after 20 weeks gestation. The bill passed in the Republican-controlled legislature by an overwhelming majority, and the override vote passed by similar margins: 77-16 in the House and 27-5 in the Senate. The bill also received bipartisan support from two-thirds of Democratic legislators, according to West Virginians for Life (WVFL). The successful override makes West Virginia the 11th state to pass fetal pain legislation. Lawmakers in South Carolina and Wisconsin also are working to pass similar bills.

MAJORITY OF PCUSA PRESBYTERIES VOTE TO ENDORSE GAY MARRIAGE

(WNS)--A majority of congregations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have voted to approve gay marriage, a position endorsed by the General Assembly last year. The denomination's constitutional definition of marriage will be expanded to include a "commitment between two people." No clergy will be required to officiate a same-sex marriage or host a ceremony on church property under the new constitutional amendment. The change will take effect June 21.

Since last year, 86 of the church's 171 presbyteries voted to approve the redefinition of marriage, with the vote that made the majority coming in last night. But 41 rejected the change, leaving the future of their congregations uncertain. Since 2011, as the Kentucky-based PCUSA drifted away from biblical orthodoxy, 428 churches have left to join more conservative denominations, or disbanded.

KANSAS BANS DISMEMBERMENT ABORTIONS

(WNS)--Abortionists in Kansas will soon be banned from performing dismemberment abortions, thanks to legislation passed by the state legislature March 25. Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback promised in January he would sign the bill, making the state the first to ban abortions that tear children limb-from-limb in the womb. The federal government already criminalizes partial birth abortions, but dismemberment abortions—also known as dilation and evacuation abortions—are still legal. The legislation is part of a new strategy pioneered by National Right to Life Committee (NRLC). Kansans for Life (KFL) promoted the bill based on NRLC's model legislation.

NEW MEXICO DEMS KILL STATE'S FIRST ABORTION RESTRICTIONS

(WNS)--A New Mexico Senate committee killed two pro-life bills that would have aligned the state with 42 others that currently limit

abortion in some way. The bills, an induction abortion ban and parental notification requirement, died in a Public Affairs Committee hearing on a 5-3, partisan vote. Just two weeks ago, the bills sailed through the Republican-controlled house. But because Democrats control the Senate, some pro-lifers expected Sunday's outcome. Others had hoped the bills' broad appeal would encourage a positive vote. Rep. Yvette Herrell, who sponsored the late-term abortion ban in the House, was disappointed the measure failed. "At the end of the day we're talking about a viable human being that can live outside the woman's [womb] with or without life support," she said.

LEGISLATING TOLERANCE FOR FAITH-BASED ADOPTION AGENCIES

(WNS)--Legislation introduced in Congress earlier this month would prohibit government discrimination against faith-based adoption and foster care organizations that are not willing to place children with same-sex couples. The Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act, sponsored by Sen. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., and Rep. Mike Kelly, R-Pa., was re-introduced on March 4. Enzi and Kelly submitted the same bill last year, but it never made it out of committee. The act would ensure state-licensed child welfare providers are allowed to operate while also holding to religious and moral convictions on homosexuality and family structure. In four states—California, Illinois, Massachusetts, and the District of Columbia—faith-based adoption and foster care providers have been forced to stop providing services because they refused to place children with same-sex couples.

WASHINGTON FLORIST FINED, ORDERED TO CREATE GAY WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

(WNS)--A Washington state

great-grandmother was ordered to pay \$1,001 to the state last week for violating its Consumer Protection Act (CPA) when she refused to create a flower arrangement for a long-time customer's same-sex wedding. The court has yet to impose an award for the gay couple. Barronelle Stutzman, 70, sold flowers to Robert Ingersoll and Curt Freed for more than nine years, and considered Ingersoll a friend. But when he asked her to create the flower arrangements for the couple's wedding in 2013, Stutzman said she couldn't because of her "relationship with Jesus Christ." She referred them to another business for assistance. The Washington state attorney sued Stutzman for sexual orientation discrimination under CPA. Ingersoll and Freed then filed their own lawsuit against her.

COALITION OF BLACK CHURCHES REBUKES PCUSA OVER MARRIAGE REDEFINITION

(WNS)--In a stern public rebuke, the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) has condemned the recent decision by the Presbyterian Church (USA) to define marriage as a "commitment between two people." NBCI's president, Anthony Evans, chastised the denomination, saying that "by voting to redefine marriage [the] PCUSA automatically forfeits Christ's saving grace." Evans' statement calls for a complete separation of NBCI churches—which, according to the press release, include tens of thousands of congregations across 15 denominations—from the PCUSA. Because the "PCUSA deliberately voted to change the Word of God and the interpretation of holy marriage between one man and one woman," the NBCI "must break fellowship with them and urge ... Christendom to do so as well." This separation need not be permanent, but the path to

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reconciliation can be paved only with the PCUSA's repentance, according to Evans: "We urge our brother[s] and sisters of the PCUSA to repent and be restored to fellowship."

OKLAHOMA BANS DISMEMBERMENT ABORTIONS

(WNS)--Oklahoma is set to become the second state to prohibit late-term, dismemberment abortions. In a 37-4 vote, the Oklahoma Senate passed a bill based on model legislation from the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC). The House already passed the bill in February by an 84-2 vote. Though Republican Gov. Mary Fallin hasn't indicated whether she will sign it, she has approved pro-life bills in the past. If the bill becomes law, Oklahoma will join Kansas in banning the late-term abortions. Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback signed a similar measure in April.

DENVER BAKERS CLEARED OF BIAS FOR REFUSING TO MAKE BIBLE CAKES

(WNS)--Colorado officials rejected discrimination claims filed by a man who was refused service at three bakeries because he requested cakes that included Bible verses calling homosexuality a sin, according to a decision released in early April. Critics of the ruling argue it runs in sharp contrast to a decision in 2014 by the same agency, which declared a Christian baker cannot refuse to make a cake for a gay wedding ceremony. Bill Jack approached three Denver-area bakeries last spring and asked for two cakes, both in the shape of an open Bible. He presented a drawing showing what he wanted on each: "God hates sin—Psalm 45:7" and "Homosexuality is a detestable sin—Leviticus 18:22" on

one cake; "God loves sinners" and "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us—Romans 5:8" on the other. All three businesses—Azucar Bakery, Le Sensual Bakery, and Gateaux Pastries—refused to make the cakes. Jack filed three claims of discrimination with the Colorado Civil Rights Division (CCRD).

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS MUSLIMS TOSS CHRISTIANS INTO SEA DURING MIGRATION ATTEMPT

(WNS)--Muslim migrants threw overboard 12 Christians during a recent crossing from Libya to Italy. The survivors, mostly migrant workers from Africa, kept their lives by forming a human chain to resist further assault. Another 400 are presumed dead in the sinking of another migrant boat near the Libyan coast. The Italian coast has a sadly growing history of taking on escapees from conflicts in Africa and the Middle East—often ending in tragedy.

PUBLIC PRAYER IN CANADA RESTRICTED BY SUPREME COURT

(WNS)--The Supreme Court of Canada ruled against a city in Quebec whose council members began their meetings with a prayer. The court said the prayer was discriminatory and violated the state's duty of neutrality. But the court's ruling doesn't end the practice of public prayer entirely. Canada's Parliament may still begin its sessions with prayer, as it has always done. But in Saguenay, the presence of religious symbols, including a cross, violated one atheist resident's freedom of conscience and religion, or lack thereof, the court found. Christian leaders warn the ruling raises more questions than it answers. "For example, the court said that it is discriminatory for state officials in the performance of their functions

to profess, adopt, or favor one belief to the exclusion of all others," said Bruce Clemenger, President of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. "And yet they did not say how this might extend to matters of religious observance such as wearing religious symbols."



Short Pews

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Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:44). If you have truly come to Christ, give the glory to God for it is He that has drawn you to Him! If you have not come, Come! and welcome!

WHAT WILL JESUS FIND WHEN HE COMES AGAIN?

There was a time when many professing Christians believed that the world was getting better and better. They thought that they could convert the world to Christianity. After they did so, they believed, Christ would return and receive His waiting kingdom which they had prepared for Him. Almost nobody believes that today. There is just too much plain Bible testimony that things are getting worse and worse – especially in the religion department. Paul penned these words in II Timothy 3:13: **"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."** We are seeing this prophecy (among others) fulfilled before our eyes.

The Lord Jesus Himself asked an interesting question in Luke 18:7-8. This question has an implied answer which tells us just what Jesus will find when He comes again. **"And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell**

you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" While there will be some of God's elect people alive on earth when the Lord Jesus comes, the question makes the point. There will not be much "faith on the earth."

Religion is flourishing. Eastern religions, Middle-eastern religions and a whole variety of groups professing to be Christians gain popularity daily. Many people claim the Christian faith, but reject church membership with its obligations. Nevertheless they consider themselves "spiritual" and "Christians." We notice that the Lord did not ask if there would be religion when He returns. He was not talking about religion. He was talking about faith. In fact, the Greek word of the original means not just faith in general, but "the faith." There can be faith and it not be "the faith." A man may have faith that his car will start, but find out some frosty morning that it will not. He had faith, but it was misplaced faith. Misplaced faith is not "the faith."

There is "the faith" which is peculiar to a certain people. In Paul's letter to Titus he wrote of this kind of faith - "the faith." Here is what he wrote: **"Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness,"** (Titus 1:1). He specifically mentions **"the faith of God's elect."** It is a characteristic of God's elect people that they have "the faith." This kind of faith is not a will-o-the-wisp kind of hoping that everything will turn out all right. It is not confidence in what the sinner has done. It is not confidence in baptism or a profession of faith.

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Short Pews

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It is not confidence in prayer or religion at all. It is totally relying upon Christ who gave His life for His sheep as He said in John 10:15: “...I lay down my life for the sheep.”

DANGEROUS DOGS

Those dogs that are mentioned in Scripture are not household pets. They were mongrels that lived in the streets. They ate whatever they could find there including corpses. They were as Barnes says, “contentious, troublesome, dissatisfied, and would produce disturbance.” Paul wrote: **“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision,”** (Phil. 3:2). In his threefold warning to the congregation in Philippi, Paul repeats the word “beware” three times for emphasis and urgency. A.T. Robertson points out that he wrote “the dogs,” “the evil workers,” and “the concision” using the definite article each time. These are not three different groups, but three names for the same men who plagued the various congregations with their troublesome heresy. They were the Judaizers: those who taught that those who professed faith in Christ must add something to that faith. They must keep the Old Testament law in order to be completely saved. So Paul pictures them as ravenous, howling dogs of the streets, scavenging – not among the offal of those times and places, but seeking to destroy the faith of the saints. They were trying to get professing believers to “frustrate the grace of God” – a term Paul used in Galatians 2:21 where his full statement is this:

“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” There is absolutely no place for law-keeping as a means of being righteous in God’s eyes! No place whatsoever! If a believer in Christ could perfectly keep the Old Testament law, he would not add one whit to the righteous standing which believers have before God! He would not make his salvation one tittle more secure. He would not enjoy one iota more of God’s favor even for complete obedience to Moses law!

If the term **“the dogs”** were not clear enough, Paul further identifies this crowd as **“the evil workers.”** “Oh!” somebody says, “There are a great many sincere and true Christians who believe that the law must be kept in order to make heaven the believer’s home. Such a belief is just one of many differences among the various denominations of true Christians.” Paul did not think so! He said those who add law-keeping to faith in Christ as necessary to salvation are **“the evil workers!”** They are not to be viewed as “sincere but erring Brethren,” nor are they full of good works, although they may appear so. Some old Baptist writers named these folk, “works-mongers.” Paul goes on to further identify this crowd as being **“the concision.”** This phrase literally means “those cut-up” or “those mutilated.” This is a play on words – a literary device used by Paul. This is clear from the next verse where Paul writes saying, **“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,”** (Phil. 3:3). Paul contrasts **“the concision”** with **“the**

circumcision.” Here is what Paul is saying: those Jews who taught law-keeping for righteousness were just mutilated ones. The true circumcision – those circumcised **“without hands”** (Colossians 2:11), are those who have been operated upon by God Himself. The true believers are characterized here by Paul as doing three things: (1) they worship God in the Spirit – not in rituals, mumbo-jumbo, hocus-pocus, or fleshly activities such as hand-clapping, falling on the floor or other physical movements such as making the sign of the cross, etc.; (2) they glory or rejoice or exult in Christ Jesus and His finished work on their behalf, not in their supposed goodness; and (3) they have no confidence in anything produced by the abilities of unregenerate human beings. They had not confidence in what they or any other mere human had done. We may summarize all that we have said thus far in this way: Those who would insist upon law-keeping as adding in any way whatsoever to the imputed righteousness of Christ are dangerous dogs! They are evil workers. They are the mutilated ones.

The Psalmist wrote about priests, prophets, and others having the spiritual care over Israel. For several reasons which he mentions – i.e. blindness, ignorance, muteness, loving sleep, greed, without understanding and drunkenness – for these reasons they do not bark. They do not warn of dangers. They are worthless as watchers. Psalm 56:10-12 paints this picture: **“His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea,**

they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.” Here we see that false religious leaders are called **“dumb dogs.”** A lack of intelligence is not meant by the word “dumb.” Rather, they are mute: unable to bark. In this instance they are unable to bark because of those reasons cited. In short they were too full of self, greed and pleasure seeking to bark. We have similar such **“dumb dogs”** in America and around the world today to whom these Scriptures can be applied. Should they bark – i.e. give real biblical warnings to their hearers, they would lose their popularity, their followers, their large incomes, etc. These also are dangerous dogs!

Again the Psalmist, being moved along by the Holy Ghost, prophesied concerning the death of Christ on the tree. Probably he wrote unknowingly – at least without full knowledge – for the New Testament tells us it was often the case that the writers of the Old Testament did not understand what they wrote. Peter tells us about this when he wrote: **“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that**

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should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into," (1 Peter 1:10-12). And so we say that the Psalmist, guided by the Holy Spirit, wrote: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog," (Ps. 22:14-18). Those whose "wicked hands" (Acts 2:23) caused the blessed, sinless Savior to be nailed to the tree compassed round about Him like "dogs." They are further identified as "the assembly [congregation] of the wicked." Note the last quoted verse: "Deliver my soul... from the power of the dog." Those who opposed and finally murdered the Lord Jesus were "dogs" as were those religious leaders who would not warn the people of Israel of their sins. And these both

are classed as "dogs" right along with those who insist on law-keeping in order to please God and complete righteousness.

What shall be the end of those who are classed by God as "dogs"? The Lord Jesus Himself revealed to John what the end of these "dogs" shall be. He said, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star," (Rev. 22:14-16). Such "dogs" shall be kept "without" or on the outside. Here "dumb dogs" who cannot bark, Judaizers who insist on law-keeping, the congregation of wicked dogs who compassed 'round about the Lord Jesus – these shall be kept out of that holy city, the New Jerusalem – right along with the "sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." And so we conclude with the same urgent warning with which we began: "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision," (Phil. 3:2). As Barnes commented, they are "contentious, troublesome, dissatisfied, and would produce disturbance." These oppose the preaching of free grace and "frustrate the grace of God." Are you wary of such religionists? They are still with us today. And they are still dangerous dogs. Look out!



ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

The Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Marion, IL is in need of a replacement pastor. Elder Raymond T. Ellis is the current pastor, but due to his age, is needing to resign. The church believes and preaches the doctrines of grace and the local church. Any interested Elder may contact Elder Ellis at (618) 983-8697 or Bro. Gary Ratley at (618) 841-0228.

The Twinbrook Hills Baptist Church of Hamilton, OH is prayerfully seeking a pastor. Organized in 1938, the church holds to historic Baptist truths, including the Doctrines of Grace. Please visit the church's website at <http://twinbrook.net> to view the Church Constitution and other items that describe our beliefs and show what the church is doing today. Please contact Bro. Chris Willis at Elohimfirst@gmail.com for more information.

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



BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 3-1-2015 to 3-31-2015

Beginning Balance	\$7,586.15
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
Calvary Ind. B. C., Everson, WA	100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	200.00
.....	625.00
TOTAL	8,211.15
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	363.98
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	363.98
ENDING BALANCE	\$7,847.23



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 3-1-2015 to 3-31-2015

Beginning Balance	\$2,866.69
RECEIPTS:	
Expanded Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX	50.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	50.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	150.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	313.45
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Emmanuel M. B. C., Oldtown, KY	200.00
Faith B. C. Lynn, AR	25.00
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	200.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
Joann Mills, Barboursville, KY	10.00
Joe Williamson, Philpot, KY	25.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	35.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR	50.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	342.00
Anonymous	220.00
Dividing checks	150.00
Sub Total	\$2,940.45
TOTAL	\$5,807.14
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	676.14
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.96
Dividing checks	150.00
Total Expenditures	\$3,792.10
.....	2,015.04
Bank Charge	-13.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$2,002.04

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Glade Creek Baptist Church of Summersville, WV has called Elder Jonathan Bailess as pastor.

The Grace Bible Baptist Church in Denham Springs, LA will be hosting its 19th annual Bible Conference on June 5-7, 2015.

Scheduled speakers are Bro. Larry Wilson, Pastor of Northside B.C., in Oakdale, LA; Bro. David O'Neal, Pastor of Grace Missionary B.C., in Tulsa, OK; Bro. Lucien Lesage, of Pride, LA; Bro. Joey Newell, of Denham Springs, LA; and Bro. Jerry Dodson, Pastor of Grace Bible B.C., in Denham Springs, LA.

Services will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Friday the 5th, 10:30 a.m. on Saturday morning, 4:30 p.m. on Saturday evening and 9:45 a.m. on Sunday Morning.

A light meal will be served at the church fellowship hall at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, a noon meal at 12:10 p.m. on Saturday and the evening meal at 6:10 p.m., on Saturday, followed by a noon meal at 12:00 p.m. on Sunday.

Everyone is invited to attend this conference. Call Bro Jerry at (225) 664-3223 if you have any questions. Be sure and leave a message on the church answering machine should you get no answer and we will get back with you as soon as possible.

The Grace Baptist Church of Rural Hall, NC, and pastor Andy Proctor would like to announce their Annual Spring Meeting held at the church building at 156 Cross Baptist Church Rd., Rural Hall, NC. Services

will be held from Wednesday, May 13th through Sunday, May 17th. The times of services will be at 7:30 p.m. except on Sunday which will be the regular schedule of services, 9:45 a.m., 10:45 p.m., and 1:30 p.m.

The scheduled speaker will be Elder Mike Prater from Landmark Missionary Baptist Church in Granite Bay, CA.

All are invited to attend, and pray for us if you can not attend. If you have any questions please call the pastor at (352) 895-1437.

The Philadelphia B. C. of Decatur, AL would like to announce their Summer Meeting for June 17th - 21st. Service times are Wednesday thru Friday at 7:00 p.m., Saturday 10:00 a.m., and Sunday 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

The primary speaker will be Elder William VanNunen. Elder Shaun Trescott will be the additional speaker on Saturday which is the Quarterly Fellowship. A noon meal will be provided Saturday.

The Big Creek Baptist Church of Wayne, WV. and pastor Matthew Stepp would like to announce Revival Services April 27 thru May 1st. Service time is 7:30 p.m. nightly.

Scheduled speakers are Elders

John Lybrook (Monday), Tom Hysell (Tuesday), Bob Patton (Wednesday), John Fry (Thursday), and Rex Smith (Friday).

Also, included Friday is the Area Fellowship. Dinner on the grounds will follow the evening service and is provided by the ladies of the church.

For more information please contact Pastor Stepp at (304) 807-5063 (M) or (304) 522-1261 (H) or by Email at bigcreek@frontier.com.

The Berea Baptist Church of Mantachie, MS would like to announce their Spring Fellowship meeting on May 2nd. Scheduled speakers are Elders Eldon Joslin of Birmingham, AL, and Paul Stepp of Lizemores, WV.

Services begin at 10:00 a.m. and a noon meal will be provided by the church.

All are invited to attend.

The Berea Baptist Broadcast can now be heard on WQRL 106.3 FM in the southern Illinois area at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings. The program is being sponsored by the Grace Missionary Baptist Church, 306 North Vicksburg St, Marion, IL 22959. If you enjoy the program let them know by calling them at (618) 841-0228.

A new mission work has begun. The Providence Baptist Church located at 1115 Jones Mill Road, Cartersville, GA 30120, is an outreach of the Tibet Baptist Church of Ludowici, GA. Service times are Sunday School at 9:45 a.m., Morning Worship at 10:45 a.m. and Evening Worship at 5:00 p.m.

For more information please contact Bro. Bruce Allen (502) 468-6563, Email: providencebc30120@gmail.com or on Facebook under Providence Baptist.

The Windsor Baptist Church of Windsor, IL is seeking a qualified candidate for pastor. They are small in number but rich in truth. Candidate should meet the qualification in I Timothy 3. For more information please contact Brother John Gregory at (217)728-9966 or Email windsorbaptist.grace@gmail.com.

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

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

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