

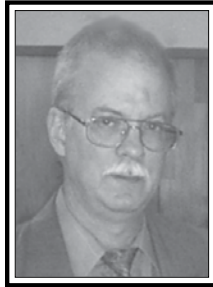
# The Berea Baptist Banner

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

## A Little Leaven

By Lucien J. LeSage Jr.  
of Pride, Louisiana

The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Galatians said, **"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"** (Gal. 5:9). When we first read of leaven in the Bible we see that the Jews were to put away leaven out of their houses when observing the Lord's Passover. In fact it was so serious that we read, **"Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put**



**away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel"** (Ex. 12:15). We see that in the Bible leaven represents sin. This is why we observe the Lord's

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## An Inexhaustible Supply

By Paul Stepp  
of Indore, West Virginia



**"After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up**

**his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may**

**eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth**

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## Past the Point of No Return

By Curtis Pugh  
of Poteau, Oklahoma

To no degree whatsoever does the Bible support the idea that either the United States or Christians have replaced Israel. The promises made to Israel cannot be claimed by others. Israel was God's national earthly people. Christians are a spiritual people. Israel was God's Old Testament visible kingdom. The Lord's congregations are the executive branch of the present unseen phase of Christ's kingdom.



(Christ's congregations each also have Christ-given limited judicial power in addition to each one's executive power, but none have any legislative power since Christ is to be each church's Head and Lawgiver. Thus churches are to carry out those things prescribed in the Bible. They are to "judge them that are within,"

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## Quietness Versus Busyness

By Tom Ross  
of South Point, Ohio



**He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men"** (Psa. 107:29-31)!

Our text is actually a prophecy that was fulfilled in Matthew 8:23-27 when Jesus calmed the

**stormy sea and saved His disciples from destruction. When the Lord Jesus calmed the raging sea, the disciples, who**

**had been troubled and terrified, were suddenly quieted and filled with gladness. What a practical lesson demonstrating the power and presence of Christ to quiet the hearts of His people in the**

◊ (Continued on page 11)

**Be very slow a pledge to make,  
But slower still your word to break.**

**"But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation"** (James 5:12).

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

## A Little Leaven

(Continued from page 1) ♦

Supper with unleavened bread as it represents our Lord's sinless body and we use unleavened wine which represents His sinless blood.

Jesus verifies what I say for He warned of the leaven of the Pharisees. He spoke on more than one occasion warning of leaven, but not the leaven of bread. Here are His words. **"Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees"** (Matt 16:6), and then when His disciples thought that He spoke of the leaven of bread we then read, **"How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees"** (Matt 16:11-12). So here we see that false doctrine is likened unto leaven. And then we read of another occasion where Jesus **"began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy"** (Luke 12:1). One of the definitions of hypocrisy is "the acting of a stage player." So now we see that worship and religious activity that is not done from the heart is likened unto leaven. In another place Jesus warned of the leaven of Herod, and Herod was not a righteous man (See Mark 8:15). The Apostle Paul said that self-glorying and malice and wickedness were likened unto leaven. **"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). So hypocrisy and false doctrine is represented by leaven and truth and sincerity is said to be without leaven. And what is truth one might ask? Well Jesus answered that question for us in His high priestly prayer to His Father when He said, **"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"** (John 17:17). The word of God, that is the Bible, is where we find truth. Now you would not want to add any leaven to that, would you? Would you be so brave as to add to it the commandments of men?

I have quoted these Scriptures to establish a foundation of what leaven represents in the Bible. There is an interesting passage in the kingdom of heaven parables that Jesus gave. They are seen in Matthew's gospel, chapter thirteen. In that chapter we read these words in the 33rd verse. **"Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."** What could be meant by these words? Does leaven represent what it does in other places in the Bible or something different here? Even the learned John Gill wrote, "The word 'leaven' is everywhere else used in a bad sense; and either designs immorality, as malice and wickedness, or false doctrine, such as that of the Pharisees and Sadducees: but here it seems to be taken in a good sense, and the

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# A Little Leaven

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Gospel to be compared unto it." As much as we admire John Gill's commentaries we feel that he has made an error with his comments concerning this verse. Notice his words "everywhere else" it is "used in a bad sense" but here "it seems" otherwise. It only seemed that way to him. We believe that it is still as always in that it represents evil. Let us examine the parables of Matthew chapter thirteen a little more closely.

Let me ask this question. Does the **"kingdom of heaven"** represent the saved in heaven or something else? Well, in that same chapter of Matthew we read, **"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn"** (Matt. 13:24-30). Not just a few tares but enough to be gathered into bundles. For those who may not know, a tare is a false wheat. It looks like wheat but has a black

grain. Now look down at verse 47-48 of the same chapter. **"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away."**

So in both of these cases we see the kingdom of heaven with tares that an enemy had planted with the wheat together and a net that had gathered both good and bad. Notice in verse 41 that Jesus said that his angels would gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and do iniquity. So we see that the kingdom of heaven does not represent the saved who are in heaven but professing Christendom here on earth during this present age in which we are now living which began at the preaching of John the Baptist. **"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force"** (Matt. 11:12). What kind of kingdom could suffer violence and the violent take it by force other than one on earth? This is not the coming millennial kingdom because this one had suffered violence since the days of John the Baptist.

At the beginning of chapter thirteen of Matthew Jesus started speaking in parables. It begins with the parable of the sower who sowed seed. The seed fell on four types of ground. Jesus said that the seed was the word of the kingdom. On the stony ground it even sprang up but withered away. Where it fell among thorns it also sprang up but was choked. Only one type of ground of the four ever produced any fruit. It was only the seed that fell on good ground that produced any fruit. But the Bible teaches that there is

## Little Hills

By Nathaniel Hille of  
Caldwell, Kansas



### The New Birth #2 Marvel Not - Part 1

**"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again"** (John 3:7). It should be no surprise to anyone that all of man kind is in need of a new birth. This first birth we have of our parents is after the likeness of sinful Adam. The Scriptures declare concerning the birth we have of our father that it is one of sin, **"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me"** (Ps. 51:5). **"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one"** (Ps. 14:2-3).

**"Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble"** (Job 14:1). The Bible declares that the sons of men **"go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies"** (Ps. 58:1, 3). Our first birth is filled with sin, **"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"** (Rom. 3:23). Our first birth has no righteousness; no spiritual life; it has been destroyed with sin. No wonder Christ said to Nicodemus, **"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."**

Have you been born again? Have you been quickened by the Holy Spirit of God? Has Christ imparted unto you a Divine nature of perfect righteousness? **"Ye MUST be born again"** (emph. NH).

none good, no not one (Romans 3:12). **"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one"** (Ps. 14:2-3). Jesus himself said the same. **"And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God"** (Mark 10:18). Now back to our parable about the seed that fell on the good ground. Jesus later explained that the good ground is **"he that heareth the word, and understandeth it"** (Matt. 13:23). But again the Bible says that there is none that understandeth. Paul said, **"There is none that**

**understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God"** (Rom. 3:11). So who understands? Well the Bible tells us who understands. It is not the one who is smarter than everyone else. **"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,"** (Luke 24:45). You see, dear reader, the ground had to be prepared by the Holy Spirit in order that the seed which fell on it would produce any fruit. It is all a work of God. Men repent and believe the gospel because of a work that God Himself does. Paul said that **"he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"** (Phil. 1:6). He wrote to the Corinthians and asked them

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# A Little Leaven

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**“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it”** (I Cor. 4:7)? It is God that makes the difference, not you. It is all of grace and **“not of works, lest any man should boast.”** And this is important to see when considering that **“the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”** Oh, dear reader, I am about to present a sobering picture of today’s professing Christendom. I do not think this represents the bride of Christ because I read where the bride has made herself ready, but it represents the sad state of professing Christendom.

So what has happened? Well, it started very early. Paul warned of it over and over. **“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears”** (Acts 20:29). And what was this doctrine that they would bring in? Paul in his epistle to the Galatians wrote, **“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain”** (Gal. 2:21). And then in that same epistle he wrote, **“Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law”**

(Gal. 3:21). You see, dear reader, there is no commandment given that can be obeyed that will produce life. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians stated that we were all dead in trespasses and sins and that it was God who quickened us. Our repentance and faith which we must have in order to be truly saved are the results of Holy Spirit quickening. A man who is spiritually blind must be given the ability to see before he can see the glorious light of the gospel. A man who is spiritually deaf must be given the ability to hear before he can hear the good news of the Gospel. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation but Paul did not stop there when he said that. He said, **“for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”** (Rom. 1:16). Spiritually dead men cannot embrace the gospel in saving faith without the quickening power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us now return to Jesus’ parable of the woman hiding leaven in three measures of meal. I would like to draw your attention to a few points of interest. Leaven is hidden by this woman in the meal. If leaven represented the gospel then why would it be hidden? The Gospel is to be proclaimed and shouted from the housetops. Jesus said, **“What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops”** (Matt. 10:27). But we see in the parable of the leaven that the woman hid this leaven in the meal. Paul spoke of false brethren who **“came in privily”** in order **“that they might bring us into bondage”** (Gal. 2:4). The word **“privily”** means secretly or by stealth. Peter says the same thing when he wrote, **“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be**

**false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction”** (II Peter 2:1). So we can see that it makes no sense to make the action of secretly hiding leaven in three measures to represent the preaching of the Gospel and that it would grow and grow until it filled the earth. What the parable teaches is that the three measures of meal have had leaven inserted and that meal will eventually become completely leavened. So what could the three measures of meal represent? It is always best to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Where is the first place in the Bible that three measures of meal are spoken of? It is in Genesis 18:6 where Abraham told Sarah to quickly make ready **“three measures of fine meal.”** And what was it for? It was to feed three men, one being the LORD Himself. It was what the Lord Himself ate. The three measures of meal represent the pure unleavened Gospel of God. It is the food of God, without leaven. But this woman has secretly hidden leaven in the pure Gospel. She has by stealth inserted the commandments of men into the Gospel. Things to do in order to be saved. Commandments to keep and days to observe that are not to be found anywhere in the Gospel. Paul in his letter to the Galatians wrote, **“Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain”** (Gal. 4:10-11). I fear many Baptists have fallen into a similar trap. Do you really think walking an aisle, or shaking a preacher’s hand, or raising your hand, or saying a sinner’s prayer can create life? In my own experience I did come to the front

in a church service but it was the results of being brought under conviction by the Holy Spirit and shut up with no place to turn but the completed work of Jesus Christ as my substitute.

So, who is this woman that did this awful thing? Well, the bride of Christ is a woman, but I do not think this woman is the bride of Christ. As has already been pointed out the bride hath **“made herself ready”** for the marriage and it was granted to her to be **“arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints”** (Rev. 19:7-8). However, there is another woman mentioned in the Book of Revelation and nothing good is said of her. It says that **“the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication”** (Rev. 17:2). That would be spiritual fornication. She **“was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication”** (Rev. 17:4). She had come so far in her heresy that she was **“drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus”** (Rev. 17:6) through her inquisition. One thing we are sure of is that the woman in Jesus’ parable concerning the leaven was pretending to be Christian. We know that because she is hiding the leaven in the three measures of meal and the kingdom of heaven is likened unto to this. Make no mistake, she is part of professing Christendom. She has mixed works and the commandments of men to be kept into the pure Gospel meal.

How far will it all go? Well the Lord says, **“Till the whole was**

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# WATERING THE TULIPS



By Todd Bryant  
of  
Northport, Alabama



## The Foundation of All Truth

**“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time” (I Cor. 15:3-8).**

The resurrection of Jesus is a fact without question. If ever there was a place where such a supposed falsehood could have been quickly snuffed out, it was Israel. If Jesus was not Whom He claimed to be and did not do the things He claimed to do, the Jews would have immediately dismissed it as fantasy and moved on with the status quo. Yet Peter told these very people on Pentecost, **“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know” (Acts 2:22).** The works of

Jesus were attested to them and done in their midst and they knew them to be the truth. The same can be said of the resurrection.

But no, they would have believed if they knew a man was raised from the dead, one might well say. This is not true, however, for Jesus recounted a conversation between a dead rich man in torments as he spoke with Abraham. In response to the rich man’s plea that Lazarus be allowed to return from the dead to warn his family, Abraham said, **“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:31).** The resurrection of Jesus proves this to be true.

One would also think that the chief priests upon hearing the witness of those guarding Jesus’ tomb would have changed their minds concerning Jesus. As the guards detailed how the angel came with an earthquake and rolled the stone away, logic would lead us to believe the chief priests would have immediately seen their error and repented. However, that is not what occurred. **“And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept” (Matt. 28:12-13).** Having heard this grand account, they immediately sought to cover it up much like they sought to cover up the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 12:9-11).

Today’s world is much the same. History teaches us that all of the apostles died still professing to have seen the risen Jesus. Now, this might not be so amazing except that history informs us that 11 of them died a martyr’s death. And even that 12th one

was supposedly boiled in oil in the Coliseum. But in the midst of these tortures, not one of them recanted. In fact, none of the 500 that saw Jesus alive recanted. Surely, the Jews would have loved a witness that did just that. But they never found one. If they had, they would have put him out there for all the world to see.

The world has been turned upside down as a result of the resurrection of Jesus. Unlike a plethora of religious people, followers of Jesus have remained firmly committed to Him for 2000 years – because He is surely risen from the dead. Friend, what is your opinion of Jesus today? Do you believe the Bible? Do you believe the witnesses? Even the facts if weighed fairly point to Him being raised from the dead, and your eternity weighs on it. **“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9).**



## A Little Leaven

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**leavened” (Matt. 13:33).** Paul wrote to Timothy and said, **“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (I Tim. 4:1-3).** And again he wrote, **“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”**

**... “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (II Tim. 3:1, 5).** They would be religious, but worldly and lost. They would think that they are **“rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”** and not know that they are **“wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17).** Because they were this way the Lord Jesus said, **“I will spue thee out of my mouth.”** I do realize that was written to a local church that did exist in John’s day, but it was the last church mentioned and we are in the last times. However the woman in Jesus’ parable is in a far more perilous condition than even this church mentioned in Revelation. The Laodicean church was lukewarm and Christ was not even in it. We see Him standing on the outside but He did stand at the door and knock. But the woman in Jesus’ parable had purposely and secretly introduced false doctrine into the Gospel and this action would eventually pollute all of professing Christendom. No wonder Jesus said, **“When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth” (Luke 18:8)?** And again He said, **“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:22-23).**

A brief explanation of the parable of the mustard seed is probably in order here. **“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the**

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# A Little Leaven

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**least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.** (Matt. 13:31-32). A mustard seed is a herb and may be as large as a small tree but is more like a bush from what I have found. But this herb though it is greatest among herbs became a tree. It morphed into something large enough that birds (translated fowls in verse 4) came and lodged there. Not just lighted, but lodged which means according to Strong's "to camp down," "haunt" or "to remain." Back in verse 19 Jesus explained that the fowls of verse 4 were the **"wicked one."** In the Revelation we see Babylon as a place for every unclean and hateful bird. In Ezekiel we see that the Assyrian was like a great cedar whose height was exalted above all trees and the fowls of heaven made their nests there. Then in the book of Daniel we see that it was Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom of Babylon that was compared to a great tree **"and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof."** So when we compare this parable with Scripture and in its context we get the same picture we do with the leaven.

Dear reader, we are in perilous times as Paul said would come. Men would be religious, yet deny the power of God. The God of the Bible has the power to save. He had the power to apprehend Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and convert him from being a hater of the truth to one of the greatest preachers of it. This is why Jesus said, **"Ye must be born again"** (John 3:7). Not get, but be because it is passive. The believer

is born of God. I ask the reader to please read Romans 8:28 through 9:24. Do you ever hear that passage of Scripture preached? And if not, then why? Have you ever heard sovereign election taught? If not, then why? Has this passage ever been preached? **"For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth"** (Rom. 9:15-18). The passages I have just referenced speak of the God of the Bible who has absolute power to save all that He has chosen in Christ before the world began. But men will not preach them nor will they deal with them. The reason sovereign grace is not preached or taught in most churches today is because it is not compatible with the leaven that has been introduced and has now permeated most of professing Christendom.

**"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues"** (Rev. 18:4).



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(1 Corinthians 5:12), but have no power whatsoever to make laws and rules.) Israel was blessed with land and prosperity while Christians are blessed with **"...all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"** (Eph. 1:3).

While godly-living Israel was promised prosperity, often the children of God are like Gaius. This man Gaius was a godly-living follower of Christ to whom John wrote his third letter. But he was not prosperous. Old John in his letter to him commended his godliness and personally wished for him that he might prosper financially just as he was prospering spiritually, saying, **"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth"** (III John 1:2). This verse does not teach that all godly-living people will prosper. In fact it proves the very opposite! John's personal wish was that Gaius prosper in the natural realm just as he was prospering in the spiritual realm. So then, it is possible for a Christian to be prospering spiritually while lacking much in the natural or financial realm. Paul experienced poverty at times for he wrote, **"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need"** (Phil. 4:11-12). Paul knew what it meant to "suffer need." The Bible evidence is against the prosperity preachers of our day! Our point is that while American Christians in many instances have

prospered, what Bible evidence do we have that this will continue? If the U.S. as a nation is indeed ripe for judgment, who says that the Christian citizens of this nation shall escape suffering? There is no guarantee of that and history is replete with examples of suffering saints.

While we want to be clear on the difference between the place in God's plan held by Israel and that of Christianity, God's dealings with Israel have been recorded for each of us. Paul wrote of the Old Testament Scriptures in Romans 15:4 saying: **"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."** The adage is this: "The New is in the Old contained and the Old is by the New explained." Both the Old Testament and the New are for God's children today although the Old is not to them. In the above verse, Paul said the Old Testament was "for our learning" not to us. There is a difference in something being "for" a person and something being "to" them. We may learn much about our grandfather and his dealings by his last will and testament although it was "to" our parents and did not include us, his yet unborn grandchildren – if such an illustration is helpful.

Three times the phrase "the hope of Israel" appears in our King James Bibles. In this article we want to examine the context of the first instance of this phrase. This preacher would think that the translators should have used a capital letter so that the phrase reads, "the Hope of Israel," but they did not. Immediately when seeing this phrase we notice the definite article is used: "the" is used, not "a" as if there was more

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than one Hope for Israel. There is only one such Hope. Once a professed Brother asked this preacher if there was any hope of a future for Israel outside of Christ. Seldom is my mind quick enough to give good on-the-spot answers, but I believe God enabled me to answer him wisely and correctly. My words were, "There is no hope of a future for any man outside of Christ." And so Israel shall be brought to recognize and worship Jesus as their Messiah through suffering the terrible tribulation prophesied. Peter, speaking of the Lord Jesus, the Anointed, said, **"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"** (Acts 4:12). This is true for both Jews and Gentiles! (To my Brothers and Sisters in Christ I would say, please do not think this preacher is becoming an imitator of the Jews, a Messianic Jew or anything like that because I used the word "Anointed" in the place of Messiah or Christ. The word transliterated "Christ" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word transliterated "Messiah" and both mean the "Anointed" or the "Anointed One" - the only Deliverer and Hope of men whether Jews or Gentiles, but specifically stated to be the Hope of Israel.)

There are lessons for us in these three usages of the phrase "the hope of Israel," but space forbids examining more than one here. The first usage of this phrase is found in Jeremiah 14:8 where it is written: **"O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth**

**aside to tarry for a night?"** A traveler passing through a strange country cared little for the people or country he traversed. Come near-nightfall he might seek hospitality in a private dwelling or an inn. Or he might turn aside, go off the road and pitch his tent so as to have a place to lodge for the night. He was, after all, just passing through as he traveled to his intended destination. His interest lay in another place, not in the country he traversed.

Jeremiah refers to Jehovah as both "the hope of Israel" and "the savior thereof" - that is of Israel. But he portrays God as disinterested in Israel. Just as Jesus in Mark 6:48 made as if He would pass by His disciples in the little ship, so Jeremiah pictures God as not caring about Israel. We ask, why does the prophet present God to us in this way? The context, always of greatest importance, makes clear Jeremiah's portrayal: hear it: **"Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence"** (Jer. 14:10-12). And so God, because of the unfaithfulness of Israel, is pictured as a wayfaring man, a stranger, a pilgrim just passing through taking no fatherly interest in Israel.

Notice in this quotation first of all God speaks of the sins of Israel. Loving to wander from God and His law, they have not

refrained to do whatever pleased them. Does not God's assessment of ancient Israel bring the U.S.A. immediately to mind? Is there not a definite parallel between what Israel had done and what is going on in the U.S. at this very moment? While we make no claim to the U.S. being God's people or His land, we are mindful that God spoke specifically of the Gentile nations when He said, **"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God"** (Ps. 9:17). Whether Jews or Gentiles, God chastens His people (see Hebrews 12:6 and Revelation 3:19). But God does not ignore the sins of either Jews or Gentiles. In Isaiah 60:12 we are told: **"For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."** God holds nations and the individuals that compose them responsible for their sins.

The second thing of note is that the point of no return had passed. There is sometimes a point in airplane travel when more than half the fuel has been burned, and because of this, it is impossible to return to the plane's place of origin. It is impossible to go back regardless of what may be ahead. So our text says that God, **"will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins."** So it is that we ask the question: has the U.S. passed the point of no return? Is it possible to go back - to return to those days when at least in public God was honored? Is it possible to go back to the time when God and the Bible were honored in public schools and when prayer was offered in the name of Jesus Christ? Is it possible to go back to a time when decency in conduct, modesty in dress, cleanliness of speech, honesty in business, etc. were expected as the norm? Do the

words of Scripture in Psalm 11:3, **"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"** find proper application to the present situation in the U.S.? Have the foundations in the U.S. been so destroyed as to make useless the efforts of the righteous to restore the nation?

Next in our text from Jeremiah chapter fourteen we note these crushing words: **"Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence."** They had passed the point of no return! God forbade the prophet praying for the good of Israel! Even the prayers, sacrifices, fasting - all the religious efforts of the people were in vain. Nothing would be accomplished by even sincere worshipers toward averting the judgment of God upon Israel. Has that time come for the U.S.? Should we Baptists be praying for God to bless America with good? Is praying such prayers according to His will or is it not? Can we, with Biblical assurance, pray other than to ask God that His will be done? **"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him"** (I John 5:14-15). Do we pray for God's blessing upon the U.S. with confidence that we are asking according to His will? When we pray thus do we know that He hears us? And do we have assurance that "we have the petitions that we desired

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of him"? I trow not! Can we pray other than "Revive us again"? Can we say more than "may God have mercy upon us all"?

And next we are told how God judges nations. "I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence." The words "consume them" speak of total and final destruction. Wars, starvation and disease: these are tools in God's hands. Is one or more of these tools in God's hand for the U.S.? We have long asked the question: "Why is the United States not mentioned in prophecy?" Other nations are mentioned, some by name. But the U.S. is not mentioned! It seems clear that these United States will play no important role in end-time events. Either she will be destroyed as a nation or reduced to such a weak, third-world status as to have no impact upon end-time events. Are you spiritually ready for this?

Unpopular words, these! So it was in the days of Jeremiah! In fact the next words after our text are these: **"Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart"** (Jer. 14:13-14). Let the liberals, the leftists, the Joel Osteens and the other false prophets say what they will! We live in dangerous days! We may be living in the final days of the

United States. We certainly live in the days prophesied by Paul: **"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away"** (II Tim. 3:1-5). Dangerous days for the saints! Dangerous days for the Lord's congregations!

Shall Christ's bride and her maidens escape the tribulation – that time of "Jacob's trouble"? This preacher is convinced that the next prophesied event is the catching away or rapture of the saints. He is convinced that the Lord's saints of this church-age will be caught away before that terrible time of tribulation that is to **"...come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth"** (Rev. 3:10). (One commentator says "them that dwell upon the earth" should be understood as referring to their character "those who are of earth, earthy" rather than just their dwelling place.) This preacher is also convinced that we are in that time called by our Lord **"the beginning of sorrows"** (Matt. 24:8). But what Scripture do we have that equates a possible destruction of the United States with the tribulation period? The tribulation period has to do with Israel. It is as stated, the time of **"Jacob's trouble"** (Jer. 30:7). We ask in all seriousness, could it not be that God may judge America with **"the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence"** prior to the tribulation period?

Why do we Americans think we are safe just because Christ is going to return for His bride and her guests prior to the tribulation period? While other nations have been judged for their sins, do we have a right to think that God will withhold judgment upon America until after Christ has come back in the air? Do we not, as a nation, deserve such a judgment? It has often been repeated that "If God does not judge America He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah." He judged them and our nation's sins in number and magnitude exceed theirs! Can we think ourselves as a nation not in the same wicked condition as was Israel in the days of Jeremiah? Let us not be presumptuous. Let us not have wicked self-confidence in America's greatness either former or present.

Rather should we not walk humbly before our God? Should we not occupy until Jesus comes or calls us home? Shall we then hear Him say **"...Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord"** (Matt. 25:21). Remember Paul's words: **"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"** (Galatians 6:9). And then, glory of glories, we shall be with Him who is "the Hope of Israel" and shall cast our crowns at His feet, saying **"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created"** (Rev. 4:11). As the old Baptists sang, "Broken hearts, and humble walkers, These are dear in Jesus' eyes." Cast off presumption! May God give us grace to be "humble walkers," **"For many walk, of whom I have**

told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:18-19). Selah!



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of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world" (John 6:1-14).

I want to examine this miracle, purely from the perspective of the picture which we see of the Word of God as represented by the bread and the fishes which are fed to the multitude. I want us

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to consider some ways in which we can see the Word of God pictured, and to consider some of the characteristics of the food and the miracle which represent also the characteristics of the Word of God.

God is gracious to His people. He will typically feed, clothe, protect, and preserve His people in this life. We have His Providence to provide and protect us. However, we will not always live on this earth. And, we will not always live lives of abundance of possessions and abundance of health. Hard times come to us. Bitter struggles sometimes nearly consume us. And yet, God will provide for each of us, up until such time as we are destined to leave this earth.

But, though this life – and the blessings of it – are temporal, the spiritual blessings and the spiritual provision of God is “an inexhaustible supply.” Our mortal lives will one day end; but the spiritual lives which have been granted to those who are the children of God, will never expire. This is true, also, in the realm of the spiritual things, even in this life. There are blessings that are given unto us – the presence of the Holy Spirit, the peace of God from Heaven, and the Blessed Word of God – which can never be taken from us, and which will prevail in this life, and into the life to come.

I want us to especially consider the incredible blessing which is the Word of God. We who are the sons and daughters of God are privileged and honored to hold in our hands, and to consume with the inner man, the very words of God which are delivered to mankind. This Word of God descends from Heaven,

and indwells in the hearts and minds of God’s people. And yet, we do not always properly esteem this Word, and we do not always diligently seek the deliverance, the nourishment, the guidance, and the instruction which is found in the Word of God.

Surely, our God is good to us. In reference to this miracle, and in particular the phrase **“as much as they would,”** Charles Spurgeon said, “Note those words, for they are the rule at Christ’s feasts. Of earthly things, he gives us as much as we need; and of heavenly things, as much as we would! ‘Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.’ According to your faith be it unto you.” I think the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, and the thoughts that are provoked, are a good picture of the “inexhaustible supply” of the Word of God.

## THE WORD OF GOD IS ABUNDANT

First, let us notice the abundance of the Word of God, as it is demonstrated in this miracle. **“There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would”** (John 6:9-11).

It might seem that the ingredients of the feast that Jesus Christ was about to prepare, were very sparing indeed. And yet, Jesus Christ was able to deliver a feast that could not have been imagined by those who were present. Even so, the Word of God may seem small or even

inconsequential to many; and yet, hidden inside the pages of the Holy Book of Scriptures, lies a feast of immense proportions. Many might consider the ingredients of this Heavenly feast to be meager or sparse or even un-appetizing. However, the children of the Kingdom of Heaven, will find that the Word of God contains an abundance of sustenance, and is, in fact, an inexhaustible supply of the necessary nutrition and sustenance which every child of God requires.

In the Great Commission, the church is instructed to take the gospel (the Word of God) into all the world. We never run out of material! We never run out of the abundance of God’s Word and God’s grace! We are told, **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none**

**other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). This Word of God is abundant, even to the salvation of the souls of men, so that every soul that is saved will be saved through a belief in the proclamation of this gospel of Jesus Christ.

We read in the book of the Revelation, **“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people”** (Rev. 14:6). John Gill said, “The Gospel in its fulness and purity; the Gospel of the grace of God, of free justification by the righteousness of Christ, of peace and pardon by his blood, and of complete salvation by him; called

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everlasting, because the substance of it was settled from all eternity, in the council and covenant of peace; it was ordained before the world was, and was hid in God from the beginning; and the revelation of it was of old; it was made to our first parents immediately after the fall, and was spoken of by all God's holy prophets which have been since the world began; it was preached before unto Abraham, and in the times of Isaiah, and by other prophets, and so is no new upstart doctrine: besides, the matter of it is everlasting; it treats of everlasting things; of the eternal election of persons to salvation; of God's everlasting love to them; of an everlasting covenant he made with Christ on their account; of blessings, promises, and grace given to them in him, before the world began; and of his being set up so early as a Mediator; and of his going forth in a way of grace from everlasting; as well as it reveals an everlasting righteousness, and brings life and immortality, or eternal life to light, or shows the way to everlasting life and happiness; to which may be added, that it will abide for ever, it will always remain... it will continue till all the elect of God are gathered in, notwithstanding the violence of persecutors, or the craft of seducers; nor will it be antiquated and made void by another Gospel succeeding it, for there will be no other." O, the abundance and the everlasting nature of the Word of God! This is no short-lived Gospel, nor is Christianity a short-lived or temporal religion. This Word of God exists from before the foundation of the world, and will extend in its powers into the ages of eternity future. This Word

of God is abundant, in that it is effective in its application in the life of every one of those who are destined for salvation. Its flow cannot be stanchied or quenched; its power will abundantly spread into all the world, saving the souls of those who are elect, and as a witness against those who are condemned because of their unbelief.

## THE WORD OF GOD IS SATISFYING

Second, let us notice how that the multitude was satisfied, and let us apply this satisfaction to the Word of God in the lives of the believers. **"And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost"** (John 6:11-12).

The men and women who were fed by the Lord Jesus Christ, must have been a hungry bunch of people. There they were, in a wilderness place, without enough food to feed more than a family or two. Why would so many people assemble together in such a distant place, without thought for food and sustenance? I suppose that we can answer, at least, that they were assembled together to prove the power, the authority, and the compassion of Jesus Christ.

These hungry persons are representative of the hungry souls who desire the satisfaction that can only be found in the Word of God – the Living Bread. **"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which**

**cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst"** (John 6:32-35). Men have written many books; men have penned a multitude of words and sayings; but, to the hungry soul of the child of God, there is nothing so satisfying as the Word of God. In the case of those who are saved or are destined for salvation, Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the Word of God, and the Living Bread which gives us life and sustains us. **"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David"** (Isa. 55:1-3).

I wonder, how satisfying is the Word of God to you? If you are saved, I wonder how much do you long for the Word of God? The Word of God is the delight of His people. The Word of God is the desire of His people. The Word of God is all-satisfying to His people. King David said, **"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth"** (Ps. 119:103)! Jeremiah said, **"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am**

**called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts"** (Jer. 15:16).

Without a doubt, the people who were physically fed in our text passage were physically satisfied and were filled. Notice that they all ate, and there was still some left-over. Notice that they ate their fill. The Word of God is also the satisfaction of all those who seek Christ. Nourishment, sustenance, and even life is found in the Word of God. The Word of God is the only nourishment that will give us that "full and satisfied" feeling. And, if we go long without that precious Word, we will find that our lives will show the effect; we will grow weaker in the spirit; we will not have the strength to persevere nor to resist temptation; we will not be able to succor others in the Churches of Jesus Christ; we will not be the example to the world that we ought to be. We need the Word of God and Its satisfying sustenance.

## THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT WASTED

Finally, I want you to notice that there was not any wasted food at the performing of the miracle in our text passage. **"When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten"** (John 6:12-13). In this miracle, all of the left-overs were gathered together and they were preserved. Let us apply this thought to the Word of God, as well.

You might imagine that, since the Word of God is inexhaustible; and, since the Word of God is so abundant; that there must be

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some waste, or some surplus, or some discarded portions of the Word of God, which will never be made proper use of – surely, there is something that will be lost. However, if you imagine some such a thing, you are terribly wrong. Just as the bread and the fishes were made proper use of, and just as the fragments that remained were gathered up for future use, even so, the Word of God will not be wasted. What portions might seem to be discarded by some will be highly valued by others. What portions might seem to be misused or misapplied by some will be properly used and properly applied by others. What portions – or even the entirety of the Scriptures – might seem to be derided or disobeyed or twisted by some, will be highly esteemed, obeyed, and properly understood by others. God's Word is sent forth with a purpose, and God's will shall be accomplished! **"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it"** (Isa. 55:9-11). God is sovereign in His creation. He knows far more than we can imagine. He is far more powerful than we can imagine. It is vain for any man, to imagine that he can test the limits of God's power or knowledge. **"Great is**

**our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite"** (Ps. 147:5).

The Word of God reveals God to man. The Word of God relates the purpose and the will of God to man. **"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"** (Isa. 46:9-10). This Word cannot be thwarted, utterly (forever) ignored, or resisted as the will of God is accomplished. There are no left-overs which are the result of ineffectiveness or failure on the part of God!

Since God has determined to deliver His Word unto sinful men, it is vain for us to imagine that there is some weakness, some flaw, or some sense in which His Word has been wasted upon men. Yes, the Word of God does contain the gospel of salvation. Yes, men must hear and believe that Gospel message in order to be saved. It is also true that we, the children of God, and the emissaries of Jesus Christ on this earth, freely share this Gospel with the world – and yet, all are not saved. Often, it seems that very few (if any at all) are saved. But, this does not mean that God's Word is wasted. All who are ordained unto salvation shall hear and believe. The remainder are condemned because they did not believe that Word which was preached.

It is also true that the Word of God contains the rules by which men should live their lives. And yet, all men do not obey the moral and practical and heavenly teachings of God's Word. But this does not mean that God's Word is wasted. All who are meant to

obey, will obey the Word and the precepts of God. The remainder will be held accountable for their disobedience.

In the end, the Word of God will be – at the very least – a voice of condemnation for the wicked who did not obey, and a voice of reproof for those saints of God who did not always pursue the teachings and the precepts of the Word of God. **"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"** (Matt. 24:14). In the Word of God, and the manner of Its delivery to the sons of Adam, the Lord God Creator has called the world to witness that He has given unto us the revelation of God to man. Man is responsible to obey and believe. God is responsible only to judge men's reaction to the Word of God.

Thankfully, through the Word of God many are saved. **"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise"** (Eph. 1:13). Thankfully, through the Word of God many are made able to follow God and to obey Him. **"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"** (John 17:17). **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish"** (Eph. 5:25-27). Praise God for the inexhaustible supply of the Word of God!



# Quietness Versus

(Continued from page 1) ♦

midst of a world that is filled with storms of busyness, turmoil, and distractions. Oh that we would learn to take time in quiet contemplation to commune with God in solitude that we might gain a better understanding of His goodness and His mighty works!

Could it be that we have become so enamored with busyness and productivity in our daily lives that we have failed to spend quiet time in the secret place of the Most High, drinking in His fellowship, and basking in His glory? Without a private life of spiritual devotion we will soon burn out in our public service. We may stay busy "serving" but wondering why we feel miserable and empty inside. We must understand that quiet time with God is absolutely necessary if we are to serve Him aright!

## CULTIVATING QUIETNESS

1. We must learn to obey God's Word which commands: **"Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah...Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth"** (Psa. 4:4; 46:10). It is imperative that we spend time with God in solitude each and every day (Psa. 91:1-6). In order to do this we must of necessity turn off worldly distractions that would serve to divert our attention. Turn off the Iphone, the Ipad, the laptop, the television, the radio, and every other form of busy diversion. Take time to listen to God through His Word and talk to Him in prayer. We will never grow to love the Lord if we do not spend quiet time with Him. If we are to enjoy the peace of God and the comfort of

♦ (Continued on page 17)



## The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Is it possible that we still have Apostles and gifts of the Holy Spirit today as some Christians believe and preach? California

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We no longer have Apostles in our day and have not had the presence of an Apostle on earth since the end of the first century after the death of John the beloved. Jesus chose twelve apostles and set them as founding members in the church He started and promised perpetuity to (Matt. 16:18; I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20). The original twelve all had the baptism of John the Baptist as did Mathias who was chosen to replace Judas in Acts 1:21-26. In this passage 3 distinct requirements are listed to replace Judas as an apostle: 1) Verse 21, they had to be chosen by Christ and in the company of those that followed Jesus during His earthly ministry. 2) Verse 22, all the apostles were bound together and identified as the disciples of Christ by the baptism of John the Baptist. 3) Verse 22, all were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ. Paul, an apostle born out of due time (I Cor. 15:6-10) was later added by the Lord Himself (Acts 9). Since Paul, no other apostles have been ordained, chosen, or appointed by Christ. The Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement came into being in the early 1900's claiming to have apostles and apostolic gifts. However, not one of the "new"

apostles met even one of the qualifications for apostleship set forth in Acts 1 and I Corinthians 15. There are many Charismatics who claim to have apostolic authority but they are liars and false apostles. II Corinthians 11:13-15 declares: **"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."**

I am assuming the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the second part of the question have to do with the supernatural gifts of tongues, miracles, and healing. The gift of tongues was given for the benefit of unbelievers (I Cor. 14:22) during the times of the apostles to authenticate the work of the Lord's church as it preached the Gospel. It was first demonstrated in Acts 2, where the apostles were able to speak in the specific languages of those gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. The tongues, or languages spoken were intelligible and understandable to the hearers. The thing that made it miraculous is the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to fluently speak in languages they had no previous knowledge of. Later Paul would instruct the church at Corinth regarding the interpretation of tongues in church services in I Corinthians 14. Interestingly enough, Paul also told the Corinthians that the

supernatural gift of being able to speak a language without previous knowledge or training would cease (I Cor. 13:8). It should be further noted that the apostle Paul forbid the idea of a woman speaking in church services (I Cor. 14:33-35). This certainly cramps the style of the Charismatics and Pentecostals who openly promote the false notion of women speaking in tongues and preaching in our day. It simply is not scriptural.

In the Gospels and the Book of Acts there were supernatural gifts of healing and other miracles performed by Christ and the apostles. Interestingly enough those miracles were only performed in the Book of Acts when an apostle or one personally commissioned by an apostle were present. The apostolic miracles were used by God to authenticate the work of the Church that Jesus had started during His earthly ministry and the truth it was commissioned to proclaim.

I like the following two quotes found on page 77 in *The Charismatics* by John MacArthur:

MacArthur wrote: "Tongues, healings, and miracles all served as signs to authenticate an era of new revelation. As the era of revelation came to a close, the signs ceased also."

B. B. Warfield wrote: "Miracles do not appear on the pages of Scripture vagrantly, here, there, and elsewhere indifferently, without assignable reason. They belong to revelation periods, and appear only when God is speaking to His people through accredited messengers, declaring His gracious purposes. Their abundant display in the Apostolic Church is the mark of the richness of the Apostolic age in revelation; and when this revelation period closed, the period of miracle-working had passed by also,

as a mere matter of course."

Do I believe that God is still working miracles in our day? No doubt. However it is not through the ministry of apostles. Every time a poor sinner is born of the Spirit, translated out of darkness into God's marvelous light, and justified by faith a miracle of sovereign grace has occurred! I can not tell you how many times I have prayed in hospital rooms for God to heal folks of various afflictions and have witnessed the healing power of the Lord raise them up in His time. How many times have you prayed for family members, church members, children, neighbors, and co-workers to be physically healed or saved by grace? It is God who is in the miracle business of healing and saving sinners. I despise the "fake" healers of our day who often play upon the fragile emotions of their followers. When their supposed "magic" does not work they blame it on the folks by saying they must not have enough faith. These Charismatic charlatans often line their pockets with the money they received from their hearers. It is wickedness that will be judged by the Almighty.

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**"Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword" (Acts 12:1-2).** Apostolic succession is denied in this passage. There are no follow-up Scriptures

◊ (Continued on page 14)

# The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Some Christians say that having a television is evil. I have always thought it was no different than having a radio, computer, or telephone. Are all these devices evil? California

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**"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not"** (I Cor. 10:23). Televisions and other mortal media inventions are certainly not evil in themselves, but in our age and generation, they certainly have been "tainted" with evil, as the main purpose of this carnal generation has been to use every avenue available to them to push their liberal, humanistic agendas. The television has certainly not been the exception, but rather the chief instrument! Selah! Think about it!

Man is totally depraved and the results of his inventions will tend toward the promiscuous. But to say that the instrument of "moving pictures" is evil, may be going too far. It can, and has been used for virtuous or economic purposes, and may continue to be used as such. Selective videos can enhance our education and broaden our understanding of God's creation and even allow a propagation of the Gospel and Bible truth, via Bible conferences and missionary teachers. Perhaps a clear understanding of the difference between being totally depraved and absolutely depraved might help. That man and his

creations tend toward evil does not mean that everything that man does is evil. Moral deeds can be done by fallen man, and moral shows used to exist on the American television screen. But those days are long gone, and it is foolish for Baptists to continue to allow our children to watch Hollywood's productions without a close and critical censorship. Selah! Think about it! **"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh"** (Gal. 5:16).

As we defend the media instruments of our day as being inert and inoffensive of themselves, we must realistically understand that once that flickering picture or raucous voice begins to weave its web of mesmerizing deceit, we are very vulnerable to its worldly attractions. **"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever"** (I John 2:15-17). The warning from the Apostle John is not to withdraw from the world, but to **"love"** or **"lust"** it not. That is always been the danger. There is no danger inherent in money, we always say, but it is the desire to be rich and the lust of power, as the Apostle Paul warns Timothy, **"But they that will be rich fall into**

**temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses"** (I Tim. 6:9-12).

If it is the love of money that is evil, and not the money, so too is the machinery (the telly), not the guilty part, but the tendency of the man and woman to turn on the channels of covetousness and lust that tell the tale. **"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren"** (James 1:14-16).

Perhaps if we were so busy about the business of the Gospel, we would not feel the need, or find the time to sit down in front of that many times appropriately called "boobtube" or "hellevision." **"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame"** (I Cor. 15:33-34). Our conscience has been seared far too much, I fear. May God give us the grace, wisdom, and courage to turn off the television and open our Bibles in the proper percentages of our fleeting time upon this earth. Selah! Think about it!

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I have thought and pondered this question for several weeks, ever since I received it to answer. The first thing that came to mind is, well, I have all these items in my home so no matter how I answer the question, I will be a hypocrite. I have sat and looked at my television, radio, computer, and telephone, which I have turned off for the moment. I see no evil in them. Just as I have laid some of my guns on the table and stared at them to see what evil I can find in them, and all of them seem to be totally harmless. I have even applied I Thessalonians 5:22, **"Abstain from all appearance of evil."** And I still can not find or see any evil in them.

So, I guess I would have to answer this question "Some Christians say that having a television is evil. I have always thought it was no different than having a radio, computer, or telephone. Are all these devices evil?" with a NO, all these devices are not evil. Turned OFF, that is!

On the other hand, when I turned them all on, it all changed. Then I could start to see evil at every turn. Now let us be sensible here, dear reader. I really do not have to go any further if we would all be honest. There is no doubt, and should be no argument that the first thing we will find is that once we turn these items on there is all sorts of evil there to attract us if we so choose to do so. I think the worst is the term (which I hear everywhere) is "O My God."

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# Forum #1

(Continued from page 12) ♦

to replace this original Apostle. If we go back to when the Apostle Judas Iscariot fell in treachery and treason, the Scriptures bound the early church to set another in the place of Judas. **"Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. ...For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection"** (Acts 1:16, 20-22). But that was it. Christ Jesus called Judas a "devil" and God had already ordained his failure and his replacement. But when James died there was no replacement. Although acceptable candidates remained, in the city of new Jerusalem, there will always be just the twelve. **"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb"** (Rev. 21:14).

The thrust of the question seems to be asking whether the Pentecostal charismatic movement has any legitimacy. They proclaim apostles and supernatural gifts of healing, speaking in tongues, etc. Are these real gifts of the Holy Spirit in these modern times? Selah! Think about it!

That these gifts and offices existed for a time, there is no

doubt. The Apostle Paul claims that these gifts were real, both in the Apostolic capacity and also in the early church. Even Christ proclaims that the early church would be known by these signs! **"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ... And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover"** (Mark 16:15, 17-18). These miraculous signs would validate the Lord's church and differentiate them from other religions as much as Elijah's "fire from heaven" blew away any credibility of Baal and his prophets.

But as the Word of God was completed, God phased out these "signs and wonders." The Apostle Paul predicted that in I Corinthians 13:8-10, **"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."** Charity/love was a gift that would never cease, but the Apostle clearly states here that open "prophecy" and "tongues" would cease. Selah! Think about it!

I remember Elder Andy Proctor's testimony about the simplicity of that verse, as the Lord brought him out of Pentecostalism. **"...Whether there be tongues, they shall cease..."**

Outright, that means there was coming a time when there would

be an END to the Biblical "gift of tongues" and miraculously speaking in unknown languages. When did that happen? Well, any honest student of Scripture and history will acknowledge that there are ZERO instances of these Apostolic gifts for almost 2000 years. It is inconceivable that these amazing gifts would have remained hidden until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only to begin flourishing again; this Bible verse being yet unfulfilled of "ceasing" when that which is perfect is come.

Of course, that perfect thing that would come is our Holy Bible. We do not need to replicate the miracles of old. Our hearts thrill and believe the stories of Elijah, Noah, Moses and more. Actually the charismatic movement is coming along just in time to fulfill more prophesy. **"And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things"** (Mark 13:21-23). The time of the Anti-christ is nigh at hand. Selah!

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(Mark 16:20, Acts 4:29-31, Exodus 4:30). These verses demonstrate the need for signs and wonders, the ability to speak in other languages and the job of an Apostle, not in that order.

No, it is not possible to still have Apostles, because there are

requirements that need to be met. **"Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection"** (Acts 1:21-22).

The gifts of the Holy Spirit, I am not quite sure what you mean by the gifts. I see in God's Word that there are many gifts the Holy Spirit gives to the saints. I suppose maybe you are thinking about tongues and healing? Speaking in tongues was never meant to be a perverted practice as it is today. What does Peter say. **"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts"** (II Pet. 1:19). We have all we need in God's Holy Bible. The Bible has nearly been translated in all languages of our earth, praise the Lord.

Healing was a sign to confirm the Gospel the Apostles preached. It ended with their death.

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One only has to read their Bible to know that we DO NOT have Apostles and gifts of the Holy Spirit today. That is what the Bible is for!

**"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,**

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## Forum #1

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and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (I Cor. 13:1-13).

The above chapter answers the question that has been asked here. But if someone wants to be

silly and argue the fact that this does not answer this question, then I can not help you and you need to examine your Christian life more carefully. Verses 8-10 are the key verses here. "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

Paul is saying that those things that were done by the Apostles were just for a short time until "that which is perfect is come." "That which is perfect is come" is the Holy Scriptures, the completed Bible which we now possess. We no longer need these gifts because everything has been recorded and is now in our possession, which we may read about, and experience by the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Let me ask a question here. Do you know of any missionary that can go to a foreign country and immediately speak and preach in that country's language without first studying it and learning it? If you do, I would like to know who it was or is! Another question; if there were such a thing today of true Apostles that could heal, why only heal in the so-called Pentecostal churches and only do it on TV shows? If I had the ability to heal I would be going to the hospital and healing those that are dying each and every day. It is because they are fakes and phonies and they can not do it outside their public shows. It is all a money making scheme.

Be assured though, God does heal today! And He answers our prayers! But He no longer needs

to show people signs when He has shown it already in His Word. "And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation" (Mark 8:12). "And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Luke 11:29). "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1:22-24).

Everything that was done "in part" was done for the preaching of and edifying of the Gospel, nothing else. People, today, are trying to bring attention to themselves; I want to bring attention to my Lord and Saviour because He is the only one that can save sinners. All we need to do is follow the commandment in Matthew 28:18-20, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." May God help us to be faithful in keeping this commandment! God Bless!

ROGER REED



## Forum #2

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"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Deut. 5:11). Even among Christians this term is used. Is it evil? Well, YES! It is the breaking of God's law! The Ten Commandments are not taken seriously enough today, most at best think what Moses brought down from Mount Sinai was the ten suggestions.

I am not going to belabor this question because we all know the answer before it is even asked. Yes, there are good educational things on all these devises, but it is what we choose to do with them that is the problem. You can listen to great sermons by Baptist preachers on them or you can listen to dirty jokes and look at pornography as well. Turned off everything is fine, nothing to worry about. But turned on as I have already stated, and start to look around (channel surfing) evil is right around the corner, it is what you do with it when you find it is the real question here.

"And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon" (II Sam. 11:1-2). David is not doing something wrong at this point;

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## Forum #2

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he is just failing to do something right. **"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"** (Jam. 4:17). There are two fields we should be in today: the battlefield, and the harvest field. David was in neither. David had not planned to commit adultery with Bathsheba. Sin is oftentimes a combination of three things: an undetected weakness, an unexpected opportunity, and an unprotected life. David never dreamed that he would have committed this sin. But he did! He should have been in the battlefield but he decided to stay home and then he got bored and then he decided to (channel surf) if you will. **"And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon"** (II Sam. 11:2). He saw, and then he looked, and then he looked a little longer. And there it is, **"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death"** (James 1:15).

There is the evil, my dear reader. Would we be better without these devises? absolutely! There used to be a thing called family time, it is almost non-existent today. I use my computer for good; I do all my sermons on it. I have a Bible program on it, do not know what I would do without it, but I would survive I am sure. I would just have to get paper and pencil out like my Baptist forefathers. But it could also be used for evil as well as the television, and the truth is there is not much good on it anymore. I was asked one

time about watching Fox News about all the blonde women on there and never really paid much attention, but I just took a break, and ate lunch, and turned on Fox News and there sat four beautiful women on a couch with their short dresses on and then I related to the question and what Brother James said, **"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death"** (Jam. 1:15).

If David could do what he did, then I have no doubt we could do the very same thing...God help us. We have to live in this wicked and evil world but we do not have to be a part of it. I had a few favorite shows I liked but then they brought sodomy into every one of them, needless to say I do not watch them anymore. I commend those who no longer have television service brought into their homes, many still have their televisions but no cable or satellite. After the election I will do the same. One might ask why not do it now? Because I want to watch the election unfold, no evil in that, except for the politicians running for office, is there?

Dear reader, none of us wants to sin against our God and Lord, even Paul said, **"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do"** (Rom. 7:19). We still have a sin nature and we have to **"put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"** (Eph. 6:11). It is not going to get any easier either.

Before I close, I want to give you my scenario for a sheltered life. That would be a cabin in the mountains away from everyone and everything, no television, radio, computer, or telephone. But then I would not be spreading

the Gospel the way I have been commanded to do. I will say this, 90-95% of what is on TV is evil. The same can be said of the radio, computer, and phone. If you can not control your lusts, then do not have these things in your home... why tempt yourself? **"Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted"** (I Cor. 10:6). **"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh"** (Gal. 5:16). Stay in the battlefield, and the harvest field. **"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus"** (Rev. 22:20). God Bless!

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A television has wires, a screen, and plastic just like radios, computers and telephones. Since those are evil to some, how about living in town, or having a car to drive around in or cooking with a microwave? I know I am being silly, but I am trying to prove a point, that those things are what you make them.

I love wrestling, both my older sons wrestled and were very good. They could have done well in college. My wife and I spent a small fortune on travel, food, gas, wrestling camps, lodging, not to mention the Friday and Saturday tournaments sitting for 12 or more hours on wooden bleachers. One day it hit us "What are we doing?" we asked. Idols do not always come in the form of a man with a fish head, or a fat little bald

guy. You see, we were worshipping our children and a sport. We turned a good time with family into something evil by how we employed ourselves. A computer is not anymore evil than a piece of wood, it is what you do with it. Maybe those Christians have a problem with what they are doing and instead of fessing up to their sin they cover it up by deeming those objects as being evil.

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Yes and no, depending on how they are being used. There is nothing intrinsically evil about a machine, but rather how that device is used by the owner. If any of the devices listed above keep you from serving God, worshipping Him, reading His Word, praying, witnessing, helping others, instructing your children, etc. then yes, they are evil because you are allowing them to steal time that could be better used for the glory of God. I Corinthians 10:31 states: **"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."** Ephesians 5:15-16 declares: **"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."** If you are using any of the devices to spread gossip, promote false doctrine, view pornography, or listen to ungodly music, etc. , then yes they are evil. Psalm 101:2-4 states: **"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.**

**O when wilt thou come unto**

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## Forum #2

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**me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.** If you use any device to facilitate your sin the evil is really in your heart and mind.

Some would argue that we would all be better off if we completely unplug by doing away with every device and go off the grid. I can not tell you how many times I have pondered such a course of action in my 36 years of Christian living. Monks have been trying to do this for centuries. However, if I rid myself of all electronic devices I still have that pesky, wicked, Adamic, carnal nature to deal with. The real problem is with me, my sin, my desires, my distractions.

Then I also think of how I have used the computer, internet, telephone, and even Facebook to communicate with sinners and saints alike. People from all over the world can go to [www.sermonaudio.com/mtppleasant](http://www.sermonaudio.com/mtppleasant) and listen to our church services. They can hear the Gospel. Right now we are going through a comprehensive study of the Doctrines of Grace. I am answering these forum questions on my son's laptop computer and will send them via the internet. I do the same thing when I write books or articles. So devices may be used for good. My wife and oldest son are currently studying the doctrine of Creation via YouTube videos. My daughter uses the computer and internet in her home schooling curriculum and activities. And yes, my family has been known to watch Ohio

State football games through the years on the hellelevision. We have had a lot of fun and family time doing so. Condemn me if you must, but it is something we can do as a family that we all enjoy.

The key is temperance and honesty before the Lord. Why are you doing what you are doing? Are you using devices for evil or good? Are you allowing them to diminish your relationship with God, your family, or your church? Let us learn to pray like the Psalmist: **"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"** (Ps. 139:23-24). May God help us to follow the admonition and example of Paul: **"And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"** (I Cor. 9:25-27).

TOM ROSS



## Quietness Versus

(Continued from page 11) ♦

the Good Shepherd then we must lie down in the green pastures and drink of the still waters (Psa. 23:1-3).

2. We need to discipline our heart and mind to be quiet before the Lord. As we read the Word in our secret devotions it is important to devote all of our mental and spiritual energy to listening and hearkening to what God has to say (Job 37:14). We

must learn to think deeply upon God in sacred meditation. This requires a mind that is fixed on God and His glory, not on the world, politics, troubles, or the trifles of life. Isaiah 26:3-4 promises: **"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength"** (cf. Rom. 8:5-6; Phil. 4:7-9; Col. 3:1-3).

3. Understanding the importance of stillness and quietness before God will enable us to serve Him more faithfully and fruitfully. Consider how God prepared some of the greatest spiritual warriors for battle. Moses spent 40 years in the back side of a desert to prepare him to lead Israel out of Egypt. Elijah had to remain at the brook of Cherith, waiting upon the Lord (I Kings 17:1-7) prior to his victory at Mount Carmel. David spent quiet time meditating upon the Word as a shepherd boy before he was called upon to defeat Goliath and then reign as king. Jesus commanded the first church to wait and worship in the place appointed (Matt. 28:16-18) before He gave them the Great Commission that would turn the world upside down. Paul spent three years in the Arabian desert (Gal. 1:15-18) to prepare him for missionary work and inspired writing. John was banished to the isle of Patmos in solitude so the Lord could reveal the contents of Revelation to him. Each one of these saints of God had to spend time alone with the Lord in quiet solitude to prepare them for the work that was ahead of them.

### THE QUAGMIRE OF BUSYNESS

1. The average person is so busy pursuing the **"course of this world"** (Eph. 2:2) they have no

time for God, His Word, prayer, meditation, or public worship. Satan keeps folks so busy with work, entertainment, social media, television, computers, etc. they are sinking in the quagmire of busyness. Lost men and women are running helter skelter keeping themselves busy so they will not have time to think about eternity, their sin, and the righteous judgment of God. People rarely think for themselves any more because they do not have time for quiet contemplation and solemn thought.

2. It is sad, but true, that the quagmire of busyness also overwhelms those who profess the name of Jesus Christ. The minds and hearts of many are distracted by gimmicks, gadgets, and gizmos that vie for our time and attention. How many have made television, sports, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and a whole host of other THINGS the main focus of their life? In essence we have embraced so many THINGS, that they have become idols that crowd out our time for God, His Word, the prayer closet, witnessing, and worship. Take an honest look at how you spend your hours, days, weeks, and years! How much time is devoted to the very THINGS that distract us from our real purpose in life? How often do we exhaust ourselves in the busy pursuit of pleasure, popularity, and possessions to the point that we have little or no time for quiet stillness before the Lord?

3. We can also become so busy in "serving" the Lord we do not take time to actually commune with Him. There have been times in my Christian life that I have run to and fro from one revival meeting to another, going on visitation, attending Bible college,

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# Quietness Versus

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participating in assorted church sponsored programs and activities that left me precious little time for God Himself. I wound up giving God my leftovers instead of the first fruits He so richly deserves. If we are not careful the quagmire of busyness in the name of Christ can cause us to offer half-hearted devotion to the Lord. Deuteronomy 17:1 declares: **"Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness: for that is an abomination unto the LORD thy God."** May God give us grace to obey the admonition of Paul when he wrote: **"...and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction"** (I Cor. 7:35).

Please do not misunderstand. I believe that we should be earnestly engaged in the work of the Lord (I Cor. 15:58). However, we must not equate mere busyness with genuine service if there is no personal devotion to God accompanying it.

## QUALITIES PRODUCED BY QUIETNESS

1. Time spent in quiet solitude and communion with the Living God will produce spiritual fruit and godly qualities in the saints of God. The more time we spend sitting at the feet of Jesus, the more like Him we will be (II Cor. 3:17-18). We will experience a spiritual transformation of character that will manifest itself in the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25).

2. A deep settled peace and tranquility will sweep over the soul. We will learn the graces of patience (Lam. 3:26); contentment (Prov. 17:1; Ecc. 4:6); honesty (I Tim. 2:2); and humility (Psa. 131:2).

3. We will learn to depend upon God and wait upon Him for direction, guidance, and strength (Psa. 27:14; Isa. 40:31).

4. We will not feel so hurried, hassled, and pressured by every day life. When we make time for God and His glory our number one priority, everything else will fall into place (Matt. 6:33-34). We will learn how to simplify our lives so that we are not overwhelmed and overcome by the cares of life.

5. We will delight in the things of God like never before. We will long for the joys of quiet communion and fellowship with the Lord (Psa. 42:1-2; Song of Sol. 2:3-4). What a revival of spiritual life would take place if only we would learn that time spent with God in solitude is one of our greatest resources and blessings in the Christian life!

6. We will learn what it means to live in the presence of God in all circumstances. Each day will be devoted to obeying the command of I Thessalonians 4:11-2: **"And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing."**

7. A greater measure of transparency and sincerity will be evident in our communion with God, prompting us to pray like the Psalmist: **"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"** (139:23-24).

## GEMS FROM OTHERS

The following quotes are taken from the writings of A.W. Tozer in a delightful little volume entitled *The Best of A.W. Tozer* put out by Christian Publications and Baker Book House in 1978:

"Modern civilization is so complex as to make the devotional life all but impossible. It wears us out by multiplying distractions and beats us down by destroying our solitude, where otherwise we might drink and renew our strength before going out to face the world again."

"Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still is a wise and healing counsel, but how can it be followed in this day of the newspaper, the telephone, the radio and the television? These modern playthings, like pet tiger cubs, have grown so large and dangerous that they threaten to devour us all. What was intended to be a blessing has become a positive curse. No spot is not safe from the world's intrusion."

"One way the civilized world destroys men is by preventing them from thinking their own thoughts" (p. 149).

"While it is scarcely within the scope of the present piece, I cannot refrain from remarking that the most ominous sign of the coming destruction of our country is the passing of the American home. Americans live no longer in homes, but in theaters. The members of many families hardly know each other, and the face of some popular TV star is to many wives as familiar as that of their husbands. Let no one smile. Rather should we weep at the portent. It will do no good to wrap ourselves in the Stars and Stripes for protection. No nation can long endure whose people have sold themselves for bread and circuses. Our fathers sleep soundly, and the harsh bedlam of commercialized noise that engulfs us like something from Dante's Inferno cannot disturb their slumber. They left us a goodly heritage. To preserve that heritage we must have a national

character as strong as theirs. And this can be developed only in the Christian home" (pp. 150-151).

The following quotes are taken from *A Puritan Golden Treasury* by I.D.E. Thomas:

John Owen: "If I have observed anything by experience, it is this: a man may take the measure of his growth and decay in grace according to his thoughts and meditations upon the person of Christ, and the glory of Christ's Kingdom, and of His love" (p. 184).

George Swinnock: "The exercising thyself to godliness in solitude, will be a probable proof of thy uprightness. Men are withheld in company from doing evil by the iron curb of fear or shame, and provoked to do good by the golden spurs of praise or profit; but in solitariness there are no such curbs in the way of lust to hinder our passage, nor such baits in the way of holiness to encourage our progress. The naked lineaments and natural thoughts of the soul are best discerned in secret" (p. 184).

Ezekiel Culverwell: "A true Christian must endeavour himself to deliver, not in gross, but by retail, the millions of God's mercy to his soul; in secret thought chewing the cud of every circumstance with continual contemplation" (p. 186).

David Dickson: "Meditate on our making, that we may fall in love with our Maker" (p. 187).

Thomas Watson: "I will conclude with that excellent saying of Bernard: 'Lord, I will never come away from Thee without Thee.' Let this be a Christians resolution, not to leave off his meditations of God till he find something of God in him" (p. 187).



# THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

## SENATE RESURRECTS LATE-TERM ABORTION DEBATE

(WNS)--Following pro-life successes with 20-week abortion bans in several state legislatures, the Senate Judiciary Committee reopened debate March 15 on protecting the unborn from late-term abortions nationwide. "We are trying to prohibit abortion on demand at 20 weeks," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who introduced the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act in the Senate last summer. Republican committee members invited a panel of legal and medical experts to shed light on the facts of late-term abortion, focusing on when babies can experience pain and when they can survive outside the womb. But the committee also invited women with powerful testimonies, including an abortion survivor and a former abortionist.

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## CAMPUS PRIDE CALLS ON NCAA TO CUT TIES WITH CHRISTIAN COLLEGES

(WNS)--Campus Pride, an LGBT activist group, is pressuring the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to cut ties with Christian colleges over their views on transgenderism and homosexuality. Ever since the Obama administration extended Title IX rights to LGBT students, Christian schools across the country have been requesting waivers to maintain their rules on lifestyle choices or campus housing. Following demands from another gay rights group, the Department of Education agreed in January to

create a public database listing the Christian colleges that apply for waivers. On March 9, Campus Pride requested the NCAA "divest from all religious based campuses who have requested discriminatory Title IX waivers." Eighty other LGBT rights groups joined Campus Pride in signing the letter.

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## UTAH COULD BE FIRST OF MANY STATES TO DECLARE PORN A HEALTH CRISIS

(WNS)--A resolution declaring pornography a public health crisis landed on Utah Gov. Gary Herbert's desk in mid-March after unanimously passing the state House and Senate. The bill, Senate Concurrent Resolution 9 (SCR9), marks the first time a state has called pornography a "public health crisis," language more often used for smoking, drunk driving, and epidemics like Ebola. Although the non-binding resolution does not change law, experts say the bill is part of a concerted effort to start framing the issue as not merely a "moral" crisis, but one that affects entire communities. "For years people have been discussing the issue of pornography from a moral perspective—right and wrong," said Dawn Hawkins, executive director of the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE), the organization that drafted the bill. "But while that is still important, what has changed now is there is a plethora of research showing pornography has long-lasting and deep impacts psychologically,

developmentally, and socially on the individual using it and on society as a whole."

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## WILL NFL INTERFERENCE BLOCK GEORGIA'S RELIGIOUS LIBERTY LAW?

(WNS)--In its continuing effort to quash religious liberty legislation across the nation, the National Football League (NFL) last week threatened Georgia with the loss of a Super Bowl bid if Gov. Nathan Deal does not veto the recently passed Free Exercise Protection Act. This marks the fourth time in two years the NFL (whose teams are worth an average of \$1.97 billion each, according to Forbes) has threatened to pick up its ball and multi-million dollar economic windfall and go elsewhere if a state enacted conscience protection laws. "[The NFL] told Georgia, 'If you build a new stadium, the Super Bowl will come. If you build a new parking complex, the Super Bowl will come. If you give five certain tax breaks, the Super Bowl will come. And now, if you will veto the religious freedom bill, the Super Bowl will come,'" said an exasperated state Rep. Kevin Tanner, one of the bill's sponsors.

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## NORTH CAROLINA FLUSHES CHARLOTTE'S TRANSGENDER RESTROOM POLICY

(WNS)--North Carolina legislators held an emergency session on March 23 to overturn a Charlotte ordinance forcing businesses to allow transgender customers to use the restrooms and locker rooms of their choice. "This new government regulation defies common sense and basic community norms," Gov. Pat McCrory, a Republican, said in a statement after signing the bill overturning the local law. "The basic expectation of privacy in the most personal of settings, a restroom or locker room, for each gender was

violated." Charlotte's city council passed the divisive ordinance in February to update rules for local businesses. The update, which would have taken effect on April 1, added gay, lesbian, and transgender classifications to existing non-discrimination provisions for race, age, religion, and gender. McCrory quickly vowed to intervene.

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## NORTH CAROLINA GOVERNOR DENOUNCES OUTCRY OVER TRANSGENDER BILL

(WNS)--Republicans in North Carolina rallied in late March to overthrow a city ordinance forcing businesses in Charlotte to allow transgender customers to use the restroom of their choice—but the fight has just begun. In the days since lawmakers flushed the ordinance, opponents within the state and from across the country have launched a flood of attacks. "Some have called our state an embarrassment," said Gov. Pat McCrory, a Republican. "The real embarrassment is politicians not publicly respecting each other's positions on complex issues."

McCrory spoke out after fellow governors began issuing travel bans to North Carolina because they disagree with the state's actions.

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## PEDIATRICIANS' GROUP: TRANSGENDER KIDS NEED HELP, NOT NEW HORMONES

(WNS)--The American College of Pediatricians (ACP) has issued a statement urging educators and legislators to reject all policies that encourage chemical or surgical gender reassignment for children. The ACP is a socially conservative, national medical association of pediatricians and health care providers not affiliated with the larger American Academy of Pediatrics. The ACP has been inundated with emails from professionals supporting

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# Bible & the Newspaper

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its stance, said the group's president, Michelle Cretella. But liberal, LGBT-supporting publications such as Think Progress, have accused the ACP of being a hate group attacking transgender youth. "We are not encouraging hate," Cretella insists. The ACP statement reflects its members' concern that parents and schools are inflicting harm on gender-confused children by encouraging them to seek medical interventions that often place them on life-long, risky hormone treatment and starts them on a path that eventually leads to mutilating their otherwise healthy bodies to re-assign gender.

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## INDIANA ADOPTS LAW TO PROTECT BABIES WITH DOWN SYNDROME FROM ABORTIONS

(WNS)--Indiana Gov. Mike Pence on March 24 signed a bill into law protecting babies from abortions based solely on genetic conditions such as Down syndrome. "When it comes to genetics, it is easy for us to say 'if it is not perfect let us abort,'" said Len Reynolds, the president of Indiana Right to Life's Lake County affiliate. "I have had the opportunity to meet many families with Down syndrome children. Yes, they have an extra chromosome, but there is something truly special about them. I think these kids have an extra love gene." The new law, set to take effect in July, says abortionists can be held liable for wrongful death if they know the mother is seeking an abortion solely because of the baby's disability, gender, race, or other physical characteristics. Indiana joins North Dakota as the second state to enact such protections.

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## GEORGIA GOVERNOR: THREATS FROM NFL, DISNEY DID NOT PROMPT VETO

(WNS)--Claiming the bill would "give rise to state-sanctioned discrimination," Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal on March 28 vetoed a law that would have provided legal protection for pastors, faith-based organizations, and business owners who, in good conscience, refused to service gay weddings. The veto leaves Georgians with no statewide religious liberty protection and vulnerable to lawsuits over belief in the Biblical definition of marriage. Deal cited no evidence showing the bill would have institutionalized discrimination but instead dismissed as irrelevant the plight of business owners in other states who have lost their livelihoods because they declined to provide services for same-sex unions. He excused those situations as different states operating under different laws. But in doing so, he ignored a lawsuit pending in his own capital and the fears of Georgia business owners who may face a similar plight over their beliefs about marriage.

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## ILLINOIS JUDGE ORDERS CHRISTIAN INN OWNERS TO HOST SAME-SEX WEDDING

(WNS)--An Illinois administrative judge has given the owners of a bed and breakfast one year to provide their facility to a gay couple "for an event celebrating their civil union." The order, part of a decision handed down March 22 in a discrimination case filed by the two men, also includes an \$80,000 fine. In September, Illinois Human Rights Commission Judge Michael Robinson declared Jim and Beth Walder, owners of Timber Creek Bed and Breakfast near Paxton, Ill., in violation of the state's Human Rights Act, which bans discrimination in public accommodation based on sexual orientation. In a 2011 email exchange with Todd Wathen, Jim Walder said because the Bible "contains the highest laws pertinent to man," his inn would never host a

same-sex wedding or civil union. Walder's attorney, Jason Craddock, said compelling the couple to do what it had refused to do out of Christian conviction is "out of bounds."

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## FDA BOWS TO ABORTION INDUSTRY PRESSURE ON RU-486 REGULATIONS

(WNS)--The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has loosened its guidelines for the administration of the abortifacient RU-486, a move pro-life advocates say puts abortionists' profit margins ahead of women's health and safety. The agency notified RU-486 manufacturer Danco Laboratories about the guideline change in a letter sent March 29. It claims the new rules will allow effective and safe termination of pregnancies. Under the previous guidelines, established in 2000, an abortionist could only administer RU-486, also known as mifepristone, within 49 days from a woman's last menstrual cycle. And the second drug, misoprostol, had to be administered at the abortion facility. But abortionists routinely used their own guidelines for prescribing the drug—essentially developing the same protocol now approved by the FDA. Under the new guidelines, abortionists can administer a smaller dose of RU-486 up to 70 days after a woman's last menstrual cycle. And the second drug, which causes the woman to expel the aborted baby, can be taken at home.

**"Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths"** (Isa. 59:7).

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## MISSISSIPPI GOVERNOR SIGNS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY LAW

(WNS)--A new state law known as the Religious Liberty Accommodations Act will

now protect business owners in Mississippi who believe in traditional marriage. The state's Republican governor, Phil Bryant, said he signed Mississippi House Bill 1523 on April 5 "to protect sincerely held religious beliefs and moral convictions of individuals, organizations and private associations from discriminatory action by state government or its political subdivisions. ..."

The Religious Liberty Accommodations Act cites cases where the government fined or forced closure of wedding-related businesses because they would not participate in ceremony involving a homosexual union. The law protects the convictions of those who believe marriage is between one man and one woman, that sex is for marriage alone, and that "maleness" or "femaleness" refers to a person's actual biology.

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## CITIZENSHIP TEST CHANGE ADMITS FREEDOM OF RELIGION, NOT JUST WORSHIP

(WNS)--Since 2008, government-issued citizenship tests required applicants to circle "freedom of worship" to correctly answer a question about what rights Americans have under the First Amendment. Last year, a senator disputed the wording of that answer, noting Americans actually have "freedom of religion"—a discrepancy the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agreed this week should be fixed. "At first glance, it appears like a small matter, but it is actually an important distinction for the Constitution and the First Amendment," said Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla. "The 'freedom of religion' language reflects our right to live a life of faith at all times, while the 'freedom of worship' reflects a right simply confined to a particular space and location."

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# Bible & the Newspaper

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## INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS CHRISTIAN GROUPS FIGHT SCOTTISH LAW GIVING EVERY KID A GOVERNMENT GUARDIAN

(WNS)--Christian and family groups in Scotland are making a last ditch effort to stop implementation of a new law that would assign a state guardian to every child in Scotland. While supporters claim the comprehensive legislation will streamline child welfare agency processes, opponents argue the plan to appoint a government-employed "named person" for every child violates human rights and infringes on privacy. "[The law is] an insult to the fundamental human rights of mums and dads to bring up their children the way they see fit," said Colin Hart, director of The Christian Institute, one of the plaintiffs in the case. He added that there is no way for parents to opt-out or be the named person for their own child. The law, approved in 2014 and set to go into effect in August, assigns a guardian—a teacher, nurse, midwife, social worker, or other government-employed person—to monitor the "wellbeing" of every Scottish child from birth to age 18.

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## CHRISTIANITY THRIVES IN IRAN DESPITE SEVERE PERSECUTION

(WNS)--Although Iran is one of the most difficult places in the world to be a Christian, the underground house church movement there is exploding. "Thousands upon thousands" of people in Iran are becoming Christians annually, according to Open Doors USA spokeswoman Emily Fuentes. "The house churches are causing such rapid growth in conversions it is unmatched by any other country in the Middle East," she said. According

to Mohabat News, estimates suggest the underground church network could include as many as 1 million people, but Fuentes said it is difficult to accurately quantify its size. Operation World recently ranked Iran as the country with the fastest growing evangelical population in the world.

**"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake"** (Matt. 5:11).

**"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"** (II Tim. 3:12).

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## CANADA SCRAPS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM OFFICE

(WNS)--Canada's new Liberal government decided the country no longer needs an office dedicated to religious freedom, allowing it to expire on March 31. "We now have one less strong partner and one less voice for religious freedom," Katrina Lantos Swett, commissioner of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, told me. "This is a very unfortunate message to send out to the rest of the world at this time." Former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper advocated for an office dedicated to international religious freedom, finally opening it in February 2013. But newly elected Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau quickly shut the door on the operation. Trudeau's administration vows to take a broader approach to global issues of human rights—devaluing a focus specifically on religious freedom.

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## MALAYSIAN COURT APPROVES LANDMARK CHRISTIAN CONVERSION CASE

(WNS)--A Malaysian court affirmed the right of a former Muslim to convert to Christianity in a landmark ruling handed down

just before Easter. Rooney Rebit converted to Christianity in 1999 and was baptized at age 24, according to World Watch Monitor. But he was officially considered Muslim due to his parents' conversion to Islam when he was 8. Rebit asked authorities to legally declare him a Christian and affirm his right to believe in Jesus. He also wanted the National Registration Department to change his identity card and for his state's religious department and Islamic Council to officially release him from Islam, WWM reported. All Malaysian national identity cards list religion.

**"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven"** (Matt. 10:32).



## The Short Pews



Brief  
Articles  
by Curtis  
Pugh

## BAPTISTS AND THE ARGUMENT FROM SILENCE

Today some people seem to regard the Bible as a book of "thou shalt nots." Taking this attitude can result in the idea that if the Bible does not forbid a thing, it is okay to do it. Thus some Baptist preachers will "dedicate babies" because the Bible does not forbid it. Others will perform marriages because the Bible does not forbid it. Others will allow rock bands, theatricals, and even "choreographic performances" (dancing) in their church meetings because the Bible does not forbid these things.

This method of Bible interpretation is based upon the

silence of the Scriptures. The argument from silence, as all competent theologians agree, proves nothing. About some things the Scriptures are silent because they did not exist in Bible days or were not problems among the New Testament congregations. Such modern problems as the abuse of prescription drugs, Internet and television pornography, Baptists believing in the spontaneous combustion theory of church organization, couples dating, etc., did not exist in either the Old or New Testament eras. Does the fact that the Bible does not specifically forbid these things mean it is OK to participate in such things?

Back in the days of the Protestant Reformation the Reformers had to contend with arguments against them from both the Roman Catholics and our old Anabaptist forefathers. The Catholics accused the Protestants of schism and heresy. The big boast of the Protestants was "sola Scriptura." We follow "only the Scriptures" was the claim of the Protestants. And they did use the Scriptures to refute the Roman Catholics. But when it came to dealing with our Anabaptist forefathers, they had to resort to other methods – to Tradition! Why? Because the Anabaptists were on the side of the Scriptures while they, the Protestants, were holding on to "baggage" they brought with them out of the Catholic church.

The Anabaptists accused the Protestants of not following the Scriptures because they "baptized" babies and young children. Huldrych Zwingli (1 January 1484 – 11 October 1531) was a leader of the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland. This fellow Zwingli, like Calvin, Luther, and others, while claiming to believe in salvation by faith, actually taught

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# The Short Pews

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salvation by works. They taught that infant baptism brought grace to, or saved little babies. That this is still the belief and teaching of the Protestants is illustrated by the following quotation from the United Methodist Church's Articles of Religion. Their Article of Religion XVII says, "Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church."

Our Anabaptist forefathers accused the Protestants of not following the Scriptures. It was obvious to them that although Protestants make a lot of noise about "sola Scriptura," it is just that: a lot of noise. Since Zwingli could find no Scripture supporting infant baptism, he tried to use the argument from silence in defending it. He said that since the Scriptures do not clearly forbid infant baptism, it is okay to baptize babies. (This is the same argument that some modern day Baptists resort to trying to defend certain unscriptural practices today).

Balthasar Hubmaier, was an important theologian among the Anabaptists. We do not know for sure when he was born: we think about 1480. But we know of a certainty when he died. He was one of those who overcame the devil, **"...by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death,"** (Rev. 12:11). He was tortured on the rack, and tried for heresy and convicted of course, at the instigation of the Protestant Reformer Zwingli. (What? "Godly Protestants" persecuting

and killing Anabaptists?) On 10 March 1528, he was taken to the public square in Vienna, Austria and burned at the stake: his wife encouraging him to remain steadfast in the faith. Three days after he was burned, his wife, with a stone tied around her neck, was drowned in the River Danube. Thus were the "dippers dipt."

No doubt one of the reasons the Protestant Zwingli hated the faithful Anabaptist Hubmaier was Hubmaier's stand for the Scriptures. For Hubmaier had staunchly opposed infant baptism. He had answered Zwingli's contention that since the Bible does not specifically forbid infant baptism is it proper to do it. He answered Zwingli and all the Protestants thus, "It is clear enough for him who has eyes to see it, but it is not expressed in so many words, literally: 'do not baptize infants.' May one baptize them? To that I answer: 'if so I may baptize my dog or my donkey... I may make idols out of St. Paul and St. Peter, I may bring infants to the Lord's Supper, bless palm branches, vegetables, salt, land and water, sell the Mass for an offering. For it is nowhere said in express words that we must not do these things.'"

Roman Catholics openly teach that the Bible is neither sufficient nor perspicuous: that is, it is not enough and it is not clear. The Bible, to the Catholic, must be supplemented by their tradition and the occasional "ex cathedra" (from the throne) infallible words uttered by their papa – their Pope. Tradition completes God's revelation for a Catholic and the priesthood alone can tell the Catholic laity what the Bible means. Protestants, while claiming to follow the Bible, often must make their arguments for their unscriptural traditions from the silence of the Scriptures. They

cannot make them on the basis of what the Bible says because the Bible does not teach many things the Protestants believe. We say, like old Brother Hubmaier, if I may baptize infants and please God, I may baptize my dog or my donkey and please Him as well. Why? Because the Bible does not specifically forbid these things.

If I may baptize infants, dogs and donkeys and please God, I may dedicate babies, take "communion" to sick people at home, bring musical and theatrical entertainments into the meetings of a New Testament Baptist church, engage in bake sales, church yard sales, Brunswick stew sales, Indian taco sales, raffling off rifles, shotguns and handguns, hosting church weddings, and blessing breweries. (All these things and others are the practices of Baptists in various locations).

But there are Bible principles involved in these matters as well as specific instructions left to the Lord's churches as to just what exactly it is they are to be doing. These specific instructions are often called the "Great Commission." That commission states: **"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen"** (Matt. 28:19-20). Those three duties are specified: they are precise: they are clear.

In connection with the Great Commission, remember this logical and legal principle: the specification of one thing excludes all others. Let me illustrate: if your mortgage specifies that you pay \$650 a month and you have met all contractual obligations to your lender, then your lender

may not rightfully demand that your pay \$1,000 a month. Why? Your mortgage agreement does not specifically forbid your lender from demanding a thousand dollars a month, now does it? Does your lender cite the argument from silence, saying that because your mortgage agreement does not specifically forbid such a thousand dollar a month payment, they are right in demanding it? Of course not! They have no right to do such a thing because your mortgage agreement specifies six-hundred-and-fifty dollar a month payments. The specification of one thing excludes all others.

Christ told His congregations what they are to be busy doing in the commission quoted above. In the parable, He is understood to have meant, **"...Occupy till I come"** (Luke 19:13). Those ten servants in this parable were to be busy about their master's business until he returned. Is that not the message to the Lord's churches today? Contests, raffles, Superbowl Sundays, concealed carry classes, Sadie Hawkins Day Dances, jamborees, rock concerts, movie nights out – all such like things are not specifically forbidden in the Scriptures, now are they? But if Baptists can properly bring such things into "worship" and "church" then we may baptize dogs and donkeys – and babies. May God be gracious towards us and preserve a remnant upon the earth until Christ comes for His bride and her maidens.

## IT CANNOT BE BOTH WAYS

The great questions that divide Christendom are these: Is salvation by works or by grace? Or, is it by some kind of hybrid thing – a combination of works and grace? Is a person saved in

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# The Short Pews

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the first place by something he does? Is he kept by being faithful in good works? Is a person saved by praying the right words? Is he saved by being baptized? Is he saved by making a decision? What about what some people call "accepting the Lord as Saviour?" Is salvation by works or by grace? Our title says, "It Cannot Be Both Ways," as we shall show.

Remember this fact: while the Bible teaches that a sinner must be born again in order to be saved, the Bible nowhere tells us what it is that a sinner can do in order to be born again. The reason? Because there is nothing a sinner can do to bring about his own spiritual birth. The new birth is a work of the Holy Spirit of God as Jesus said: **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again"** (John 3:6-7). Notice that the statement is passive. Jesus did not say you must do something to be born again. He said you must **"be born."** It is the action of another which accomplishes the new birth. A baby does not go into labor and birth itself naturally and neither can the sinner birth himself into the family of God. While a baby is a participant in its birth, it is passive not causative. So it is in the new birth!

In dealing with the Bible doctrine of election or God's choice of those sinners whom He would save, Paul wrote: **"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work"** (Rom. 11:6). In this verse he lays down a principle: the new

birth and everything related to it (including election) must be either by grace or by works. It cannot be both. Salvation is either deserved because of something the sinner does or is – or salvation is by grace. If by grace then the actions of the sinner have nothing to do with the new birth. Nothing the sinner does can cause or bring about his new birth. In another place Paul wrote: **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"** (Eph. 2:8-9). Do not believe it if someone tells you "do this" or "do that" and you will be saved. If you are interested in salvation, know this: salvation is a gift bestowed by God. It is **"Not of works, lest any man should boast."**

## HAVE YOU REPENTED THAT YOU MIGHT BELIEVE?

If we would understand the nature of gospel repentance we must consider what the Bible says about it. We must understand the importance of repentance. We must understand the order in which it occurs. And we must understand that which produces it in the sinner. Only then can we look at our own personal experience and judge whether we have experienced true Biblical repentance.

The importance of repentance is seen from the very first preaching of John the Baptist and of the Lord Jesus Himself. Both preached **"Repent"** as seen in Matthew 3:2 and 4:17. The message of the first disciples whom the Lord Jesus sent out to preach is recorded for us. Mark 6:12 says, **"And they went out, and preached that men should repent."** The Lord's words to certain Jews were, **"... except ye repent, ye shall all**

**likewise perish"** (Luke 13:3). Paul preached that God **"...now commandeth all men every where to repent"** (Acts 17:30). Gospel repentance, then, is necessary in order to be saved.

Why is it necessary to understand the order in which repentance comes? Some think that faith comes before repentance. This, however, reduces faith to a mere intellectual acceptance of facts. Jesus spoke of certain people who rejected John's preaching. He said, **"For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him"** (Matt. 21:32). Notice that repentance is stated to be necessary in order to believe! Thus repentance precedes faith. Paul in recounting his mission work stated that he went everywhere, **"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Acts 20:21). Every place in the New Testament where repentance and faith are mentioned together, repentance is always placed first because it comes first. This turning to God is not produced by a mere intellectual faith or agreement with the teaching of the Bible.

True gospel or evangelical repentance is produced by a heart that has been broken over sin. The Bible makes this clear in II Corinthians 7:10 which says, **"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."** It is wrong to think that a mere intellectual decision is sufficient. It is wrong to think that a mere mental agreement with the facts

of the gospel is true justifying faith. Salvation is an experience that includes a broken heart over sin which produces a turning to God. This turning to God, or repentance, means that the individual takes his rightful place before God as a sinner without hope except for the finished work of Christ, God's Lamb. Trust not

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## BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 3-1-2016 to 3-16-2016

Beginning Balance .....	\$2,214.23
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>	
Amazing 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
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX .....	100.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV .....	313.45
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY .....	150.00
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL .....	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL .....	25.00
Emmanuel B. C., Oldtown, KY .....	100.00
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME .....	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY .....	100.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC .....	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL .....	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV .....	100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC .....	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY .....	35.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH .....	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN .....	50.00
Parkway L. B. C., Springfield, OR .....	100.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL .....	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR .....	50.00
Providence B. C., Tupelo, MS .....	200.00
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 .....	74.00
Anonymous .....	1,214.00
Dividing checks .....	150.00
Sub Total .....	\$3,821.45
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>\$6,035.68</b>

<b>EXPENDITURES:</b>	
Printing .....	490.00
Postage .....	690.39
Wages .....	2,300.00
FICA .....	175.96
Bank Charge .....	13.00
Dividing checks .....	150.00
Total Expenditures .....	\$3,819.35
<b>ENDING BALANCE .....</b>	<b>\$2,216.33</b>

## BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 3-1-2016 to 3-16-2016

Beginning Balance .....	\$7,322.12
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY .....	100.00
Calvary B. C., Everson, WA .....	100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY .....	100.00
.....	525.00
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>7,847.12</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES:</b>	
Radio Time .....	603.98
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES .....</b>	<b>603.98</b>
.....	7,243.14
Interest .....	+0.06
<b>ENDING BALANCE .....</b>	<b>\$7,243.20</b>

# The Short Pews

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in your own works, your baptism, your prayer, your own goodness or anything other than in Jesus Christ and His finished work. This is the faith that follows true repentance which follows a broken heart over personal sin.

## BACK TO THE BIBLE

Why not get back to the Bible? Why not teach and practice only what it says? Do we believe we can improve on what God has told us to do? Do we think that we know better than God does what will please Him? Do we think to honor Him with our traditions, our innovations and our ideas? Do we think pleasing the flesh is pleasing God?

Isaiah 8:20 says: **“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”** All teaching and practice of those claiming to follow the Lord are to be according to the Bible! The fact is, true children of God love and treasure the Bible! King David said, **“My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly”** (Ps. 119:167).

The Jews were given the Old Testament. It should have been enough for them in that time. But they thought they could improve on what God had told them. So they came up with inventions and innovations which became traditions. Jesus never had anything good to say about human traditions. In fact He told them that they made **“.. the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye”** (Mark 7:13). The Holy Ghost through Paul also condemned religious traditions saying, **“Beware lest**

**any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ”** (Col. 2:8).

And yet a great many professing Christians supplement and contradict God’s Word with religious ideas from many sources. It might not be so serious a fault except that in adding their own ideas and the ideas of others to God’s Word the truth is distorted and nullified. For instance, regarding the all important matter of the new birth or as the King James Bible marginal reading has it, being “born from above.” Many people will say that it is necessary to do this or that or the other thing in order to be born again. But the fact is, nowhere in the Bible did any New Testament preacher tell a lost person that if they would do this or that or the other they would be born again. Men prescribe works thinking human effort will produce the new birth although Paul wrote: **“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works”** (Rom. 4:6)

Christ, who is in all things to have the preeminence, must share His glory with eggs, bunnies, crosses, sun worship, Ishtar, Tammuz, baptism, altar calls, Santa Claus, and other things equally foreign

to the Bible. Let us go back to the Bible! Let us purge our thinking, our worship, and our service from human ideas which almost always go back to the false idea that there is something a lost sinner can do to please God.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Grace Bible Baptist Church of Denham Springs, LA, and pastor Jerry Dodson would like to announce their 2016 Annual Bible Conference June 3rd thru 5th.

Service times are Friday 7:00 p.m., Saturday 9:30 a.m. and 3:00p.m., and Sunday at 10:15 a.m.

Scheduled speakers are Elders Tom Horn, Larry Wilson, David O’Neal, Kelly Henson, and Randy Johnson.

Meals will be provided Friday at 5:30, Saturday at noon and 5:30 p.m., and noon on Sunday.

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

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

The primary speaker will be Elder Timothy Works. Elder Enrique Cantu will be the additional speaker on Saturday which is the Quarterly Fellowship. A noon meal will be provided Saturday.

All are invited to attend.

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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.

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

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