

The Berea Baptist Banner

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

Thou Hast Given

By Paul Stepp

Indore, West Virginia

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast



Paul Stepp

given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (John 17:1:1-2). I want to look today at this 17th chapter of John. I want to consider the things that are given to the Son by the Father. And then I want to consider the things that are given to us by the Son. It may seem a little bit out of place to think about the things that are given to the Son. We know that the Son is God, and He does not need that anyone give Him anything. He is the Creator and ruler of the universe. And yet while He was here on this earth, He did subject Himself to the will of the Father. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A

bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isa. 42:1). There is no one else that this verse can be referring to. Only the Lord Jesus

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Dangerous Dainties

By Arthur W. Pink

(1886 - 1952)

"When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee" (Prov. 23:1). We suppose that this verse has little or no voice for many of our readers, inasmuch as there is scarcely any likelihood they will ever be invited to dine with the President of the U.S.A. or the King of Great Britain. Alas that such a thought should find place in any



A. W. Pink

Christian's mind. Alas that the tendency to carnalize God's Word should now be so general. Alas that spiritual interpreters of the Living Oracles have well nigh vanished from the earth. Yet even

though there be no anointed teacher available to open up the Scriptures, ought it not to be self-evident that the Holy Spirit would never have placed such a verse as this in the Word if it had no application unto the rank and file of God's people? And ought not that very consideration cause us to prayerfully seek for its hidden significance?

"When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee." There are other "rulers" mentioned in Scripture beside *civil* ones. Do we not read of "rulers of the congregation" (Ex. 16:22), the "ruler of the synagogue" (Luke 8:41), as well as the "rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. 6:12)? O how necessary it is to compare scripture with scripture! And to do that, a good concordance is essential—a book

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Studies in Esther 1:10-22

By Jeff Short

Mantachie, Mississippi

In the verses previous to those of our present text, the extravagance and indulgence of Ahasuerus is manifested. His excessive feasting speaks much about his true character. Just as we might find glimpses of our own true character if we examine the areas of excess and indulgence in our life. In the verses now before us, we shall see the consummation of the grand feasts.

"On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of



Jeff Short

Ahasuerus the king, To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on" (Esther 1:10-

11). This takes place on the seventh day, the last day of the feasting. This was a time when the drunkenness was at its very height. I imagine as the time wore

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Can You Pass This Test?

By Curtis Pugh

Bocsa, Romania

These six questions will test your knowledge of the Bible. They are concise and require only a yes or no answer. Read each question carefully and answer.

1. Can all people receive and understand the Word of God?
2. Can all people receive the Holy Spirit of God?
3. Can all people produce repentance and faith when they hear the Gospel?
4. Can all people believe savingly on the Lord Jesus Christ?
5. Can all people come to the Lord Jesus Christ?
6. Can all people please God?



Curtis Pugh

Most professing Christians would answer all these questions "yes." Would it surprise you to learn that the Bible clearly teaches that the correct answer to all six of these questions is "no?" Read further and we will prove that the Bible teaches that none of these things are possible to the natural man – by

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The Real Rascal

By Milburn Cockrell

(1941 -2002)

"And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity" (Eccl. 8:10).

Death is a busy worker, and funerals are no uncommon sight. But some funerals are more sorrowful than others because of the character of the life that has been lived. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," but cursed are the dead out of Him (Rev. 14:13). The inhabitants of both Heaven and Hell are interested in the departure of every soul.



Milburn Cockrell

There are just two kinds of people in this world, the just and unjust, the believers and unbelievers, the sheep and the goats, the saved and the unsaved. There is no third group of the pretty good or those not too bad.

Solomon describes a wicked

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Dangerous Dainties

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of far greater importance and value for the Christian than a dictionary. But perhaps some carping reader, who has been infected with the subtle poison of "dispensationalism," objects "But the **'rulers of the congregation'** and of the **'synagogue'** were 'Jewish,' and so pertain not to gatherings professedly Christian." Alright, then turn to Matthew 24:25, where the Lord Jesus spoke of "**a faithful and wise servant**" whom He hath made "**ruler over His household.**"

It is the last-quoted scripture which furnishes the key to our present passage, for the purpose why Christ makes him "**ruler over His household**" (let the P. B.'s carefully take note of the "one man ministry" here!) is "**to give them meat in due season**" (Matt. 24:45). Thus when the Holy Spirit, in Proverbs 23:1, bids us "**consider diligently**" what is before us when we sit to eat "**with a ruler,**" He is referring to an ecclesiastical "**ruler**" or

preacher. Now, not all of the religious "rulers" in Christendom today have been appointed by God. No indeed, far from it. Personally the writer very much doubts if two out of each thousand of the preachers, ministers, and missionaries, the world over, have been *Divinely* called! Many of them are self-appointed, some of them sent out by men, most of them raised up by Satan.

The attentive reader of the Old and New Testaments will find that the false prophets have, in every age, greatly outnumbered the true. It is for this reason that God commands us to "**believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world**" (I John 4:1). Thus the admonition given in Proverbs 23:1 has always been a timely one for God's people to pay strict attention unto, and perhaps it was never more needful to give heed unto it than in the degenerate and apostate time in which *our* lot is cast. The preaching we listen to, and in measure absorb, has precisely the same effect upon our souls, as does the food we eat have upon our bodies: if wholesome, it is nutritious; if injurious, it works harm.

"**When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee.**" The tragic thing is that many of God's own children today are so unspiritual, and therefore so spiritually ignorant, that *they know not how* TO "**consider diligently**" what is set "**before them.**" They know not what tests to apply, nor how to examine what they hear. So long as the preacher is "orthodox" and approved by those whom they consider "sound in the Faith," they think his message is alright. So long as the preacher holds to the "fundamentals" of the Faith, they suppose that he is a true servant of God. So long as the preacher sticks close to the letter of Scripture, they imagine their souls are being fed with the sincere milk of the Word. Alas for the credulity of such unwary souls.

Is the reader ready to ask, "But what *other* tests are we to apply?" Let us help you to answer your own question by asking another. *What* criterion do you apply to the material food you eat? Are you satisfied if it has been prepared and cooked according to the best culinary books? Of course not. The chief thing is, *what effect* does your food produce? Does it agree with or upset your digestive system? Does it promote or injure your health? We are agreed, are we not? Very good, now apply the same rule or test unto the spiritual—or, we should say, more correctly, the "religious"—food of which you are partaking; *what effect* is it having upon your character and conduct, what is it producing in your heart and life?

But we must not stop there with a mere generalization. If souls are to be helped today, the servant of God must be precise, and enter into details. Ponder

carefully, these questions, dear reader. Does the preaching you listen to come home to your heart in the power of the Holy Spirit? If not, what is the use of hearing it? Does the preaching you hear pierce you, search your conscience, condemn you, and make you cry "**O wretched man that I am**"? Or does it add to your store of intellectual knowledge, minister to your complacency, and make you feel self-satisfied? Do not treat these questions lightly, we beg you, or you are very likely to prove your own worst enemy. Face them fairly and squarely, as in the presence of God.

"**Consider diligently**" what is set before thee from the pulpit, for it *must* do one of two things: help or harm you. It either promotes humility, or feeds pride. It either stimulates to work out your own salvation "**with fear and trembling,**" or it fosters carnal security and self-confidence. It either drives you to your knees, or it more and more lulls your spiritual sensibilities. It either makes you more conscientious and careful about all the details of your daily life, or more careless and callous. It either causes you to cry unto God day and night for Him to work in your heart a deeper and more constant hatred of evil, or (probably, unconsciously) leads you to think more lightly of sin—excusing "little" failures, and consoling yourself with the thought that none of us reach perfection in this life; whereas God says, "**Be ye holy in all manner of conversation**" or "**behaviour**" (I Pet. 1:15).

"**And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite**" (v. 2). This is strong language, is it not? Yes, and the subject calls for it. So very few realize the fearful consequences, which follow from a disregard of that command of Christ's, "**Take heed what ye hear**" (Mark 4:24). False doctrine has the same effect upon the soul as poison does upon the body. But Satan appeals to the pride of so many, and succeeds in making them believe they are immune, that they are so "well established in the Truth" that listening to error cannot injure them. Therefore does the Holy Spirit say, "**Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners**" (I Cor. 15:33): not they may, but DO! Yes, even though you are quite unaware of it.

"**And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.**" This is plainly a word of warning for those who are consumed with curiosity to hear every new "evangelist" or "Bible-teacher" who comes to town; those who have an insatiable appetite to sample every religious "feast" (?) that is spread in their community. *That* is what is meant by "**a man given to appetite:**" one who craves to hear the latest pulpit or platform sensationalist. To all such God says, Take yourself in hand, and use no half measures to check this dangerous tendency. It is at your imminent peril you disregard this Divine admonition. If you disobey,

Satan will either slay you, or else drug and put you soundly to sleep.

"**Be not desirous of his dainties, for they are deceitful meat**" (v. 3). Yes, he has "dainties" to offer you: that is why so many are attracted to his table. These "dainties" are skillfully varied to meet different tastes. For "prophetic students" they are spicy items from the newspapers, served under the name of "signs of the times." But these are "**deceitful meat,**" for they leave the soul starved and barren: there is *no spiritual* nutriment in them! For the energetic young people there is a pleasing presentation of "Christian service," calling upon them to engage in "work for the Lord"; these too are "**deceitful meat,**" for they neither edify (build up) nor lead to a closer walking with Christ; instead they take the eye off *Christ*, unto the "**perishing multitudes**"; as though God were unable to save His own elect without *our* assistance! "**Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life**" (Prov. 4:23) is God's word unto you.

For others there is a regular exposition of "our doctrines" which are indeed "dainties" unto those of a theological turn of mind. "Yes, but 'our doctrines' are *scripture* doctrines, and surely *they* cannot be '**deceitful meat!**'" Ah, dear friend, Satan frequently transforms himself into "**an angel of light,**" he knows full well that no harm will be done unto his cause while doctrinal dissertations are addressed to the intellect, and the conscience is not searched. Unless there be a *practical application* made of each Scripture doctrine, the heart is not touched nor the soul humbled; instead, pride is fed and the head is merely stuffed with a theoretical knowledge of the Truth. Mark this well: doctrine *divorced* from experimental and practical preaching is highly injurious!

What the writer and reader most need is not "dainties," but "**bitter herbs**" (Ex. 12:8) to purge us of pride, independency, self-love! We need to be fed "**with the bread of tears**" (Ps. 80:5) and "**the water of affliction**" (Isa. 30:20). Only that ministry truly helps which causes us to mourn before God, which brings us into the dust, which makes us loathe ourselves. Perhaps some will reply, "I want a ministry where *Christ* is exalted." Good; but do you relish a ministry which gives you to see how *un-Christlike* you are in your ways, how little you are following the example which He has left us? A faithful and well-balanced ministry of "Christ" includes His teaching upon Discipleship. His claims and demands upon us, His precepts and warnings. Beware of flesh pleasing "dainties," dear reader.

We pass over the intervening ones and come to v. 8, "**The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.**" Yes, if you are really a child of God, *this* is what the Spirit will, sooner or later, work in you. He will yet make your heart nauseated with those

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Berea Baptist Broadcast

STATION	TIME	DIAL	WATTS
WFTA, Tupelo, MS	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	101.9	3,000 FM
WLZA, Starkville, MS	Sunday 1:00 - 1:30 p.m.	710	2,500 AM
WCNA, Myrtle, MS	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	95.9	3,000 FM
WCTT, Corbin, KY	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	680	5,000 AM
KARI, Blaine, WA	Saturday 10:30 - 11:00 a.m.	550	5,000 AM
KORE, Springfield, OR	Sunday 8:00 - 8:30 a.m.	1050	5,000 AM
DXRA, Davao City, Philippines	Sunday 8:15 - 8:45 a.m.	783 Khz...	10,000 AM
DWSS, Manila, Philippines	Sunday 5:30 - 6:00 p.m.	1494	16,000 AM

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flesh-pleasing "dainties" which you now so much relish; He will yet cause you to turn with disgust from that which the empty professors feed upon with such avidity. We speak from painful experience. Sheep cannot thrive on that which goats eat! If your preacher is admired and eulogized by white-washed worldlings, you may be certain that his ministry cannot help you. If large crowds enthusiastically hear him, it is a sure sign that he is not ministering the Word in the power of the Spirit!

In closing, let us point out that all we have said above about "considering diligently" what preaching you attend, applies with equal force to listening-in to the radio! **"Take heed what ye hear":** if it does not make your conscience more tender, it will make it more callus. The same applies to your *reading*. The great majority of the "orthodox" and "sound" magazines being printed today, can only *harm* you, for they contain nothing to make you weep before God, nothing to increase the **"fear of the Lord"** in your soul, nothing that will lead to an increasing mortifying of your members which are upon the earth. If you have proven this to be the case, then from now on *shun them* as you would a plague, **"Cease ye from man"** (Isa. 2:22) and feed upon the Word.

Ill that He blesses is our good,

And unblest good is ill,

And all is right that seems most wrong

If it be His sweet will.

The Real Rascal

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man in the text who had been seen going to the temple with the righteous and holy. He came as he went and was buried a wicked person. This is so because coming and going to church is not salvation.

Multitudes of churchgoers assume going to church on Sunday morning qualifies them for a seat in Heaven. These folks are content with a Sunday-go-to-meetin' religion. They seem to forget that Cain brought his sacrifice as well as Abel. The Pharisees went up to the temple as well as the publicans.

Church membership is not synonymous with salvation. You can be a church

member like Judas and still be a devil. The Bible speaks frequently of false professors or hypocrites. James 1:26 speaks of some who **"seem to be religious."** Some in the churches today, like the members of the Sardis church in Revelation, have a name to live and are dead spiritually (Rev. 3:1).

A FORM OF GODLINESS

Paul told young Timothy: **"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away"** (II Tim. 3:5). He indicates in these words that a person can be called a Christian, be baptized into a church, and make a religious show while never being converted. These persons assume a form of godliness to have respectability in the business world, but they will not submit to the power of it, which would take away their sins. A form of godliness is a very different thing from the power of it. You can have the form and be wholly destitute of the power.

Modern day religion seems to exercise little power over the lives of its adherents. The Bible teaches Christians not to conform to the world, yet most professed believers look like the world, dress like the world, smell like the world, and talk like the world. The preaching of the Word of the Living God doesn't even have enough power to keep most church members awake during the sermon. The members of the Apostolic churches laid down their lives for Christ. Modern church people will not even live for him. In spite of all of its buildings and rituals, the modern church is powerless!

A form of godliness without real godliness, can do the world no good. It cannot convert the unconverted, check the divorce rate, curb immorality, stop modernism, eradicate heresy, terminate the rapid spread of Communism, or lower the crime rate. The church will never influence a lost world by bringing the sacrifice of fools to worship.

Does a person really go to church on Sunday to be instructed out of God's Word by the minister? How many come just to see if the preacher will approve of their conduct and endorse their preconceived plans? How many church members change their way of living after the Sunday morning sermon is delivered? Nearly all go to church knowing full well they will keep walking according to the course of this world no matter what the minister preaches! Such people pretend to have some zeal for religious ceremo-

nies, but they are void of the living, saving power of Christ upon their souls. They are religious but lost.

PROFESS TO KNOW HIM

To Titus the Apostle wrote: **"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate"** (Titus 1:16).

Here Paul warns Titus of false professors. He points out in the church some who in word and tongue profess to know God, yet their lives indicate they have rejected Him. Their practice contradicts their religious profession. They live as though they never knew Him.

They say they believe in prayer, but they never pray. They claim to believe in giving to Christ's cause, yet continually rob God of His tithes and offerings. They profess to believe in witnessing to the lost, but they never witness to anyone.

What about such people? Are they God's elect? Are they real believers in Christ? The answer of found in I John 2:4, which says: **"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."** Such people are abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

HEARERS ONLY

I read in James 1:22-24 these words: **"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."**

The Jews heard the Old Testament Scriptures read every Sabbath day (Acts 15:21). It was to just such hearers of the Word that Christ said: **"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"** (Matt. 23:33). These Pharisees thought they were Heaven-bound, yet all the while they were Hell-bound.

Those who think hearing a sermon occasionally is sufficient for salvation are self-deceived. James said: **"Deceiving your own selves."** The minister is not deceived; the church is not deceived; the world is not deceived. The hearer has deceived himself. Jesus Christ said: **"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man..."** (Matt. 7:26).

Ezekiel spoke of some people who were hearers only. He wrote: **"And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness"** (Ezek. 33:31).

Some in our generation take pleasure in hearing the Word. The Bible tells us old wicked Herod heard John the Baptist preach gladly (Mark 6:20). A sermon is good amusement to some people. But

while it gratifies their itching ears, it does not sanctify their corrupt natures. Their listening to God's word is all a sham, a jest, and a pretension.

Thousands of church members hear the Word each Sunday, but they refuse to do what it says. Why do pastors have trouble getting people to Sunday school, to the worship hour, to choir practice, to the church business meeting? Why is there always an uproar in the church? The answer is simple enough for all to see. Members who are false professors will not do what the Scriptures say. In character they are abominable before God, disobedient to His law, and worthless to those good works, which He demands.

Do you know the real reason ministers are quitting the ministry? Do you know why so many pastors resign their churches and move on often? It is because the churches are filled with unsaved people. Preachers find it is impossible to keep the sheep and the goats happy and working together in the church. They discover you cannot teach a lost person the Scriptures, nor can you get him to do what Christ commanded.

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS

Too many church members claim to have faith in Christ but have no works to prove their faith. What is it worth to say: "I believe in Christ," then do nothing for Christ? Such useless, fruitless faith is no faith at all. It is like an apple tree that never bears apples, or a clock that never tells time, or a car that has no wheels.

Works are the natural fruit of faith. Faith is first, but works must follow, or there is no proof that faith exists. True faith is something real, vital, living that affects one's whole life. James makes works the true test of real faith: **"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone"** (Jas. 2:17).

THE DEVIL'S DECEIVED DUPES

To the Corinthian church members Paul declared: **"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God"** (I Cor. 6:9-10).

The person, who belongs to the church and imagines he can live like the Devil all his life, is terribly deceived. If you think you can habitually live in sin and go to Heaven when you die, you are deceived by vain words. If you believe you can put every thing before God and be an inheritor in God's kingdom, you are one of the Devil deceived dupes. If you feel you can habitually stay drunk and die in Jesus Christ, you are greatly in the dark about spiritual things. Do not be deceived! The Bible says such persons shall not inherit God's kingdom.

How calamitous for a church member

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to die deceived about his salvation. How disastrous for a man to be a member of the Baptist church, attend some of its services, support its program, and die in his sins and go to Hell. A great funeral eulogy by a preacher cannot deliver a lost church member from eternal darkness. A burial in a Christian cemetery cannot relieve the torment of everlasting fire.

Think of a minister on earth saying that the deceased church member is in Heaven with the saints, angels, and God, when in reality he is in the fire of Hell with sinners, demons, and the Devil. Think of a tombstone over his remains in the graveyard, which reads: "Asleep in Jesus," when in truth this poor soul has no rest day nor night in the everlasting fire. Think of a family on earth drying their tears and saying: "He is better off now than we are," when he is weeping and wailing in the furnace of fire. But such is the future fate of all hypocrites in the church who have never been born again.

WHAT A RASCAL!

Here is a man who makes no profession of faith. He does not belong to any church. He owns no Bible. He never prays to God or pays anything to the church. He is wrong in all of this, but he is not hypocritical. He is consistent with what he claims to be.

Here is another man who professes to know Christ as Savior. He claims to believe the Bible, yet he never goes to church, never prays, and never does anything for God. He is inconsistent. His practice contradicts his profession. I say the biggest rascal in the world is this man. He is a hypocrite, a wolf in sheep clothing, a counterfeit, and a neat imitation of a Christian. He is a stage player in religion. He acts the part of one that he neither is nor may be, neither is nor would be. God will create a special place in Hell for false professors! They will receive the greater condemnation (Matt. 23:14).

WORKS WITHOUT FAITH

Jesus declared: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 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. 7:21-23).

It is not enough to call yourself a Christian and be a member of a church, which wears the name of Christ. Judas and Caiaphas uttered prophecy but were never saved. Judas and the Jewish exorcists cast out devils though they were never born again. A person can cast out devils and be a devil himself. You can be

baptized, you can join the church, you can live the best you can, and you can do many wonderful works, and still not be recognized by Christ as one of His elect. You can claim to be a worker of miracles and still be a worker of iniquity.

Are you doing all kinds of religious works believing these will bring you to Heaven at last? Salvation does not consist of the good works, which we have done, but it rests upon the good work, which Christ did at Calvary. Those who really trust Christ for salvation will show their faith by their works. But to rest upon works without heart-felt faith in the Savior is to be deceived and to miss Heaven as far as Hell is from Heaven.

SOME GO OUT

In I John 2:19 I find these words: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

John makes it plain that not all professors of salvation are possessors of salvation. There are spurious church members. These will sooner or later prove themselves to be false professors. They prove this by going out from the fellowship of the local church. They leave because they had no vital sympathy with the church of Christ.

It is clear from I John 2:19 that a truly converted person will remain in doctrine and association with the church. John even says there can be no doubt about this. True regenerate men do not depart from the essential Christian faith, or the associate life of the Christian church. Those who depart give evidence they never belonged to the true flock.

Sir, why do you who profess to know Christ stay away from church services? Why blame it on the preacher, the deacons, or some church member? You are to blame for your own conduct. Your disassociation with the Lord's church shows the real condition of your heart. It declares to all you are a false professor. John said true believers do not depart.

You may say: "I've been a backslider for years now. I prosper and have plenty of friends. God has never whipped me for staying away from church. I'm eternally secure in Christ."

Sir, do you know why this is the case with you? Notice Hebrews 12:7-8: "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." Sir, this is true of you because you are the spurious offspring of another father. To be suffered to go on in sin without a rebuke is a sad sign of alienation from God.

CONCLUSION

In my lifetime I have seen a good many lost church members come to see their

condition and be saved by God. Could it be today that you are religious but lost? Maybe you are a preacher, or a deacon, or a Bible teacher but unredeemed. It is better to admit your condition here, than to hear Christ say at the judgment: "Depart from me ye workers of iniquity." I know it will take courage to publicly admit your plight, but it will take more courage to die in your sins and face the fire of Hell.

Do not despair. There is salvation even for lost church members. If God could save Saul of Tarsus, He can save you. The Bible says: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto me" (Matt. 12:31). This includes even the sin of hypocrisy!

Can You Pass This Test?

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that we mean a person as he is naturally born into this world – a person who has not been regenerated or born again by the Spirit of God. (We have the Scriptures in bold type and have underlined some words for emphasis.)

Question number 1. Can all people receive and understand the Word of God?

The Bible clearly teaches that only some people can receive and understand the Word of God. Proof: Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "**But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**" A "natural man" is a person as he or she is naturally born into the world. So then, according to the clear teaching of the Word of God, there is a class of people who cannot receive and understand the Word of God. They lack the ability to do so because these things are spiritually discerned and they lack the Holy Spirit, the Divine Author of the Bible.

The Lord Jesus taught the same thing when He said, "**Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.**" (John 8:43, 44). Not all people are children of God! There is a class of people whom the Lord Jesus Christ said were children of the Devil. These people, according to the Son of God, cannot receive and understand the Word of God.

Question number 2. Can all people receive the Holy Spirit of God?

The Lord Jesus said in John 14:16, 17, "**And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot**

NOTICE

We now have a sample lesson packet of the Sunday School Lessons that Sister Janet Pugh has been working on. Any church wishing to obtain a sample please contact us.

receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." The Writers of the Bible often use the word "world" to refer to that part of humanity that is lost. So here the Lord clearly teaches that lost people cannot receive the Holy Spirit of God. That being the case, it must be said that not all people can receive the Holy Spirit. So the answer to question number 2 is "No!"

Question number 3. Can all people produce repentance and faith when they hear the Gospel?

Many people think that "believing" is "man's part" in salvation and that man can produce saving faith. The Bible says in Acts 11:18, "**When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.**" So then, it is God who grants (gives) repentance and faith! And again the Word of God says, 2 Peter 1:1 "**Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.**" So the teaching of the Bible is clear: both repentance and faith come to us. Something which is "obtained" (2 Pet. 1:1) is something which comes from a source apart from ourselves. Repentance and saving faith are NOT things that humans can produce themselves.

In fact, they are inseparable gifts. In Ephesians 2:8 Paul wrote, "**For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.**" And Peter wrote, "**According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue**" (2 Peter 1:3). So, then, these verses show that repentance and faith are gifts which God gives to those whom He saves and cannot be produced by the human mind, heart, or will or any combination of these.

The idea that faith is something within all men and that all men must be convinced to "put their faith in Jesus Christ in order to be saved" is not a Biblical idea at all. In fact, the Bible says just the opposite. Notice what Paul wrote in 2

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Thessalonians 3:2: **“And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.”**

Question number 4. Can all people believe savingly on the Lord Jesus Christ?

The Lord Jesus said, as it is recorded in John 10:26 - 28: **“But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”** In this instance the Lord likens His people to sheep. Only those who are His “sheep” believe! Those who are not true “sheep” do not believe. Believing does NOT make people sheep, but rather those that are Christ’s sheep believe! In connection with this point notice Acts 13:48, **“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”** Who then can believe? Only Christ’s “sheep,” that is to say, those who “were ordained to eternal life.” Those who remain in sinful unbelief demonstrate that they were not ordained to eternal life.

In addition, some people are judicially blinded. God, in His infinite wisdom, has done this. Paul wrote in Romans 11:25, **“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”** This blindness is both temporary and partial, for some Jews are being saved, but the majority are spiritually blind and cannot believe. For proof of this consider **“Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them”** (John 12:39, 40). So then, it is clearly taught that not all people have the ability to believe.

Question number 5. Can all people come to the Lord Jesus Christ?

MARK OF THE BEAST

Look at your name on the front page of this month’s paper. If you see the mark 11-03, so detestable to a Baptist, wash it out by renewal of greenbacks. If not your paper will stop next month. We are not able to credit. It is not a good plan.



The words of the Lord Jesus are clear and plain in John 6:44 and 65. He said, **“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”** **“And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”** These are plain words and are plainly contrary to the religious ideas of most people in our contemporary religious society. “Evangelists” and other preachers who purport to teach the Bible fill the heads of their hearers with the idea that they can – that they do have the ability – to come to Christ, but Christ Himself taught otherwise. You cannot escape the words of Christ by saying that “God draws everybody” (meaning that God “tries” to draw everybody, but is unsuccessful in His attempt with most.) Poor God! He cannot do what He wants to do according to this idea. He cannot save whom He wants to save. (The Bible says that God, “. . . worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,” and that **“he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”** (Dan. 4:35)).

But back to the subject of God drawing men to Christ: the same verse (John 6:44) that says that God draws men to Christ says that those whom He draws He will also raise up at the last time. So, unless you want to say that everyone is going to be in the resurrection of the blessed, you cannot consistently say that God draws all men to Christ!

You cannot have it both ways: either God draws all (attempts to draw all men and fails with most) and to all these Christ promises that He will give them a blessed resurrection (the idea that those who do not come to Christ will share in the resurrection of the blessed is unthinkable) OR you must believe that God draws only some men to Christ (His elect) and to these alone Christ promises a blessed resurrection. But that puts the eternal destiny of all men in the hands of God and those who are rebels against God hate such a teaching. But this is the clear teaching of the Bible.

This inability to come to Christ is demonstrated in John 5:40 where the Lord said concerning some people, **“And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”** The will of some men – unregenerated men – is set as it were in concrete against Christ. Whereas, concerning those whom God saves it is said, **“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”** (Phil. 2:13). It is the rebellious will of man that refuses to come to Christ unless and until God first works in that man changing his will.

Question number 6. Can all people please God?

The usual answer is that any person who wants to can live so as to please God.

But what does the Bible say? Read carefully the Words of God as recorded in Romans 8:6-8: **“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”** Let me quote part of that again for emphasis: **“they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”** This text proves that those people who do not have the Spirit of God dwelling in them (those who are unregenerate or natural people) cannot please God.

Conclusion:

There are two reasons that most people think differently than the Bible teaches. Our human reasoning tells us that doing these “religious” things must be possible to all people. So we assume that the Bible, God’s Word, must teach that these things are all possible. In addition, for many years now, Arminianism has been the most popular system of doctrine among professing believers and many religious leaders and pastors teach that it is possible for the natural man to do all the things listed in our questions.

But we have shown that the Bible, God’s Word, says that these things are all impossible to the natural man – that is, to people as they are naturally born.

But what is the point of all this? Are these questions merely academic? Are they just something that preachers should know about and talk about? Or are they important to all people?

We write out of concern for your souls and the point of this brochure is this: Is it not possible and even likely that IF you have thought that you have the ability to do these things, you have done one thing – thinking all the while you were doing something else? For instance, perhaps you have thought that you could make a decision and come savingly to the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps you only came to the front of the building in a religious service. Perhaps you only came to an emotional experience and not to Christ at all. Perhaps you came to have a fear of Hell, but did not come to a fear of God. Perhaps you thought you could place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and so you have “done something,” but never have **“obtained like precious faith with us”** (2 Peter 1:1). Perhaps you have thought that you could somehow please God by “coming” or “believing” or by “doing something” in your own strength. A multitude of people think they are pleasing God by their religious acts and devotion. But we have shown you that it is impossible for those who have not been born again to ever please God. Remember, the Bible says, **“they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”**

Perhaps even now you are arguing with the verses we have shown you from the Word of God. Perhaps you are saying right now that these things cannot be true. Is it not likely that this very attitude is evidence that you are only a natural man and not able to receive the things of the Spirit of God because they are spiritually discerned? So then, all that you may have done in a religious sense did not please God. Neither your coming, your praying, your deciding, your believing, your weeping, your baptism – none of these things were pleasing to God if done in the flesh. None of these things merited any good-will from God. None of these things made you worthy of His love or His salvation. None of these things earned for you any grace or favor with God. Is it not probable that you are yet lost in your sins – religious sins – but sins nevertheless.

Dear Reader, may God be pleased to disturb any false peace you may have until you are brought to true peace in Jesus Christ. May God be pleased to knock from under you all the props of false religious experiences and false religious ideas until you, like Saul of Tarsus, are cast only and completely on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And may you come to rejoice in Christ and the great truths of His Gospel.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobrates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3).

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” (John 3:7).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church at Northport, AL will be having special services and the area fellowship meeting December 5th thru 7th. Friday evening services begin at 7:00 p.m., Saturday services at 10:00 a.m., and Sunday at regular service times. The guest speaker will be Elder Roy Mitchell. Anyone needing further information may contact Pastor Todd Bryant at toddbryant@juno.com.

The 3rd edition of the Berea Baptist Hymnal is being reprinted in the Philippines. We are obtaining a number of copies of this reprint. Any church or individual wanting to purchase these can order them from the Berea Church Bookstore. The price to be announced later.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Studies in Esther

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on, all of the peoples' inhibitions were lost and they became more liberal in partaking of food, drink and partying.

On this last day, Ahasuerus sends for the queen. The record does not say why he was calling her. He had been showing all his glory and the greatness of his kingdom and apparently, his wife, the queen, was one that he prized greatly because of her physical beauty. He felt she was his prized possession and cherished trophy. Since he had been displaying everything else in his kingdom, he was going to display her also.

He sends for her and makes it something of a procession. He sends all the chamberlains after her to bring her. He seems to be making a parade, continuing with the pomp and circumstance that marked these feasts. He wanted her decked out in royal apparel and the crown on her head. We recall here that the feasting was done in separate places. One was for the men and one for the women. He sends for her to come into the place where the men have been feasting and partying.

"But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him" (Esther 1:12). Vashti flatly refuses the king's command. It does not seem that she sends back a message and tries to be excused from doing this or even tries to negotiate. She says, "No!" Josephus reported that the king kept on sending to Vashti for to come. We can only speculate on the different reasons why she did not want to comply with the king's request. Was this something common with her? Would she ordinarily refuse the king's wishes? It seems that it was a little unusual for her to refuse the king's command, even though the king's command at this time was definitely unreasonable and distasteful.

Most women would probably applaud Vashti for making this choice and standing up for her "rights." She was not going to come to be put on display and made a show of for her husband and his friends. Most would say that it was an awful thing for the king to ask, and I certainly agree it was. However, those that would applaud are not likely applauding her virtue or modesty as much as her descent from her husband's authority. Ironically, many would seem to congratulate her virtue but they have no problem displaying their own bodies in sinful ways. Many love to keep up with the modern fashions, as if a consensus is all that is needed to deviate from Scripture. Most of today's clothing and fashion is designed to show off the body and to accentuate certain areas. In keeping with modern fashion, many women are guilty of doing

what the queen was here refusing to do.

God, in His Word says, **"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works"** (1 Tim. 2:9-10). For women to adorn themselves with good works seems to be the thrust of what the Apostle Paul is here saying. Shamefacedness is something that we do not see a lot of in the world today. As time goes on, people are wearing less and less in public places. The question is, "What are we trying to accomplish with the things we are wearing and the way we are conducting ourselves? Are we displaying or making an advertisement of ourselves, or do we want to dress as to exude holiness?" Vashti here at least refused to come and display herself. We oftentimes want for such modesty today. The record indicates that Ahasuerus was not so pleased with her modesty. **"Therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him."** He was upset that she would refuse to do this thing. This strong statement signifies that he was full of wrath and hot headed. He was not merely annoyed or irritated. **"His anger burned in him."** We could not expect less than that one so ruled by his passions would react passionately to any challenge or descent from his commands.

"Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment: And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face and which sat the first in the kingdom)" (Esther 1:13-14). The king now turns to his counselors for advice. His heart was before merry with wine, but now he is enraged that the queen did not honor his command. However, instead of just doing something off the cuff, he seeks counsel from his counselors. He spoke **"to the wise men"** which were some of the Magi that **"knew the times."** He seems to possess some wisdom in this, for when a man is in a fit of temper, he least likely to seek or even accept wise counsel.

He also shows wisdom in making his appeal to the law. When he questioned the wise men he asked, **"What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?"** (Esther 1:15). As an absolute monarch, it was within his power to do whatever he wanted to do; however, he stops and seeks counsel from his wise men about the legal course.

It is a sign of woe to any nation when they are ruled by the whim, fancy, mood and temper of their absolute monarch. If you are governed by fixed laws, even if those laws are not good, you at least know

what to expect and what is expected of you. However, if you are governed by the caprice of some man that could be in any mood, life can be miserable. We see this style of government in many different countries of the world.

We also encounter this flaw in businessmen. Sometimes the top man will run the business according to his mood or temper not necessarily according to a fixed standard. His employees do not know from one day to the next how they will find him. He will make promises to reward them if the company does well. Unfortunately, the success that is spoken of is undefined and rests on his opinion at any given time. Usually in this system, the employees never see the promised reward because it is based more on the mood of the employer than the performance of the company. This sort of uncertainty makes for a miserable work experience.

Sometimes fathers are guilty of this unstable rule in their own homes among their families. They will deal with their families according to their mood or temper. If Dad has a bad day at work, he comes home in a fit and the family walks around anxiously trying to avoid him. These fathers at times deal harshly with their wife and children. This is contrary to the Scripture admonition, **"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged"** (Col. 3:21). These fathers are not governing by a fixed standard and it makes for a miserable home life.

Ahasuerus was at least deferring to a fixed standard, though it was the corrupt laws of mortal man. You might ask, "What is the fixed standard by which we ought to be governing our homes and ourselves?" Our fixed standard is the Word of God. If we would meditate in this word **"day and night,"** it would impart wisdom to us. **"Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?"** (Prov. 22:20-21). Here is our certainty and our unchanging standard. God's laws have never needed revision, nor has any change ever attended Jehovah's will. Man's laws are fickle and quickly pass out of relevance. However, God's Word is an unchanging standard to which we must resort. I wish that we would be as devoted to God's law as Ahasuerus was to the laws of the Persian kingdom.

"And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be

reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath" (Esther 1:16-18). Now Memucan speaks up and reasons with the king. He puts the whole situation in perspective for the king. He says it is not only a wrong to the king, **"but also to all the princes, and all the people that in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus."** He is saying, "If you let this go, it is going to grow to proportions where all of the women of the kingdom are going to dishonor their husbands and refuse to be in subjection." There is some truth to his reasoning, not that all the women would become rebellious but in the fact that this is the queen and her actions would influence others. She is the highest-ranking woman in all of the one hundred twenty-seven provinces of the Persian kingdom. She cannot act in isolation. Her acts will be seen and imitated.

The old saying is, "A great man cannot commit a small sin." Many times our actions are somewhat relative to the position that we hold. The queen cannot act just any way she wants and think that she is not affecting others. However, this is what is taught in our society today. We are taught for everyone to do what feels good or is right for them, but we are to be governed by the fixed standard of God's Word and must also realize that we do have an affect on others.

People will watch you. If you claim to be a Baptist, you are a little peculiar. If you claim to be a Sovereign Grace, Landmark Baptist, you are very peculiar. When you make those kinds of claims, the world will expect something from you. Paul touched on this in his epistles to the Corinthians. He said, **"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more"** (1 Cor. 9:19). He said, **"I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some"** (1 Cor. 9:22). Paul lived to a higher standard denying himself some things that were lawful but **"not expedient."** He did not want to allow any occasion to bring reproach upon Christ.

Memucan is saying that the queen must be a model wife and mother. She is in a high position where many women are looking up to her and she must be exemplary. He feels that the queen's present actions are going to cause a great chaos. He proposes, **"If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. And when**

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Outlines for Country Preachers

by a Country Preacher

Sermon Outlines by Milburn Cockrell

THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S DEATH

Isaiah 42:4

Read verses 1-4. This is a prophecy of Christ. There is no such thing as a man who never fails (Ps. 12:1). Christ came to do the Father's will (John 6:38-39). He finished this work (John 17:4; 19:30).

What did Christ come to accomplish? Whatever it was, we can be sure that He did not fail to accomplish it. Jesus Christ came—

I. TO REMIT THE SINS OF HIS PEOPLE (Matt. 26:28).

1. Christ died to remit sins or forgive sins (Heb. 9:22). His blood will not be fuel for the flames of Hell.
2. His blood is efficacious for the pardon of sins. He died in the place of the sinner as his Substitute.
3. "For" means "for the benefit of."
4. It was shed for "many"—the many ordained to life, the many given to Christ, the many justified by Him, etc.
5. Christ made full satisfaction to the law of God for our sins (Eph. 1:7).
6. If so much as one for whom Christ died fails to have his sins forgiven, then Christ's death was a failure.

II. TO GATHER TOGETHER THE CHILDREN OF GOD INTO ONE (John 11:50-52).

1. God regarded sonship as existing before regeneration (Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:5; Heb. 2:13-14). They were predestinated to sonship.
2. These are scattered sheep (John 10:16; Acts 18:10). They are both Jew and Gentile predestinated to sonship scattered among the nations.
3. This is not some gathering in the kingdom or church, but into the family of God (John 17:20-21; Eph. 1:10) and in the air (II Thess. 2:1; John 14:1-3).
4. In time they would appear as children of God by regeneration and faith.
5. If just one of the children is not gathered into God's family, then Jesus Christ died in vain.

III. TO GIVE ETERNAL LIFE TO HIS SHEEP (John 10:10).

1. The "they" are the sheep (vv. 11, 14-15, 26-29).
2. Christ came that the sheep might have spiritual and eternal life. He gave His life for this purpose.
3. The Arabic version renders it "that they might have eternal life."
4. If one of the sheep He laid down His life for fails to enjoy eternal life, then our Lord is a failure.

IV. TO RECONCILE HIS PEOPLE TO GOD (Rom. 5:10).

1. The death of Christ; removed the enmity of God toward men. Our enmity toward God is removed as a consequence of this.
2. God's wrath was appeased by the death of Christ. It does say after we believed, but while we were yet enemies.
3. God was offered and we were the offenders.
4. God laid aside His enmity toward us on account of the death of Christ. His justice was satisfied.
5. If one for whom Christ died is not reconciled to God, Jesus did not accomplish what He set out to do. He is a failure!

V. THAT A PEOPLE MIGHT LIVE UNTO HIM (II Cor. 5:14-15, 19).

1. Christ died for all in a substitutionary sense—He died in our place and stead.
2. All died with Christ at His crucifixion (Rom. 6:6-8, 11; Gal. 2:20).
3. Christ died for us that we might die to ourselves. We live to Christ. We owe Christ for our life.
4. His death secured our death to sin. He died for all who died when He died.
5. Christ's death was the death of His people. Those He died for live in a spiritual sense.
6. If just one He died for does not live unto Him, His death was a failure! He is a discouraged, disappointed, and defeated God!

VI. TO DELIVER US FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD (Gal. 1:4).

1. Christ offered Himself in a vicarious and sacrificial manner, bearing the judgment due us, standing in our place (II Cor. 5:21).
2. He died to rescue us out of this present evil age, or world.
 - (1) His death separated us from this present evil world and made us belong to Him.
 - (2) Christ's redeemed people are contrasted with the present evil world.
3. He does not immediately take us out, but He leaves us to live for Him.
4. At the rapture He will remove us completely (I Thess. 4:13-18).
5. It was the purpose of the Father that Christ take us out of this present evil world. This was the Father's will He came to do.
6. If so much as just one He died for is not separated from this present evil world, then His death was a failure!

VII. TO REDEEM HIS PEOPLE FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW (Gal. 3:13).

1. Christ bore the punishment due for our sins (Isa. 53:6). The curse was transferred from us to Him.
2. Christ did not suffer on His own account. The curse for violating the law of God was laid on Him that we might be delivered from it.
3. We were under the curse of the law and could not deliver ourselves. His curse-bearing was substitutionary (II Cor. 5:21).
4. "Redeem" (exagorazo) means "to purchase a slave with a view to his freedom." "For" (huper) means "on behalf of."
5. Christ stood in the place of those who had broken the holy law of God, and He bore the penalty due us.
6. He took our place, bore our judgment, died our death, etc. Note Gal. 3:1, 4).
7. If one sinner for whom Christ died suffers the curse of the law, then Christ died in vain. God requires double payment for sins!

VII. TO REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY (Tit. 2:14).

1. It was vicarious—"for us." It was voluntary—"who gave himself" (Eph. 5:25; I Tim. 2:6).
2. The purpose of Christ's death was twofold—
 - (1) Negatively, to redeem from all iniquity (Eph. 1:7).
 - (2) Positively, to purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.
 - (3) Both to redeem and to sanctify.
3. The word "redeem" (lutroo) means "to realize by the payment of a ransom."
4. Those redeemed are also purified. We are chosen ones (Tit. 1:1) and purified ones.
5. If just one ransomed and purified by Christ suffers in Hell for his iniquities, then the death of Jesus was a failure!

Studies in Esther

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the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small" (Esther 1:19-20). He puts everything in perspective for the king. He proposed that the king divorce the queen, put her out of her royal estate and give it to another. He suggests that one be sought that is better than Vashti. They need a queen that is going to live up and honor the position that she has and will not bring reproach to the king or to the others of the kingdom.

He is taking a risk in offering this advice. This seems an extreme measure to take. The king's first request was unreasonable. Vashti was unreasonable in refusing his command. Now, Memucan is further being unreasonable in taking things to this extreme extent. He is taking a risk by suggesting to the king that he divorce and expel the wife for which he has much affection.

"And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: For he sent

letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people" (Esther 1:21-22). The king found some satisfaction in this course of action. The king had two problems to face. First, his pride had been hurt and he is determined to make a show. Second, he has risen to a very hot temper and there must be some release of that temper. Memucan's recommendation seems to satisfy both of those problems.

The king's pride would be redeemed. He is enabled to say, "You can't do that to me. I'll divorce you and put you out on the street." He gets revenge. His temper is satisfied with some sort of retaliation.

He sent this letter all over the kingdom and made sure everyone could understand what had happened. He does this to save face to all ends of the kingdom. He makes a great show of his power and therefore feels he has gained the respect, or at least the fear, of his people.

In conclusion, I wish to mark three notable providential events in our text. The first is the king's notion to display the

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Studies in Esther

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queen before the princes and nobles. The thought that came to the king and the timing are very interesting. Why did the king think of such a thing at this time? He was no doubt emboldened by the strong drink of this excessive feast. Seeing his glory on such display and hearing the flattery of the attendants served to make him feel near invincible. He felt he could make any command and none would dare refuse.

It is likely that the women were as well drunk as the men. Vashti would also feel bolder to refuse the king. Solomon wrote, **"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging"** (Proverbs 20:1). Outside of that influence, she may not have refused the king's request even though she disagreed with it. The circumstance that facilitated Ahasuerus' bold request was the same circumstance that facilitated Vashti's refusal.

Additionally, had this been a smaller affair it may not have been quite as great of an insult. However, they had been feasting for 187 days. All the important people were there and even the common people were present these last seven days. For her to refuse his command at this time was a great insult.

The second notable event is Vashti's refusal to follow the command of an absolute monarch. Here is a man that rules the kingdom. He can cast into prison with a single word. He can execute at will. He certainly has the power to reduce her from riches to rags. Why would she refuse at this particular time?

Her virtue is unknown, but her bold refusal does not seem to be in her best self-interest. Think of all the things the king could do to her. Most usually, people are motivated by fear. She could have gone along with the request, even though she did not agree, just to keep the peace and keep her riches. She chose to refuse at a time when it would cause the greatest insult to the king.

The third event is the counselors that counsel the king to divorce the queen and banish her out of his palace. The counselors run the real risk of incurring the king's displeasure. The king is enraged and very upset, but also it is apparent that the king has a great affection for his queen. Even though he might be very upset, their advice could backfire on them. They could incur the king's wrath.

Counselors of imminent positions like these are usually worm-tongued flatterers. They stick their fingers in the air trying to see which way the wind is blowing and that is the way they advise the king. The only principle they know to act from is the principle of "the survival of the fittest" or maybe "every man for himself." They are certainly not going to do anything that will put them in jeopardy. If

they make this suggestion to the king and he is offended at the very thought, he might banish or execute them. In reality, the counselors act contrary to the nature of normal counselors in this situation. They have a peculiar bold streak.

All of these things have happened together and effected the removal of the queen. We see here God's hand ruling, governing, restraining and overruling to bring about His purposes, because His people are in great danger and He is going to bring them out and deliver them through the means of Esther. In order for her to do so, she has to be advanced to the position of queen. This meant that the queen Vashti had to be removed. This train of providential events led to that very removal that opened up the position for Esther to be advanced. This is wonderful evidence of the providence of God working in the affairs of the world.

Thou Hast Given

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Christ can fulfill this prophecy. And He is called a servant. And this is true. He did come as a servant. He humbled Himself. **"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"** (Phil. 2:8). The Lord Jesus Christ was **"obedient unto death."** Meaning that He was obedient to the Father and to all things that the Father would have Him suffer and do. He was **"obedient"** even until **"death."** He subjected Himself and His will to the Father and His will.

And even as He was subject unto the Father, the Father saw fit to give Him many things. We can see some of those things here in John 17. Of course we can also continue reading in Phil. 2:9-12, **"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."** We can see here that the Father has **"given him a name which is above every name."** The Father has **"highly exalted"** the Son. In our text we can see some more that the Father has given the Son.

POWER

The Father has given Power to the Son. **"As thou hast given him power over all flesh..."** (John 17:2). All power, authority, and might belong to God. God is omnipotent. And yet here on earth, the Son had subjected Himself to the will of the Father. He had humbled Himself in taking upon Him flesh. In many ways, as a body of flesh, He was subject to the circumstances that we all daily face. He could hunger and thirst. He could suffer

pain and anguish. He could be tempted. (Though in reality, as God, He is infallible and He is immutable. Any temptation of an infallible and immutable being has only one outcome; He cannot change. So there is no doubt as to the sinless nature of His character.) He could and did grow as a body of flesh. He did increase **"in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man"** (Luke 2:52). And since He had done this, the Father gave Him power. His was truly authority beyond question. There was no flesh on this earth that could rise up and do unto the Son anything that He would not allow.

I know that in this passage the Son is referring mostly to His power over the sons of men, to give eternal life to whom He would. Yet His power exceeds all flesh and actually extends to all creation. Let's look at a few examples of His power.

Firstly, He had power over sickness: In

the case of the Centurion's servant in Matthew 8:8-9, **"The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."** As a man used to authority, the Centurion did not question the authority of this Master. In fact, notice that the Centurion would normally say **"to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."** But he could not say to his servant, "Be healed," and have him obey. But Jesus the Christ could say, "Be healed" and it would be so.

Secondly, He had power over the elements: In Matthew 8:26-26, **"..Then he**

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Mini Edition

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THE LOST ART OF READING

First Lady Laura Bush has excelled again. She has consistently brought honor and dignity to the White House through her demeanor and example. On a recent visit to the National Library of Russia, she extolled the importance of reading over watching television as being a "much better exercise for the brain." She also added that it was good for the heart, since it can show to children their importance by parents taking time from a busy schedule to read to their children, even if only for twenty minutes a day.

That's good stuff. And befitting for the first lady, since she is a former librarian. She is right on target. A reading people become an educated people. TV, video games and movies are robbing us of our culture which is often locked up in the written word of the past. These truths could be passed on orally, but no one ever talks anymore. Neighborly and family visits are a thing of the past.

Are you a reader? Do your kids read? Reading exercises the mind, stimulates the brain and fires up creativity. Instead of asking a co-worker about the latest flick, try using the old cliché, "Read any good books lately?" After deciding which planet you are from, they will probably mumble something about "weirdoes" and rush off to watch a video. Anyway, most flicks aren't worth watching, much less discussing.

You can usually tell who is a reader and who is not. Readers can usually think for themselves and carry on an intelligent conversation. Readers usually have some knowledge on all subjects. Readers have ambition and goals in life. Readers more

often than not can relate to people of all ages. And readers are open minded and teachable. The great Christian educator C. B. Eavey once said, "To be alive is to be educated" but I say "To read is to also be educated." Charles Spurgeon, called the prince of preachers, was so well read in all subjects, it was stated he could preach hundreds of sermons using different illustrations without ever repeating himself.

Since most people are not readers, it goes without saying most do not read the Bible. Instilling in children a love for reading good literature can help insure they become students of the Bible. First Lady Laura Bush has even given an abbreviated recommended reading list as follows:

"Amazing Grace" Mary Hoffman
 "Hop on Pop" Dr. Seuss (My favorite)
 "Little Women" Louisa Mae Alcott
 "On the Banks of Plum Creek" Laura Ingalls Wilder

Of course the Bible is in a class by itself in what it can produce in your life, but other good books help build character and determination. And some books are just fun and relaxing to read. I challenge you to put your busy schedule on paper, carve out the unnecessary or least important things and begin reading one book a week for yourself and read at least 20 minutes a day to your children. Re-evaluate after one month and you will probably schedule more time for reading. When we begin to read, the mind is opened. As we continue reading, the mind is expanded and filled with wealth. When we cease reading, the mind closes and we perish from lack of knowledge.

Thou Hast Given

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arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" These veteran mariners had never seen a Man with this power and authority. It is not as if it is just power in the sense of strength and might. But the winds and the sea obey Him. He needs not even compel; He only commands and they obey because He has the Right or the Authority to command them. The winds and the sea are forces of creation that are immediately subject to Him – all creation is joyously obedient to Him.

Thirdly, He had power over the demons: In Matthew 8:28-34, we read the account of the Gergesene demoniacs. (Notice that this and the two previous accounts come from **Mt.8.**) In v. 29, the demons call out, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" In v. 31 we read, "So the devils besought him, saying If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine." The devils speak as if they acknowledge the power and authority of this Jesus. They say to Him "if," knowing full well that the Lord will do as He pleases. They know that the decision to determine their fate lies solely in the hands of Jesus Christ. Then in v. 32 our Lord says one word – "Go." It is as simple as that, and the devils must obey. There is no question about their obedience to His command; the only question is what he will command them to do.

Fourthly, He had power over Satan himself: After the temptation of Christ, we see the Lord command Satan, and we see Satan obey the Lord. "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (Matt. 4:10-11). What is there left that is not subject to the power of this Saviour? When it was His will and the will of the Father, the Son could exert His Power over any being or any object in His creation – in heaven or in earth. We see that He did not do so as a general rule, while He was here on this earth. Instead He took upon Him flesh, and covered over His glory for a while.

Yet, even so, as He was obedient to the Father, the Father was faithful unto Him. As a part of His obedience to the Father, and as a part of His subjection to the Father, power, authority, and might were given unto Him, even on earth. As He obeyed the Father, none could deter Him. As long as He did the will of the Father, how could any oppose Him? In fact Jesus told Pilate in John 19:11, "...Thou

couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above..." His power was omnipotent because His power was the power that the Father had in Heaven. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53). The Lord had authority to call down the angels. Surely, the angels would even desire to come to His aid! As they came to Him after the temptation and succored Him there, surely they would rejoice at the opportunity to now destroy sinful man on the behalf of their Creator! Yet it was not His will, nor was it the will of the Father. Oh, the grace and love that our Saviour showed, in that He suffered what He had the power to avoid! Oh, the grace and love that our Father showed, in that He allowed His Son to suffer what He had the power to prevent!

A PEOPLE

There is more that we can find is given unto the Son. In John 17:2 we also read, "...that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." (I am going through these things that we can see are given unto the Son in this chapter in a verse-by-verse manner. I am not trying to look at this in a chronological fashion.) We can see here that the Father has also given unto the Son a people. Here we have the sovereignty of God exposed to us again. How can any Bible scholar, or even any that would study the Bible in an honest way, ever deny the election of man as it is found in God's sovereignty? This verse is so simple in its statements. The "eternal life" that is spoken of here is not a general or ambiguous thing. The "many" that is spoken of here is also not a general or ambiguous people. The eternal life is definite and it is intended for a certain people. This is not merely a gift that is set out for the taking. Nor is it a prize that can be won by a certain few. No, to be included in that number is up to God, and God alone. Even the Son is subject to the Father's will here. (Though, again, we would note that the Father and Son can never be in opposition to one another, but are always in perfect harmony and agreement.) As per the plan of salvation, the Father has "given" to the Son "many" people for His possession. Now we know that these were given to the Son even before the world began. In fact, they have ever been His people, and they ever will be His people. But in a special way, they are given to Him here in time, as He walks the face of the earth in preparation of that deed which will forever secure the "eternal life" for the "many." In a beautiful and special way, He now comes face to face, in the flesh, with His people that are present at this time. Consider that the disciples and the members of the first Church at Jerusalem are now face to face with Him of whom the prophets foretold! Consider that these precious men and women were now in

the presence of the Saviour that was prophesied to Adam, to Abraham, and to David! What hallowed ground they now walked on!

We also can read in John 17:6,11,12,24 about the people that are given to the Son. In v. 6, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." Another marvelous thought is expressed to us here in this verse. These "men" were given to the Son by the Father. They were chosen "out of the world" by the Father and then given to the Son. The men were the Father's and He gave them to the Son to secure their salvation! We the people of God are both the Father's and the Son's! What love the Father must have for us, that He would choose us out from the world, to be His Son's! Notice also v. 11, "...keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." The Father and the Son are one. Therefore, what one has, the other must also have. When we are given to the Son, we become new creatures, in Christ Jesus. Now if we are in the Son, and the Son is in the Father, we can truly say that we are all one, and that this will be made manifest in Heaven. This is truly beyond our mortal comprehension. Yet, we have been given to the Son and we will be one. Notice also v. 12, "...those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost..." Not only are we given to the Son by the Father; not only do we now dwell in the Son; but we are kept by the Son. Now if we believe, as we have already mentioned, that all power is given to the Son, how can we doubt but that He will keep us? Notice that He said, in regards to those that were given Him, "I have kept, and none of them is lost." If He would desire to keep His people, and He has all power given unto Him, then we can certainly say that none has ever, nor ever will be lost. What confidence we should have in the sovereignty of our God! The sickness of this world could not defy Him. The winds and the sea could not resist Him. The fallen angels could not help but obey Him. Even Satan himself, the ruler of the darkness of this world, is subject to Him! Notice also v. 24, "Father, I will that they also, whom

thou hast given me, be with me where I am..." Again we see that this people is given to the Son. They are His to keep and He has power to keep them. They are His, not only in this lifetime, but also in eternity to come. We, the people of God, will be with Him "where I am."

Now, it might seem a little odd that the Son would ask that this people would be with Him where He currently was, given that He is in the Garden of Gethsemane. But I think that there is a lot to be learned from this. We all would desire to be *where* the Lord is. No matter where it is, we know that we will be kept by Him. I also would like to point out, that even while here on this earth, the Son in a way was present with the Father. He could always seek Him out and dwell in His presence. If they are one, then we will be one with them. It is the intention of our Saviour to not only save His people, and to keep His people, but to bring His people to Him and to His Father. The "many" are given to the Son; He redeems them; He returns them unto the Father as a faithful and set apart people. Now, He will preserve them until such time that we can all be one in Heaven.

A WORK

Something else that the Father gives the Son is A Work. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). The Son was given a "work...to do." He was given this work by the Father. If we examine the preceding points, we see that the Son was given power and the Son was given a people. He was given these by the Father. But now we see something else as well. He was given these things that we have mentioned, but there is a price. Now we see that there is a work that the Son must perform. This people was not just handed to the Son. This power was not given to the Son just to possess and not to use. There is a work that He must accomplish. Again, it is not something that He was forced to do, but this is a work that He does willingly. There was no power on earth or in Heaven that could save the many that were given to the Son, without a work first being performed. Our Holy God in Heaven could not tolerate the sight of this sinful people. Someone must perform an act to justify these people in the sight of God. This is the work that was given to the Son. He must live a perfect life as a Man. Then He must sacrifice that life for the people that were given to Him by the Father. His work was a terrible work that only He could perform. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

Notice that both this passage and our passage in John 17:4 tell us that Jesus 'finished' His work. There was never a doubt

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

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1. In reference to James 5:13-16, is it wrong to anoint with oil? – Kentucky



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“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry, let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam. 5:13-16).

Unfortunately, we live in a day and age in which the Lord’s own people are afraid to do things because the world has abused them. For instance, many of our people don’t use John 3:16 because of the misinterpretation the world gives to it. Many of our people don’t spread the gospel because of the unscriptural ways of many “evangelistic” organizations. I believe this is the case with the passage before us today.

This passage doesn’t teach that it’s wrong to anoint with oil. On the contrary, this passage teaches that we should anoint the sick with oil. Let me give some of the different ideas concerning this. First, some say that this is simply symbolic of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, some say that the oil was refreshing to the sick—especially if the sickness was an external one. Thirdly, oil has some healing properties within it and could be considered medicinal. Fourthly, the oil is meant to sanctify (or, set apart) the sick to the Lord for healing. Lastly, some think the oil is the channel of the Holy Spirit and the oil is necessary for the healing of the sick.

The Bible teaches us in other places that the sick were anointed with oil and wine (Luke 10:30-34). If our passage teaches us that we are to anoint the sick with oil, what are we to think of it? Those who think the oil is necessary don’t seem to read verse 15, which says, **“The prayer of faith shall save the sick.”** There can be little doubt that the oil was refreshing to the sick and that it has healing properties when the sickness is an external one.

However, our passage doesn’t limit us to external ailments and again, the 15th verse tells us it is not the oil that heals, but, the **“prayer of faith.”** It is the opinion of this writer that the oil is meant to set apart the sick to the Lord for healing. This is why we are told to anoint him with oil *in the name of the Lord*. By doing this, we are saying, “Lord, we realize that healing is in your hands, not ours. Please heal this one that we have brought before you if it be according to your will.” I am not trying to say that we should use vain repetitions in prayer. I am simply giving an example of what our mindset should be when we anoint with oil.

I realize many may have stood against the anointing with oil in times past. However, I believe this was done out of ignorance in that they stood against the false way many people have abused this verse. However, in light of our passage, we must concede that the Bible teaches us to anoint the sick with oil praying that the Lord would heal them. We don’t, however, need to get the idea that the sick are healed by anything other than the Lord. The oil, therefore, is not necessary to the healing.

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James 5:13-16 declares: **“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”**

No, I don’t believe it would be wrong to anoint someone with oil in association with prayer by the elders of the church. And no, I am not a charismatic or a Pentecostal!!

In New Testament times it was not uncommon to use oil as a medicinal aid.

Even the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Physician, poured oil and wine on the body of the wounded man in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33-37). When the twelve were commissioned by Christ it is recorded: **“And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them”** (Mark 6:13). I don’t believe that there is any healing power in oil or in men. Ultimately, any one who is healed, whether it be from a common cold or the most serious form of cancer, can trace the source of their healing back to the power and mercy of Almighty God.

I firmly believe in Divine healing by the hand of God, but I don’t believe in the claims of the assorted fake healers of our day. Though I have never anointed with oil in association with prayer, I would have no objection whatsoever if it helped the afflicted person to feel more comfortable or alleviate some emotional fear.

The main thrust of the passage in James is the power of fervent, effectual prayer offered by righteous saints of God. The emphasis is not on the oil or even the men applying it, but rather on the power of God.

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I personally believe that the anointing mentioned in this passage of Scripture has to do with medical care and medication. This was the case with the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:33-34. The term anointing simply means to apply some form of medication such as wine and oil into wounds. I do not believe today that anointing with oil in the sense that it was done in the Old Testament times and in the beginning of the church age has any significance today in praying for healing. I believe this Scripture simply means use whatever medical help is available along with prayer that God will make the medication effective. No medicine is effective unless it is the will of God.

The anointing with oil in the period of time prior to this era had to do with signifying the presence of the Holy Spirit. In this case in this time period the Holy

Spirit had already come to stay and He thus already being present the anointing with oil would have no significance. I believe we should use whatever medical care is available and then pray for the Lord’s blessings upon the care.

However I do not think it is a sin if one feels they want to be anointed with oil with prayer for healing, but I do not believe it is necessary. I do not think a pastor is committing a wrong or is necessarily unscriptural if they anoint with oil when praying for the sick.

This Scripture certainly does not teach that it is a sin to receive medical help when a believer is sick. We must always remember that all healing is from God whether by a miraculous act of God without medical help or with medical help. Therefore all believers should seek the prayers of their church according to God’s will.

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“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” (Jam. 5:14-15).

This scripture needs to be taken literally, and it instructs us that when a member is sick to call for the elders of the church to pray for and anoint that member with oil in the name of the Lord. There is nothing wrong with someone taking heed to this scripture and asking the elders to come and do this. This scripture is not referring to the gift of healing which has ceased but it simply refers to the saints petitioning God to heal someone. Therefore this practice is still recommended.

Here are some additional thoughts on this passage.

First, we need to know and trust that all healing comes from God no matter what means the Lord uses to accomplish it. It should not seem strange then for someone to go to the throne of grace first and ask others to go to the throne of grace with them having faith that God can heal them. Too many people use the Lord as a last resort after nothing else works, when they ought to use the Lord as a first resort because He is the God of all healing.

Second, according to this verse it is clear that the sick individual would not go before the church to be anointed and

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

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Did Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore do the right thing in disobeying the Federal court order to remove the Ten Commandments from his court house? – Ohio



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Being from Alabama, this case has been most interesting to me. This monument (which contained other things besides the Ten Commandments) was not paid for by Roy Moore and it was not paid for by the citizens of Alabama. It was donated by private citizens. Judge Moore had it placed in the rotunda of the building after it was donated. The polls seem to indicate that most Alabamians were in support of the monument. That is hardly a reason to keep it, however, for the people can be wrong. It just so happens that in this case the people were right.

The opponents of Judge Moore are in the minority in Alabama, but it seems that the minority rules in our country today. They proclaimed separation of church and state—a phrase which doesn't appear in any of our documents. The first amendment, in part, says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." In other words, our government is not to require people to worship in a certain manner and they are not to restrict people from worshipping in a certain manner. This is far from what we hear today about separation of church and state. You can hardly read our national documents and not see God (not a god, but, the True and Living God) throughout them. Many of our documents are even signed, "In the year of our Lord" which tell us which God our forefathers believed in—the God of the Bible. The United States Supreme Court building has a sculpture of Moses holding the Ten Commandments. There seems to be a double standard when this same court says we can't do this in the Alabama Supreme Court building.

Having said all of this, the question at hand is not whether our government knows its own laws, but whether Chief Justice Roy Moore did the right thing by disobeying the Federal court order to remove the Ten Commandments. I'll say right up front, I have supported Roy Moore throughout this entire episode

and plan to continue supporting him. If he is a child of God (and having heard him speak on TV, I am fully persuaded that he is), he had no option but to deny the order. To have removed the monument would have been equal to denying the God that had stood up for so long.

When Peter and John were commanded by the government to stop preaching anything that related to Jesus they said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19). When the three Hebrew children were faced with obeying the government or the Lord, they did right by obeying God.

It cannot be denied that we are supposed to obey our government. The Bible teaches us so. However, there is a cutoff. We can only obey the government so long as it doesn't violate our Christianity. When our government commands us to stop doing something that the Bible plainly tells us to do, we are to stand up with God against the government. For instance, many today don't witness to people on the job because their company opposes it. However, Jesus said for us to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). I don't see how we can reconcile these two things. Therefore, we must follow the teachings of Jesus.

I believe Roy Moore did what was required of him as a child of God. He stood up when he had to against the wrong of government. He had no other choice except to deny the God that He believes in and we know that would be a grave error. We are not to follow the government blindly with no regard for God. As an Alabamian, I am thankful to have a man like Roy Moore as my Chief Justice. I can only pray that more will be elected like him in other offices of government.

TODD BRYANT



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Absolutely! We are to obey the laws of the land and thus be good citizens. However, it is imperative as Christians that we make our voice heard in standing for what is right and true. There are times when the laws of men are in con-

flict with our Christian convictions. We must follow the scriptural example of Peter and the apostles in such cases: "And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem, with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 6:27-29). There are definitely times when civil disobedience is justified when acting upon *scriptural commands or principles*. This is one of the reasons why Baptist history is marked by a trail of blood. Martyrs have been tortured, maimed, burned at the stake, imprisoned, etc. for standing up for their convictions and against civil injustice. When we fail to act upon our Christian principles and convictions it is a sin according to James 4:17 which states: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

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I do agree with Judge Roy Moore in disobeying the order of the federal judge. I make this statement based on the Scriptures and the Constitution of the United States of America.

In Acts 5:29 Peter and the other Apostles said, "We ought to obey God rather than man." The federal judge's decision was contrary to God's law; therefore Judge Moore obeyed God in refusing to remove the Ten Commandments from the building. Just as Judge Moore said in his speech, "No man judge or otherwise has the authority to put man's law or decision above God's.

The Constitution of the United States of America nowhere speaks of the separation of church and state. This is a statement the God haters have invented to confuse and mislead people. Sorry to say, many politicians have accepted it as fact in order to get the votes of the liberals. The constitution simply says that the gov-

ernment shall not authorize any religion and give them authority to be a state religion. The government is never to make any law that would give any religious group authority over other groups or the government. The government cannot make any law that takes away the freedom of religious worship.

The placing of the Ten Commandments by Judge Moore in no way usurped authority from the State or Federal government nor restricted the worship and practice of any religion. The Ten Commandments simply gives the basis upon which the laws of this country were founded. Our country recognizes God in the oath to office of the government, in trials, on our currency, pledge of allegiance, in the opening of our legislative bodies and other national procedures.

Judge Moore just made public what our government has claimed for centuries, and many former presidents, and great public servants declared made our country great.

I thank God for the stand Judge Moore took and pray that others in our justice system and government will do the same. Long live Judge Moore.

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"We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Yes, Chief Justice Roy Moore did the right thing and he has been a good example to the rest of us on how not to compromise the truth.

Many are treating Justice Moore as if he has done something illegal when he has broken no law. However, the judge that ordered him to remove the Ten Commandments broke the law, and yet oddly enough nobody is accusing that judge of doing anything wrong. Oh how the words of the prophet ring true, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Is. 5:20). There is no law in the United States of America or in the State of Alabama that forbids the displaying of the Ten Commandments on government property or that forbids the free exercise of religion.

The government does not give us religious freedom but God gives it. The Constitution of the United States is a contract by which the government promises us that it will not attempt to take away our God-given freedoms. Only

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Forum #1

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prayed for, but rather that the elders of the church would go to that person to do this (perhaps in that person's home or in the hospital). If this anointing and praying were done before the church, there would no doubt be people coming forward not because they believe in God's power to heal but rather because they like to be the center of attention. This scripture teaches the elders to go to the sick individual not the sick individual before the church.

Third, this passage teaches us that it is the responsibility of the sick individual to call on the elders, not the elders to call on the sick individual. Some people get the idea that the whole church ought to cater to them, or they think that the pastor should call on them every time they get the sniffles. According to this scripture, it is their responsibility to call for the elders. If they have too much pride to humbly ask for help then they will not receive help.

Fourth, there is a special reference in this passage to people who are sick because of sin. If we are going to call for the elders of the church we had better be ready to confess and repent of our sins. God is faithful and just to forgive us when we do. (I John 1:9).

Fifth, remember that God is still sovereign and maintain an attitude of submission to His will in all things. It is not always God's will to heal everyone. God can use sickness to teach us many valuable lessons in life, and we must learn to be grateful for all that God allows us to endure. Paul asked God three times to have his "thorn in the flesh" removed but God replied "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Cor. 12:9). God answered Paul's prayer by giving him the grace to endure his trial in the flesh. Paul was thankful that God answered his prayer and said "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Cor. 12:9-10).

MATT JAMES

Forum #2

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a tyrannical government would even try. The first amendment was not written to separate church and state but to protect the church from the state. It reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The Bill of Rights was written to protect us

from a tyrannical government, and yet our government has broken the law and is trying to take away our God-given freedoms because of their hatred for God and His law.

There is no place more fitting for the display of the Ten Commandments than in every courthouse and in every school within our borders (as well as in every home).

The laws of this nation are based on the laws of God, and this is why God has blessed us so much. His Word tells us "Righteousness exalteth a nation" (Pro. 14:34) and "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD" (Ps. 33:12). If we as a nation will deny God's law then God will deny this nation. If this nation does not want to acknowledge God then God will destroy this nation, and our destruction is surely coming except we repent.

I have been so disappointed the last few months at how few people are supporting Moore in his fight against this tyranny. There is truly but a small remnant that has not compromised God's principles. I've been hearing professed Christians say that we are supposed to submit to all the laws of men and therefore Justice Moore was wrong. They cite Romans 13:1 to prove their point. It is true that we are to be subject to the higher powers, but never should we obey men rather than God. These people are blind leaders of the blind and fools who have been taught to esteem the doctrines of men higher than the doctrines of God. They pervert scripture and transform themselves into angels of light that they may deceive many.

Lastly, Chief Justice Roy Moore has done more good for the cause of truth than a million protestors with signs could ever do. Anyone can protest and complain about something but very few are willing to sacrifice everything for the truth's sake. He has been willing to sacrifice his career and reputation for what he believes and he has done it honorably and legally. We could all learn a lesson from his example.

MATT JAMES

Thou Hast Given

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that He would finish the work. Whatever He would lay His Hand to do, He would do. He is God and He must succeed. In John 17:30 He cried out, "It is Finished"! Surely if He starts a work, He will finish it. The power was His and the people were His. He would perform that which was required to redeem that people. He would leave nothing to chance. He would leave nothing to the skill or strength of the people, but He would be the **author and finisher**.

THE WORD

We also see that the Son is given the words of the Father. "For I have given

unto them the words which thou gavest me..." (John 17:8). The Son speaks only that which the Father would have Him speak. Remember, He has taken up, voluntarily, a position subject to the Father. He is not inferior, He has only become a servant that He might perform that work which He was given to do. "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (John 14:24). Since they are one, it can only follow that what Jesus Christ speaks here on earth, God the Father speaks in heaven. What wonderful unity in the Triune God! Even the very words that are spoken are the words of God. There is nothing that the Son ever said here on earth, while in the form of a servant that was not totally and completely perfect! Every syllable that He ever uttered, was of the utmost importance, and was absolutely necessary. This must be so, because His words were the words of God. We go through our lives here on earth constantly regretting things that we have said or deeds that we have performed. With the Lord Jesus Christ it was not so. If only we would pattern our lives after His and speak and do those things that He has done. This should be our goal.

Also, I believe that we can see from these words that are given to the Son, that something more will grow. After all, the Son is called The Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). As a result of the work that the Son was given and as a result of His performing that work, there is a Gospel to preach. Without that Son there would be no 'Good News'. But, with the Son there is 'Good News'. Those that preach the Gospel will preach the Word of God. In a very real sense, when the Father gives His words to the Son, His Son becomes The Word. He embodies all that the Father commands. He embodies all of the will and purpose of God. He is the Word of God, and He will be preached unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

GLORY

Finally, we see that the Father gives unto the Son - Glory. "And the glory which thou gavest me..." (John 17:22). We can refer back to our earlier passage in Phil. 2:9-11. There we saw that the Father has "highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. We saw also that every knee should bow...And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." We know that this glory was ever the Lord's. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). Before the world was created, Jesus Christ was glorious. Let me repeat: if the Son and the Father are one, then the glory that one possesses is also possessed by the other. Let there be no doubt that this is the Word of God,

manifest here on earth, and He is glorious beyond our comprehension! His glory is only covered over for a little while. He is only clothed with flesh while He performs that work which He is given. Soon He will reclaim the outward appearances of that glory, and like Moses and the Children of Israel, we will behold His glory. "Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink" (Ex. 24:9-11). In the same chapter, we read in v.17, "And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." There is glory that the Son possesses that is beyond our comprehension.

Yet not all of it was clothed here on this earth, because the Father gave Him some glory to display even in the body of flesh. Those that would observe Him closely would marvel at His demeanor and at the grace that He displayed. "And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel" (Matt. 9:33). "And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion" (Mark 2:12). Indeed, there was never a man like this man. His glory and power could not be kept completely hidden, but the Father would show it to whom He would. Even when the sinners would seek to condemn Him, none could be found that could find in Him a fault. He was and is perfection incarnate. His glory and personage is like no man that has ever lived or ever will live upon this earth. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa. 60:1-3). This is definitely a prophecy about our Saviour. His glory is the salvation of the World. The Gentiles shall flock to Him, and He shall save His people.

Now let's change course a little bit and look here in Jn. 17 at the things that the Son has given to His people. We saw that the Father gave to the Son, power, a people, a work, The Word, and glory. Now let's look at how the Son in return gives to His People.

THE SON GIVES POWER

We can read in the Great Commission, "...All power is given unto me in heaven

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Thou Hast Given

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and in earth. Go ye therefore... (Mt. 28:18-19). We have already noticed that power is given to the Son by the Father. We now see that, because the Son has all power, He is authorizing His people to go in that same power and preach, baptize, and teach. We also have examples of the Lord giving power to His disciples while He was here on this earth. Remember that we noticed that the Lord Jesus Christ, while here on this earth, had power to heal, power over nature, power over the demons, and power over Satan himself. He passed this power on to His people. **"Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases"** (Luke 9:1). Here the disciples are given power over the demons and power to heal. In a sense, He gave them power over nature when He told them, **"...If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done."** (Mt. 21:21). His people are also given power over Satan. James tells us in Ja. 4:7, **"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."**

But I want to notice one other power that He has given to us. **"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"** (John 1:12). This is by far the most amazing power that He has given us. The Son has given us the power (the right or the authority) to be called **"the sons of God."** There was much that the Father gave the Son. There is also much that the Son has given us, but I don't think that we will find a greater gift that He has given us, then this **"power to become the sons of God."** We had no power, right, authority, or ability to come unto God on our own. We were without hope and destitute. Yet the Son came unto us, and gave us life itself. Praise God that His Son would give unto us this great salvation!

THE SON GIVES A PEOPLE

Our next point under the first part of this message was that the Father gave unto the Son a People. Now we cannot say that the Son then gives His people to any other people. He does not even give His people unto the church or unto the ministers of the gospel. No, He will not trust His people to the care of any mortal man. But instead, as we have already said, He does give His people back to the Father. Remember, they are one, and so in reality the people of God are possessed by both the Father and the Son. But in a special way, the Son will commit them to the watch-care and security of the Father. **"...Holy Father, keep through thine own**

name those whom thou hast given me..." (John 17:11). And again we read in John 17:15, **"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."** We have a very interesting passage in John 10:28-29: **"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."** If we read the preceding verses, we know that Jesus Christ is speaking of His sheep. An interesting thought here is that, apparently these sheep are in the hand of the Son and the hand of the Father at the same time. We have already said that the Father gave the sheep unto the Son. But, if we understand this verse correctly, it must be that even in giving the sheep unto the Son, the Father never relinquished His claim upon them. I remind us all again, that the Father and the Son are one. Yet somehow, in this plan of salvation, even as the Son receives the people, the Father still yet preserves them. How deep and unfathomable are the counsels and mind of our incomparable God!

THE SON GIVES A WORK

We have already briefly touched on this when we read the Great Commission. The Son was given a work to do, and He performed it while here on this earth. When He left this earth, He left His people here to do the work that He would have us do. **"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world"** (John 17:18). The Lord Jesus Christ finished the work that He was given to do on this earth. Our work is only beginning. Just as His work lasted unto His death, so our work must last unto our death or the return of our Lord. The Lord said unto the seventy in Luke 10:2-3, **"...The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. Go your ways..."** The Lord could have chosen other means to call out His people, but He chose to use His people in preaching the Gospel, to call out His elect. There will always be laborers until the harvest is complete. It should be our deepest shame, if we are not laborers in that harvest. The seed will be sown; the crop will flourish; the harvest will be reaped. Let us pray God that we might be tools that He would use in the harvest.

THE SON GIVES THE WORD

The Son was given the words of the Father. We noticed previously, that this corresponds well to the fact that the Son of God is the Word of God. We notice, now, that the Son will give unto the people the words of the Father. **"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them..."** (John 17:8). The people of God recognize the **"words"** of the Father when they are

spoken to them and the **"words"** are accompanied by the Holy Spirit. It is in fact, the word of God that will sanctify us and set us apart from the world. There is no salvation apart from the Word of God. **"I have given them thy word..."** (John 17:14). **"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"** (John 17:17). Just as we did when we studied the fact that the Father gave the word unto the Son, we want to emphasize here, that the words of the Father, are all about the work of the Son. The work of the Son is preached unto us in the words that are given unto us. Without knowledge of the Son of God (the Word of God), we cannot have this life eternal. Elsewhere the Lord tells us that He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is our life, but the only way unto that life is through the truth. We must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and the work that He accomplished, or there is no salvation. Surely we must marvel again at the graciousness of God, that He would show us this way, and then point us to the truth that we might have life!

Not only this, but the Word of God is given unto us that after we are saved, we might preach the words of the Father to the lost and dying around us. **"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;"** (John 17:20). Amazingly, as we partake of the Word, which is given us, the Word that we speak becomes the same as the Word of God. Others can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ through the words that we speak! This can only be so, if we speak and preach the Gospel as it is shown unto us in the Word of God. Don't be afraid to take advantage of the mighty weapon that we hold in our hands! Make use of this pure and holy tool that others too might rejoice in the salvation that is found in the Lord Jesus Christ! In essence, through the use of the Word is the fulfillment also of the work that is given unto us.

THE SON GIVES GLORY

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them..." (John 17:22). What is this **"glory"** that the Son gives unto His people? The rest of the verse says, **"that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one..."** It could be that this glory given unto us is the presence of the Son of God. **"I in them,"** He said. This means that He must dwell in us. **"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory"** (Col. 1:27).

I think, rather, though, that the glory that the Son would give us, we have not yet experienced. We read again in John 17:5, **"...with the glory that I had with thee before the world was."** I think that the Son speaks of giving His people a place in heaven where that glory will be seen. Not that we will be glorified, but that we

will see His glory. **"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another..."** (Isa. 42:8). Actually, all glory is the Lord's. The glory that will be seen in heaven is all His and of Him. The glory that is seen in this earth will ultimately magnify only Him. The judgment that will be executed upon all them that refuse Him will redound to His glory. The joy, happiness, and peace that His people will experience, will be to the Praise of Him alone. Yet, to be included in that number is what the Lord is speaking of here in John 17:22. For some reason known only to Him, He has endeavored to make us one with Him. We will be with Him and we will see Him as He is and as He was before the world ever was. Oh that will be glory!

CONCLUSION

There was much that the Father gave unto the Son. We have looked at only a little of what there is to see even in this one chapter. We can never fully understand the relationship between the Father and the Son. It becomes even more difficult for our finite minds when we include our relationship with both the Father and the Son. Suffice it to say that all that we have, we have received. All that we have is given unto us. We can achieve nothing on our own. It is only the grace of God, as manifest in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we can behold the Son as our Saviour and His Father as our Father.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Faith Missionary Baptist Church of Paducah, KY will be hosting their annual Thanksgiving conference on Monday through Thursday November 24th through the 27th. Services will begin Monday evening at 7:00 PM. There will be morning, afternoon, and evening services on Tuesday and Wednesday beginning at 9:45 AM, 1:30 PM, and 7:00 PM with two meals being provided by the church each day. The conference will conclude with a service on Thursday morning beginning at 10:00 AM and followed by a noon meal. Out of town guests may go to exit 4 on I-24 to the Pear Tree Inn and tell them you are with our conference group and they will give you a room. Everyone will be responsible for his or her own phone charges. This year you may call 1-800-325-0720 and tell them you are making a reservation for Faith Baptist Church's Thanksgiving Conference and your room will be held for you. PLEASE call back if you need to cancel or call Pastor Jerry Asberry at 270-554-4411 or at cell number 270-210-0853.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.

THE ACLU SEEKS TO BLOCK RELIGIOUS PROGRAMS IN NEBRASKA STATE PRISONS

LINCOLN, Neb. (EP)—Over 6 million men and women are under correctional supervision (in jail, on probation or on parole) in the United States. The U.S. Bureau of Justice estimates that two-thirds of that number will return to prison at some point in their lives.

One faith-based organization, Prison Fellowship Ministries, works to reduce the high level of recidivism in American prisons by attacking the problem at the heart. And, as the international prison ministry has been emphasizing since 1976, the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart.

But recently, Prison Fellowship Ministries has fallen under attack itself. The ACLU in Nebraska recently attempted to block Operation Starting Line, a Prison Fellowship sponsored program aimed at extending the truths of the Gospel to inmates in state-run prisons.

Operation Starting Line (OSL) is a program designed to change the lives of prisoners by seeking to change their hearts. The typical OSL effort in a prison begins with an evangelistic event, followed by counseling, Bible studies and on-going mentoring for prisoners who express interest. OSL relies on thousands of volunteers in each state to set up the programs and participate in follow-up.

Attendance at OSL events is completely voluntary for prisoners. But the ACLU asked Nebraska state prisons to stop last week's Operation Starting Line, claiming that the state's prisons give preference to Christian groups over others. "These programs cross a clear line that the courts have set to prevent the government from showing preference for one religion over another," Tim Burke, director of the ACLU in Nebraska, told the Associated Press.

Burke contends that prisons give wider access to programs like Operation Starting Line than programs run by other religious groups, but the ACLU offered no specific evidence to prove their claim.

Harold Clarke, Nebraska's state prison system director, told AP that all religious groups are afforded the same opportunities given to Christian groups. He said that no one has ever requested to put on an event similar to OSL and been turned down.

Operation Starting Line went forward last week despite the criticism, and according to Clarke, was well-attended and appreciated by the inmates.

The ACLU filed a formal complaint with Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) after the conclusion of the OSL events this weekend. A spokesman for the department responded to the complaint, saying that prisoners in state-run facilities are offered a variety of religious programs, but are never required to attend. "The same is true in this case," said Bill Wiley, spokesman for HHS of Nebraska.

Mark Earley, president of Prison Fellowship Ministries and chairman of Operation Starting Line, also dismissed the ACLU's complaints, saying, "OSL is a program that inmates can come to if they want. In Nebraska, as in many other states, there is a wide range of religious options offered in prisons, and this is just one of them."

Operation Starting Line plans to offer programs to thousands of prisoners across the U.S. this year. Since its inception in 2000, the group has visited 260,000 inmates at 489 prisons in 18 states.

UTAH'S CLEAN AIR - SALT LAKE CITY TV STATION REFUSES TO SHOW NEW NBC SITCOM

SALT LAKE CITY (EP)—Salt Lake City's NBC affiliate has deemed the new sitcom, "Coupling," as unsuitable for its viewers, and is refusing to air the series this fall.

KSL-TV, Utah's largest station, decided to can the sitcom after a barrage of complaints from viewers over the station's promotions for the show, the Associated Press reported.

One other station, WNDU, an NBC affiliate owned by the University of Notre Dame, is also refusing to air the show. WNDU's president and general manager, Jim Behling, told AP, "We strongly feel that the premiere episode, which was made available for affiliates to preview, is little more than a succession of crude sex jokes, which, when taken in total, simply push the envelope well beyond the boundaries of our community's standards."

Utah viewers likewise overwhelming objected to the sexual content in the sitcom's previews. KSL's station executives said they did not make the decision lightly, but in the end, heeded the voice of the majority.

"Coupling" was created by the British Broadcasting Corp. as a show about the relationships and sex lives of a group of thirty-somethings. NBC bought the show and is re-making it with American actors to replace its top comedy, "Friends," now in its last season.

A Salt Lake City newspaper quoted NBC Entertainment president Jeff Zucker as say-

ing "Coupling" is about relationships not sex.

The Associated Press reports that the U.S. version of the show "features three men and three women discussing their sex lives, body parts and alternative lifestyles. The first episode ends with a female character exposing herself in a restaurant."

The Utah television station has not decided what to air in place of "Coupling."

CANADIAN HOUSE OF COMMONS NARROWLY UPHOLDS SUPPORT FOR HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGE

TORONTO (EP)—Canada's ruling party narrowly defeated a Parliament resolution that opposes the government's plan to legalize homosexual marriage this week. The Associated Press reported that the resolution by the Canadian Alliance opposition party was defeated by a 137-132 vote in the 301-member House of Commons.

The proposed resolution was nonbinding, and carried no legal weight, but was intended to force Parliament members from the governing Liberal Party to officially declare their position on an issue that has divided the country.

Hundreds of homosexual couples have been married in Ontario and British Columbia since courts there ruled earlier this year that the current definition of marriage as between a man and a woman was discriminatory. The Canadian government has not appealed the decision of the courts, and chose instead to rewrite the law to define marriage as between two persons with no gender distinction.

That law has been sent to the Canadian Supreme Court for review before Parliament considers it.

Opinion polls show that Canadians are evenly split on the issue of legalizing homosexual marriage, and some of members of the majority Liberal Party oppose the government's plan to make the unions legal.

The vote showed how divided the government is on the issue, as the Liberals hold 170 seats in the House of Commons but could barely defeat the resolution.

The proposed resolution expressed support for the traditional definition of marriage as between a man and a woman, and said that Parliament should take "all necessary steps" to preserve the traditional definition of marriage.

Stephen Harper, the opposition leader who introduced the resolution for a vote, said the issue is about supporting traditional marriage and giving Parliament a say in the matter instead of letting courts set the policy.

The government's proposed law has set off a nationwide opposition movement, according to the Associated Press, led by conservative groups and churches.

EVOLUTION TAUGHT BY CATHOLICS, MAINLINERS

Professors in the mainline non-fundamentalist seminaries and university divinity schools today accept the "evolutionary view of reality" rather than the "creationist view." (9/8 *Chr. News*). Pope John Paul II rejects the

natural interpretation of the Genesis account of creation and allows for the notion that man and the universe gradually evolved from some primary organism. Evidence abounds for creation (Ps. 19:1; e.g.). These "scholars" are "willingly ignorant" (II Pet. 3:5). (*Calvary Contender*, Oct. 2003)

PAGAN WORSHIP MORE ACCEPTABLE TO EPISCOPALIANS THAN HOMOSEXUALITY?

While Christians lament the election of an openly homosexual at the recent Episcopal General Convention, few realize that the Episcopal Church has condoned outright paganism for years. Its bishops have turned a blind eye to pagan intrusion of its majestic cathedrals. Occult rituals at New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine and San Francisco's Grace Cathedral have sent a message that the Biblical God is only one of a multitude of equal deities (Berit Kjos, 9/8 *Christian News* via *Calvary Contender*, Oct. 2003).

ISLAMIC JESUS VS. CHRISTIAN JESUS

The Christian Jesus is the virgin-born Son of God, the eternal God, the Creator, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit. He died for our sins, rose physically from the dead, and is coming back physically and visibly one day. The Islamic Jesus is said to be one of God's prophets but inferior to Muhammad who brought Allah's final revelations to man. The Quran denies the Trinity and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and any Muslim who believes in the deity of Jesus has committed "the one unforgivable sin" and it will send that person to hell. Muslims do believe that Jesus is the Messiah, virgin-born and sinless (9/4 *Ala. Baptist* via *Calvary Contender*, Oct. 2003).

U.S. TOPS CHARTS IN EDUCATIONAL SPENDING, BUT NOT IN PERFORMANCE

WASHINGTON (EP)—Spending is high but performance is low in U.S. schools a recent report shows. In 2001, the United States spent an average of nearly \$4000 more per child on education than 25 other major nations while the U.S. high-school graduation rate was below the international average in 2001.

The report was part of an annual review produced by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. According to the Associated Press, the report indicates that while the U.S. spends more money on education than many other nations, American students tend to perform at average or below average levels among those same countries.

U.S. scores for reading literacy among fourth-graders were high, but scores dramatically declined as students grew older. Education Secretary Rod Paige finds that trend disturbing. "These results highlight an extremely important truth about our educational system," he told AP. "I think we have become complacent, self-satisfied and often

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lacking the will to do better.”

U.S. SUPREME COURT PETITIONED TO RULE ON “UNDER GOD” IN PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

WASHINGTON—Attorneys for the Rutherford Institute have petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to address the question of whether the phrase “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. In filing a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of the Elk Grove Unified School District in Sacramento, California, Institute attorneys have requested that the June 2002 ruling issued by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals be overturned. . . .

“America’s founders not only recognized what the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals seeks to deny—that our rights, as the Declaration of Independence states, are ‘endowed by the Creator’—they staked their ‘lives, [their] fortunes and their sacred honor’ on that truth,” stated John W. Whitehead, president of the Rutherford Institute. “It has fallen to this Court to set the record straight and confirm the unequivocal affirmation of thirteen Supreme Court Justices across four decades that state-led recitation of ‘under God’ in the Pledge of Allegiance does not violate the Establishment Clause.” (Rutherford Institute news bulletin).

GLEANINGS HERE AND THERE

SAYREVILLE, N.J. (EP)—Lawyers from the Rutherford Institute who are representing the family of a kindergartner suspended from school after playing cops and robbers have asked the Supreme Court to consider their case. The Associated Press reported that four boys at Wilson Elementary School were playing a game involving make-believe guns on the playground in March 2000. The boy represented by the institute allegedly said, “I have a bazooka, and I’m going to shoot you.” Another student told a teacher, and the four boys were suspended for three days each. The Rutherford Institute filed a lawsuit, asking to have the suspension erased from one boy’s record. Lawyers for the institute argue that the boy’s rights to free speech, due process and equal protection by the law were violated by the school. John Whitehead, president of the institute, told AP that when public schools think children “playing cops and robbers on the playground are engaged in threatening and dangerous activity, one wonders whether it is the children or the adults who can’t tell the difference between fantasy and reality.”

SAN FRANCISCO (EP)—Gov. Gray Davis wowed a significant block of California’s voting population this week, signing into law a “domestic partner” bill that gives homosexual couples in the state nearly all the same rights as married couples. The new legislation puts California nearly on par with Vermont, which legalized civil unions

for homosexuals, according to the Associated Press. The new law will allow homosexual couples to apply for insurance, property ownership and parental status with the same benefits of legally married couples. Davis announced the bill to a crowd at San Francisco’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Center. “A family is a family not because of gender, but because of values,” he said. The law won’t take effect until January 2005; giving couples time to decide to withdraw their registration as domestic partners if they don’t want to make the commitment. A representative of Republican state Sen. William Knight declared his opposition to the bill, promising to file a legal challenge to the law.

ERITREA (EP)—Over 60 Eritrean teenagers were arrested and severely punished for being caught with Bibles at a compulsory military training camp, the Voice of the Martyrs reports. The Protestant students were reportedly locked in metal shipping containers, subjected to high temperatures and kept in miserably close conditions. In June, hundreds of teenagers, male and female, were ordered to report for training at Sawa Military Training Camp. It is unclear when the students will be allowed to return home. Military camp officials ordered a search for Bibles in the barracks of the students a month after their arrival. Bibles were confiscated and their owners were imprisoned. Twenty-nine of the 62 teens incarcerated are female. The students represent most of the country’s 12 independent Protestant denominations. All of those denominations have been declared illegal and ordered to cease meeting by the Eritrean government over the past year. The recent arrests brought the known number of evangelical Christians in Eritrea currently jailed for their faith to 213.

OTTAWA, Canada (EP)—Portions of the Bible could be considered hate speech in Canada under a proposed law passed last week by the House of Commons. Focus on the Family reports that the new law, C-250, would add sexual orientation to the list of protected classes in the hate speech section of Canadian law. Earlier this year, according to Focus reports, High Owens, a Christian businessman was fined \$4500 for running a newspaper ad that listed four Biblical passages condemning homosexuality. Brian Rushfeldt of the Canada Family Action Coalition told Focus that he is convinced Canada “will have pastors who will be accused of promoting or inciting hatred.” One of Focus’ correspondents, Steve Jordahl, warns that the U.S. could be headed in a similar direction. Jordahl writes, “While the cultural battle in the United States is being waged in earnest few realize that the Church’s ability to speak truth is a potential casualty of the war.”

HOUSE VOTES TO BAN PARTIAL BIRTH ABORTIONS—

SENATE VOTE EXPECTED SOON

WASHINGTON (EP)—The House of Representatives voted this week to ban partial birth abortions, signaling the end of an

eight-year battle over the legality of the procedure, according to the Associated Press.

In a long-awaited victory for pro-life advocates, the House passed the bill 281-142, and the Senate could vote on the issue as soon as next week. Senate passage is all but certain, and President Bush has promised to sign the bill into law.

Supporters expressed their satisfaction over passage of the bill. “The drive to stop partial birth abortion will finally become law and the performance of this barbaric procedure will finally come to an end,” house Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner, told AP.

“Basic human decency has prevailed,” Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said. The procedure “is never necessary, it is never the safest procedure available, and it is morally reprehensible and unconscionable.”

Bush’s signature will make it the first federal law since Roe v. Wade in 1973 to restrict a specific abortion procedure.

House and Senate negotiators reached a compromise on the final version of the bill that will now go before the Senate after stripping out a provision that expressed support for the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision.

All six Republican negotiators voted for the bill, while the four Democrats opposed it.

Supporters of the ban said it will tighten the definition of the banned procedure and contains findings to prove that the practice is never needed to protect a woman’s health.

Partial birth is defined by the bill as a procedure in which the fetus is killed after the entire fetal head is outside the body of the mother or, in the case of breech presentation, “any part of the fetal trunk past the navel is outside the body of the mother.”

Doctors who perform the procedure would be subject to up to two years in prison.

Opponents of the bill promise to challenge it in court.

Both sides agree that the importance of the ban will be enormous. While pro-abortion groups fear the bill will limit abortion practices in America, anti-abortion groups applaud that reality, and hope it will give momentum to other limitations on abortion.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN—HUNDREDS OF GEORGIANS ATTEND “KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS” RALLY ON ITS WAY TO WASHINGTON

ATLANTA (EP)—Several hundred people—including Georgia’s governor—attended a rally at the state’s Capitol building in Atlanta this week to protest court decisions that have blocked displays of the Ten Commandments, the Associated Press reported.

“Ours is a nation founded on freedom of religion, not freedom from religion,” Republican Gov. Sonny Perdue said to the crowd at the midday rally. “It is our duty as citizens to make our voices be heard and to ensure our right to display the Ten Commandments in our public buildings.”

The rally was organized in part in re-

sponse to the suspension of Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore, who refused a federal judge’s order to remove a 5,300-pound monument of the Ten Commandments from the state Judicial Building in Montgomery.

U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson ruled last year that the monument violated the constitution’s ban on government endorsement of a particular religion.

Organizers of the Georgia rally used the occasion to voice their support for Moore and the right to display the Ten Commandments in public buildings. A replica of Moore’s monument was on display at the rally, which was sponsored by the Christian Coalition of Georgia. The monument’s prototype was brought to Atlanta by organizers of the “Keep the Commandments Caravan,” which is on its way to Washington.

A much smaller counter-protest was held a few hours after the commandments rally at the statehouse. Protestors urged strict enforcement of lines between church and state, and spoke out against religious displays in public places. Demonstrators carried signs that read, “No Tax Dollars for Religion,” and “No Tax Dollars for Prayer.” Fewer than 20 people attended the protest.

Organizers of the “Keep the Commandments Caravan” chose to bring the monument to Atlanta in Barrow County, Georgia, in part because of a legal battle over the commandments in that county. County commissioners are currently fighting a challenge to their display of a framed poster of the Ten Commandments in a county building.

“It is time for judicial activism to stop, and it must stop now,” John Giles of the Christian Coalition said at the rally.

Three Republican candidates for U.S. Senate—Congressman Mac Collins, Johnny Isakson and Herman Cain—appeared at the rally to endorse public displays of the Ten Commandments.

But Republicans weren’t the only ones defending the displays. Democratic Sen. Zell Miller told the assembled crowd. “The way, I see it, this is about more than a display of the Ten Commandments. . . it is about the right of our people to acknowledge our Creator in a public place,” the Associated Press reported.

Democratic Agriculture Commissioner Tommy Irvin also addressed the crowd, saying, “Christianity is a part of our American heritage. We should never forget that. I never do.”

Georgia House Speaker Terry Coleman issued a statement after the rally saying that displaying the Ten Commandments “is not unconstitutional, and I applaud those who are fighting to overrule the federal court.”

Legal battles over displaying the Ten Commandments continue to crop up across the country in the wake of Moore’s suspension. This week the University of North Dakota law school’s Legal Aid Association was granted permission to be a part of a lawsuit against the city of Fargo, North Dakota.

The association is representing five people who want a federal judge to order a Ten Com-

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mandments monument removed from public display in City Hall Plaza, according to AP.

One of the state's Republican representatives, Jim Kasper, asked North Dakota's attorney general last month to order an opinion on whether a state-supported institution could use public money to sue another public entity.

SCHOOL DISTRICT IN MISSOURI BANS DISTRIBUTION OF BIBLES IN SCHOOLS

ELSBERRY, Mo. (EP)—No more Bibles for kids in Elsberry, Missouri schools. That was the decision from the Elsberry School District this week after a parent called the St. Louis Post-Dispatch to complain about students returning home with Bibles. Volunteers from Gideons International had been allowed to make a presentation to fifth-graders and later passed out Bibles to students who asked for them.

The Ida Cannon Middle School principal later issued a statement saying the district, located north of St. Louis, would not allow such presentations.

"From this day forward, the Gideons will not be allowed to come into the school during the school day to speak with kids about their group," Principal Kenny Youmans wrote. "The Gideons also are going to be prohibited from handing out religious materials to kids during the school day."

The parent who complained did not want his name revealed. He said his child returned home from school Tuesday with a New Testament from the Gideons, which upset him because he believed it violated the separation of church and state.

Gideons International, based in Nashville, Tenn., places Bibles in hotels and prisons and has distributed them at colleges and elementary schools and to members of the military.

Experts have said court decisions generally would allow religious groups to distribute documents in public areas outside a school but not inside it.

Denise Lieberman, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Eastern Missouri, said even leaving Bibles in an area of school so children can pick them up if they want to doesn't meet legal standards.

"Students are required to go to school and have no choice in the matter and shouldn't be forced to be exposed to religious presentations," she said.

Conrad Cheatham, pastor of Elsberry Associate Reform Presbyterian and Mount Zion Associate Reform Presbyterian churches, said he believed the Gideons should have the right to distribute Bibles.

"I think the First Amendment gives them the right to distribute Scripture," he said. "Separation of church and state has been badly misconstrued."

GLEANINGS HERE AND THERE

SPARKS, Nev. (EP)—God has been cut

from Sparks City Hall. Literally, Patriotic signs showing an American flag and the words "God Bless America" have been displayed at City hall since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks two years ago. But City Attorney Chet Adams, concerned that reference to God could be construed as a city-sanctioned endorsement of religion and invite lawsuits, ordered that the signs be altered, the Reno Gazette-Journal reported Tuesday. An employee used scissors to cut the word God from the signs, which now read, "Bless America." "Who is blessing America? Well, I don't know who is blessing America, but I think a court would say the word 'bless' is OK," Adams told AP. "My experience is that people will sue for any reason under the sun because they feel it's their God-given right to do so," Adams said. Some city workers were taken aback by Adams' decision. "(It) kind of shocked us," said David Hart, a revenue assistant working in the licensing department where most of the signs were displayed. Jan Holman, the employee who did the snipping, was particularly troubled. "I just think it's such a sad state of affairs what we can't express ourselves fully because it might offend someone," Holman told AP.

ALL THE WAY TO THE SUPREME COURT—THE HIGH COURT BEGINS ITS NEW TERM WITH A DOCKET OF CASES FULL OF RELIGIOUS-RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

WASHINGTON (EP)—The first Monday in October, the nine justices of the nation's highest court assembled in Washington and sat down at the bench for the commencement of the 213th term of the Supreme Court of the United States.

The new term began with old traditions. The justices donned black robes—a tradition since at least 1800. Quill pens were placed on the counsel tables—a tradition since 1850. The justices took their places at the bench in order of seniority—a tradition since the Court's inception in 1790.

But many of the similarities between today's Court and the Court of centuries past stopped with quill pens and black robes. During the inaugural years of the Court, justices heard cases about land rights in post-revolutionary America and objections to state monopolies of steam-ship companies. Last year, the Court heard cases regarding pornography in public libraries and the legality of homosexual sex.

And the docket of this year's 2003-2004 Supreme Court term is already filled with cases that the original Court probably would have never anticipated coming before the highest court in the land.

The justices will consider this question: does allowing (but not requiring) students in public schools to recite the Pledge of Allegiance violate supposed principles of separation of church and state because it declares that the United States is "one nation under God?" An atheist in California thinks it does. Last year, Michael Newdow, father of a San Francisco elementary school student, sued the state and federal governments, as well as

the local school board because he claimed the voluntary pledge was offensive because of its mention of God.

A judge agreed with Newdow's lawsuit and ruled that the recital of the pledge is unconstitutional. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the lower court's decision, and now the Bush administration and the school district is asking the Court to overturn that decision. The Court is expected to hear arguments later this year and issue a ruling in the spring. Some Court-watchers predict the justices will handle the case as quickly as possible, perhaps reversing the decision on procedural grounds or returning it to a lower court.

LEAP OF FAITH—CHRISTIAN DONOR ADVOCACY GROUP WARNS DONORS ABOUT SEVERAL MAJOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

MATTHEWS, N.C. (EP)—Financial scandals in corporate-America are nothing new in the headlines. Last year, the Enron debacle dominated media attention as America watched one of the largest corporations in the country crumble in the wake of fraudulent and criminal accounting. Guilty executives went to jail and innocent employees went to the unemployment office. Sad stories emerged of men and women who lost the life savings and retirement plans they had invested with the company. . . .

But secular organizations aren't the only ones facing examination for shady financial dealings. Some Christian ministries are finding themselves under increasing scrutiny for their financial practices, and at least one watch-dog organization is calling the groups to give an account.

Wall Watchers, a North Carolina-based advocacy group for donors to Christian ministries, released new information this week on a recent investigation of the financial dealings of several Christian organizations. The recent report examines several "Word of Faith Ministries" and raises concerns about how these groups are using the millions of dollars of donations that they receive each year.

"Word of Faith" ministries are characterized by claims to an "extra-biblical anointing from God," according to the report. Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, Joyce Meyer, and Creflo Dollar were a few of the groups included in Wall Watchers' research. The report estimates that the combined revenue of just these ministries most likely exceeds \$500 million a year. What was not as easy to estimate was where that money goes.

Benny Hinn's television program "This is Your Day" rakes in millions of dollars annually, according to the report. Wall Watchers says that ministry officials admitted to revenues of \$80 million in 2002. But those same ministry officials refuse to admit exactly how that money is used. Wall Watchers says it has repeatedly asked Hinn's ministry for detailed financial records, but has consistently been denied. This leaves donors with no official way to find out how their donations are being put to use. Wall Watchers speculates that

top executives in Hinn's ministry benefit richly from the large revenues. The group reports that Hinn himself lives in a multi-million dollar mansion in Dana Point, Calif.

Rusty Leonard, founder of Wall Watchers, says any group which receives large sums of donations from the public should be transparent about the use of those donations. But he thinks this is especially true of groups claiming to be Christian ministries. "If a ministry or person is going to solicit money by invoking the name of Jesus Christ, they should certainly be completely open with their finances," Leonard said in the report.

And most Christian organizations do freely provide financial reports to the public. Wall Watchers reports that 85 percent of the groups they research provide financial statements for analysis by donors.

The ones that don't provide those financial statements, however, continue to trouble Wall Watchers. Joyce Meyer's "Life in the Word" ministry is another group that refuses to submit to the accountability of donors, according to the report. Joyce Meyer, founder of the organization, is also president, chief executive officer and chairman of the board. Wall Watchers estimates her ministry brings in millions of dollars each year through donations and merchandise sales. But "Life in the Word" earned an "F" grade in financial transparency from Wall Watchers. The ministry refuses to provide any financial details to donors.

Officials at the offices of Benny Hinn and Joyce Meyer did not return calls for comment from the Evangelical Press.

Several other ministries, including the Trinity Broadcasting Network, were cited for large estimated revenue with little financial disclosure. Reports on each of these ministries, as well as hundreds of other Christian ministries, are available on Wall Watchers' web site. Wall Watchers encourages donors to research the financial practices of any Christian organization before making a donation. Leonard says if a group refuses to disclose financial information, donors should send their money elsewhere.

"For anyone to support a ministry that refuses to be financially transparent," Leonard said, "truly takes a leap of faith."

IT'S OKAY TO PRAY—A FEDERAL JUDGE RULES THAT HOME PRAYER MEETINGS ARE LEGAL

NEW MILFORD, Conn. (EP)—The old-fashioned prayer meeting is a thing of the past in many churches in America. Churches that do hold prayer meetings often have trouble getting people to show up. But one family in Connecticut has had just the opposite problem with their weekly prayer meetings—it seems that too many people show up. At least that's what their town council thinks.

Robert and Mary Murphy began holding prayer meetings at their home nine years ago when Robert Murphy became too ill to go to church. Since then, 20 to 40 people have been gathering on the Murphy's back porch every Sunday for prayer. A town zoning enforce-

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ment officer blocked the meetings in 2000 after neighbors complained about the number of people at the Murphys' home.

Last week, after three years of legal battles, a federal judge has ruled that the family has the right to hold the prayer meetings at their home. A preliminary injunction in 2001 has allowed the prayer meetings to continue the past two years, but last week's ruling ensures that the decision to allow the prayer meetings is permanent.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Hooly B. Fitzsimmons gave a permanent order that said the town of New Milford had hindered the Murphys' right to exercise their religion and peaceably assemble, according to the Associated Press.

"This is about religious freedom," the Murphys' attorney, Vincent McCarthy, of the American Center for Law and Justice, told The News-Times of Danbury. "This is a victory for people who want to do what they want to in their own homes."

A later court hearing will determine whether the town will pay the Murphys' legal fees or damages, according to AP. McCarthy, the family's attorney, said they have not decided yet whether to seek damages.

PROPOSAL TO MENTION GOD IN EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION GAINS MOMENTUM

ROME (EP)—Support for the Vatican's campaign to get God into the European Union constitution grew this week as more EU leaders backed calls by Poland, Italy and Spain to have a stronger mention of Europe's religious heritage in the charter, the Associated Press reported.

Germany, Ireland, Austria, Portugal, Slovakia and the Netherlands said they had no problems in giving greater prominence in the charter text to the historical role and impact of Europe's Judeo-Christian heritage.

The 15 EU leaders and 10 counterparts from countries that will join next May began a final round of talks on a first constitution. They said it would be ready in mid-December.

"The inclusion of an explicit reference (to God and religion) will not fail because of Germany," Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder told AP. "I don't have a problem with that proposal."

The preamble to the draft of the constitutional text contains a very vague reference to Christianity. It merely says Europe draws "inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance. . . still present in its heritage."

At the summit, Italy and Poland pushed hard for a more specific reference to God and religion.

"The Italian government believes that the common religious heritage should be explicitly referred to with the values of Judeo-Christian traditions," said Italy's deputy pre-

mier Gianfranco Fini.

The French, however, don't seem to agree.

"In France, everyone is free to believe and practice their religion. Or they can choose not to believe," French President Jacques Chirac told the press. "There should be no favoritism in religions."

Any reference to religion was a highly divisive issue in 18 months of preliminary negotiations over the draft text in a 105-member European Convention, led by ex-French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing.

He managed to thwart conservative convention members who sought to give Christianity a leading mention in influencing Europe's cultural roots.

Short Thoughts

by Jeff Short

(Short devotionals on Bible verses.)

Psalms 41:3

"The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." (Psalms 41:3).

It is the lot of God's people to suffer the affliction of sickness. In His wise providence, we find that not all suffer the same afflictions, but all suffer from one degree to another. The testimony of Holy Scripture is plain. The Psalmist writes, **"Many are the afflictions of the righteous"** (Psa. 34:19). Jehovah declares, **"I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction"** (Isa. 48:10). Peter wrote, **"The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world"** (I Pet. 5:9). Some sicknesses are chastisements and some are trials. However, all are according to the purpose of God and all accomplish His glory. Furthermore, we can be assured that the sickness will accomplish His purpose in us.

Sickness can be a sore trial and especially to those who are not right in heart or weak in faith. Surprisingly, many professed Christians are reduced to the **"weak and beggarly elements"** by sickness. Often that one will question their affliction thus, "Why has this happened to me?" On the other hand, they will submit, "I try to eat right. I work hard and exercise. I take vitamins, minerals, and herbs. I just don't understand how this could happen to me?" Their attitude seems to be that these good physical habits have insulated them in some way from sickness. We certainly can abuse our body, and we ought to care well for our earthly tabernacle, but these things are no safeguard from suffering physical affliction.

That testimony is essentially the same that many worldlings give in their sickness. It is the same reply against the Sovereign Creator made by the unsaved. I ask you to consider – is this a testimony

that is glorifying of the grace of God, when you murmur thus as if you were above common suffering? When the disciples' hearts were near failing them for fear, Christ asked, **"Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?"** (Mark 4:40). He marveled that they could think and act like the unsaved when faced with a sore trial. On the contrary, we magnify His grace when we are **"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation"** (Rom. 12:12).

Some even question the love and mercy of God concerning sickness in His people. Perhaps some might wonder whether He has the power to do anything about it. Expel all such wicked thoughts at once and repent over the same! The report to Jesus concerning Lazarus was, **"Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick"** (John 11:3). It did not diminish the Lord's love that He tarried two more days before He went to Bethany. Nor was it a token of His displeasure that He did not immediately heal him.

Yes, we have a hard time comprehending His love, **"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it"** (Psa. 139:6). Such is the love and mercy of God that gave to the rich man in his lifetime **"good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things"** (Luke 16:25). It is easy here to complain against God, but fight off the temptation. The rest of the verse gives us, **"But now he [Lazarus] is comforted, and thou art tormented."** While we do not understand Lazarus' affliction, it is clear it was a **"light affliction, which is but for a moment,"** and it certainly worked for him **"a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"** (II Cor. 4:17).

We are assured that His love is present, even in our sickness, and that blessing is borne out in our text. There are precious blessings contained in these words that are now in our view. However, before we assay to appropriate the blessings, we must observe the condition that comes before.

This Psalm begins, **"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble"** (Psa. 41:1). We may trace the word "him" through the first three verses and note that verses two and three are extended blessings on **"he that considereth the poor."** This condition is multiplied throughout God's Word. **"With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful"** (Psa. 18:25), etc. The condition is this: Have you been merciful to others in their affliction? Have you done what you could to relieve them that suffered sickness? If you have, the blessing is here for you. Solomon taught, **"The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh"** (Pro. 11:17).

Let us now turn to the particular blessings of our passage. In the first place, David writes, **"The LORD will**

strengthen him upon the bed of languishing." The aforesaid merciful one has been brought down to the bed of sickness, sorrow, and discomfort. Being confined to the bed of sickness is a particularly difficult trial for the mind and spirit of man. We are tempted to murmur or just give up. The burden may seem greater than we can bear to the point that we are driven to despair.

Ah! But here is the blessed thought, **"The LORD will strengthen him."** The word translated strengthen signifies to support, to hold up. God will undertake to bear him up. Note here that God does not promise to remove him from the bed, but rather to sustain him **"upon the bed of languishing."** Do not misunderstand the blessing promised. There is no heavenly panacea here. God is promising to supply grace and strength to the sick saint. He is going to make him able to bear his affliction. The Lord told Paul, **"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness"** (II Cor. 12:9).

In the last place, David writes of God, **"Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."** Here we find love, mercy, compassion and unparalleled condescension. The language is picturesque of a nurse tending to the sick. It does not take long for the sick to grow weary on their bed. They toss to and fro and quickly come to discomfort. That nurse with tender hand will turn the bed or remake it to give them relief.

Here God promises to attend to the bed of the sick saint. With mercy, love, and tender hand God will make the bed of His afflicted child. No, in His wise providence, He does not lift him off, at least not yet, but He makes up the bed and **"giveth His beloved sleep"** (Psa. 127:2). I have known Bro. Bill James to say, "He will even fluff up your pillow for you." Praise God that we have not an austere man for our attendant when we are sick. We have a kind, compassionate, benevolent Father. He pities us **"as a father pitieth his children"** (Psa. 103:13).

Are you sick at this very hour? Are you tempted to murmur and complain? Have you sought to appropriate this blessing? Are you praying that the purpose of the Father will be accomplished in you? May God make our beds giving us rest and comfort, and may we rejoice to know that He is near.



GLEANINGS

IMMORALITY

By Bill James

Our society has been conditioned to tolerate immorality as normal and acceptable behavior. In fact, efforts are con-

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Gleanings

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tinuously made to render even more glaring types of sexual behavior as acceptable. However, the Holy God of Scripture still declares all types of sexual sin to be wicked and abominable. These are the very first sins mentioned wherever works of the flesh and deeds of the heart are listed. (Gal. 5:19-21; Mk. 7:21-23) Adultery, fornication, all uncleanness and sodomy are odious and hateful in the sight of God. All who live habitually in such sins will be damned forever. The Lord is the avenger of all such and whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. (Heb. 13:4) Sexual intimacy between a man and his wife is not defiling but beyond this it is. As long as it is contained within the boundaries God has established it is honorable but when it exceeds those it is damaging. A fire as long as it is contained within the furnace of your home is certainly a blessing but when it gets out into the walls it is devastating. The miseries that it has brought into our society are utterly appalling and grievous.

It is shocking just how little concern people in general have regarding immorality. However, it is not at all surprising when you consider how much of this type of thing people continuously watch on television. They sit and actually enjoy relationships that are clearly fornication, adultery and now even homosexual. They surf the channels for something even more explicit because they have "eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin" (II Pet. 2:14). In this matter appetite always increases but satisfaction diminishes. The satellite dishes and the internet provide them with an opportunity to defile themselves even more as they treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. A Thrice Holy God is One with Whom you will have to do in time.

What is so sad and disturbing is just how many professing Christians indulge in these things every day with so little to no conviction about it. The Apostle Paul confronted the Church at Corinth about a matter of glaring immorality in their midst. He said "ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned." (I Cor. 5) They may have congratulated themselves in being broad-minded enough to allow such when they should have experienced grief over this wickedness. When Joseph was subjected to the sexual advances of a seductive woman he said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9)

WICKEDNESS THAT GOD CONDEMNS.

Any body who is right with God will not be soft on sin. Adulterous behavior is called treachery and villany in the Bible. What do you call it? Do you patronize it? It's worse than disgraceful for profess-

ing Christians to have the least fellowship with it (Eph. 5:3-12). There is no way, and I repeat, there is no way we can properly and effectually condemn something that we toy with carelessly in the privacy of our homes. One does not have the conviction to heartily reprove what he secretly approves of. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." O how desperately this evil world needs Christians who walk circumspectly, who keep themselves unspotted from the world, and say with the Psalmist, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." (Ps. 101:3) Does it cleave to you? If so, the salt has lost its savor and there is little wonder Christianity is so little respected and trampled under foot.

Let's pray for a holy revival beginning with us. If it does not separate us from sin it is not holy. If it is not holy it's not revival. You can not any more leave this kind of sin than the rich young ruler could leave his coveted wealth. But with God all things are possible. Yes, genuine repentance is possible and we can burn the bridges behind us.

It is clear, unmistakable, and unapologetically stated in Scripture that the immoral who repent not will not inherit the kingdom of God. They are not saved and will not go to heaven. Such are deceived who insist they will (I Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5). Only through Christ's death on the cross can one be forgiven such sins and be empowered to walk that path no more. If you do not have the power to leave sin there is not reason to believe that you are forgiven of it. Christ saves sinner from their sin. "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).

ROY MOORE ON RELIGION

The first thing you've got to understand is, "What is religion?" Now, when you used the term "religion," you are probably talking about the varied faiths around the world that are appropriately called worldwide religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Islam, so forth. But the religion that is talked about under the 1st Amendment to the United States Constitution had a specific explicit

definition given by James Madison, George Mason, Joseph Story, various places we find the definition of religion, to include the United States Supreme Court, in the Memorial Remonstrance. It was the duties we owe to the Creator and the manner of discharging it. It was the fact that there was a certain relationship between the God of the Holy Scriptures and man that was outside interference by government. That's why it is contained in the 1st Amendment to the United States Constitution, that Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. Now, so basically what we see is that our forefathers understood that there was such a relationship between God and man that was outside government interference, and that relationship can be demonstrated in a number of ways. If a person worships a rock, or a tree, it's still something government can't interfere with. You can't interfere with the way you worship God. If you worship God by worshipping a cow, then that's your business, but it's given by God. Joseph Story, a Supreme Court justice for 34 years, in writing the *Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States* and in addressing the 1st Amendment, said this: "The rights of conscience are indeed beyond the reach of human power. They're given by God and cannot be encroached upon by any human authority without a criminal disobedience of the precepts of natural as well as revealed religion." He also said, "It yet remains a problem to be solved in human affairs whether any free government can be permanent where the public worship of God and the support of religion constitute no part of the policy or duty of the state in some form or shape." Now, in those sentences, what is he saying? He's saying we should be able to worship God publicly because your government will not remain free if you do not. Is that unfair to a Buddhist or a Hindu? Absolutely not, because that relationship they have with God is outside of government interference, because it's given by God. To acknowledge the God of the Holy Scriptures is not un-American, it is precisely what we must do to recognize the organic law of our country, which is the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration of Independence is described by the United States Code, Annotated, as "organic law." And what's organic law? That means that if that organic law is destroyed, we become a different country. And certainly when this country was founded, and for 180, nearly 200 years, there

was no question about acknowledging the God of the Holy Scriptures as the fundamental basis of our law and our morality. It's only since the 1960s that we've been confused to believe that acknowledging God is somehow unfair to other faiths. . . .Indeed, the moral questions we face are all grounded in Scripture and recognized in case law. For example, adultery. Adultery is prohibited in many states as it is in Alabama. . . .Why? Well, thou shalt not commit adultery, murder, theft, false witness. . . .(Human Events, Oct. 13, 2003, p. 20).

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 9-1-2003 to 9-30-2003

Beginning Balance	\$1,290.77
RECEIPTS	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	200.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
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John Otis, Agra, KS	50.00
Anonymous	1,180.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	125.00
Herman Stanley, Williamsburg, KY	100.00
.....	1,805.00
TOTAL	3,095.77
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	1,013.80
Tape Production	260.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1,273.80
.....	\$1,821.97
Bank charge	-10.00
BALANCE	\$1,811.97

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance	\$1,053.32
RECEIPT	
Total	933.32
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT	361.80
Total Expenditures	361.80
ENDING BALANCE	\$571.52

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 9-1-2003 to 9-30-2003

Beginning Balance	\$4,900.37
RECEIPTS:	
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Dividing checks	4,300.00
Anon.	1000.00
Sub Total	\$9,362.81
TOTAL	\$14,263.18
EXPENDITURES:	
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Postage	979.98
FICA taxes	281.53
Dividing checks	4,300.00
Supplies	267.96
Total Expenditures	9,509.47
.....	4,753.71
Bank charge	-18.85
ENDING BALANCE	\$4,734.86

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