

Respect of Authority

By Mike DeWitt
of Springfield, Oregon

I find as I get older I look at things differently than I once did. The Scriptures, for a number of reasons, have a greater influence over me and they have become more connected.

The Scriptures either have a direct or an indirect application to the elect. Sadly for some, the Scriptures seem only to satisfy the need to prove a point rather than be led of the Spirit to walk in the light of God. **"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light"** (Rom. 13:12).

The Ten Commandments hold a



prominent place to the elect of God and are loved by us for being the schoolmaster that brought us to Christ. Forgetting what the commandments have done for us simply means we have left off the importance of them. I say left off, because until we need them again we do not return to them to provide us a direction of light.

Dear reader, you are probably saying to yourself, "What in the world is he trying to say." I want to

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Repentance - A Work of God

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

Repentance is a subject that is often ignored in Christianity. (Or, if the subject is not ignored, we must say that "repentance" is vastly misunderstood, or misapplied.) Today, I would like for us to consider the subject of "repentance" – especially from this perspective: true repentance is a work and gift of God.

As you may know, the Scriptures teach us that both faith and repen-



tance are necessary in salvation. Near the end of his ministry, the Apostle Paul reminded the elders of the church in Ephesus, that he had personally

witnessed to the Jews (and to all that he preached unto) of the necessity of **"...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Acts 20:21). After all, Paul knew (and we know today) that in order for there to be salvation, a person must repent of his sins, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her

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The Hypocrite's Religion

By Thomas Brooks
(1608 - 1680)

Counterfeit holiness is often made a stalking-horse to much righteousness; but certainly it were better with the philosopher to have honesty without religion, than to have religion without honesty. A hypocrite may exercise himself in some outward, easy, ordinary duties of religion; but when shall you see a hypocrite laying the axe to the root of the tree, or searching and trying his own heart, or severely judging his bosom sins, or humbly mourning and lamenting over secret corruptions, or doubling his guards about his own soul, or rejoicing in the graces, services,

or excellencies of others, or striving or pressing after the highest pitches of grace, holiness, and communion with God, or endeavoring more to cast out the beam out of his own eye, than the mote out of his brother's eye, or to be more severe against his own sins than against the sins of others? Alas, a hypocrite is so far from practicing these things, that he thinks them either superfluous or impossible.

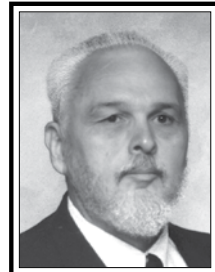
A hypocrite's obedience is always a limited and stinted obedience. It is either limited to such commands which are most suitable to his ease, safety, honor, profit, pleasure, etc., or else it is limited to the outward part of the command, and never extends

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The Successful Gardener

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma

Should we have a high opinion of God or a low one? The Bible makes it clear that God is a success in everything He does. His unequaled ability and power is recorded thus: **"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it,**



I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isa. 46:9-11). In this specific instance God spoke of using a man to execute His purpose. That

man was not one of God's chosen people, the Jewish Nation, but rather is portrayed as a **"ravenous bird from the east"**. According to the Bible, God says, **"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure"**. We conclude that the Bible reveals God as one deserving of a high opinion, well able to do as He pleases.

◊ (Continued on page 214)

Every generation needs regeneration.
None needs it more than the present.

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

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

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Respect of Authority

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share with you, in love, something I have been shown. The first half of the commandments are there for us and the rest of the world, to know we must honor God in all things, and worship Him and Him only. Quick thinkers may say, "Wait, how does the 5th commandment fit into that"? Well, by this short chain of authority we come to the knowledge of honoring and obeying those who are in authority over us.

The Old Testament tells us that those who did not respect authority were stoned to death or a curse was their reward. **"And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard"** (Deut. 21:20). **"And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known"** (Deut. 11:28). We see that obedience to authority is very important.

Now on to the New Testament. We are told by our parents to respect our elders, **"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble"** (I Pet. 5:5). I have seen the result of parents who have mistakenly told their children that whomsoever they be acquainted with must earn the child's respect. Obviously this is not a Biblical stand.

My father and mother spoke often to their three boys of respect to our elders, and I, being the youngest, was always reminded by two older brothers to respect them. "Yes sir" and "yes ma'am" was not only to be used in addressing our parents but to others, to show we did not think too highly of ourselves, and to give the due respect to others.

We move on to a point that started out, as for myself, to be very difficult to deal with. I began to see in the Scriptures how, as a Christian, I should view those who are in authority over me when I do not agree with them

or, they being ungodly altogether. **"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ"** (Eph. 6:5). I know I am not a servant in the strictness of the definition of servant. I have a secular job, and I have bosses that have bosses. I have no other Scripture to go by on how I should conduct myself as a man of God at the work place. I think that verse may suffice for the subject at hand. The elect should work with the understanding they are working for the Lord and be obedient to those who have authority over them. I have seen the results of workers who show no respect for the men in charge and soon find themselves either not relied on, or out of work.

Next is what I have struggled with the most in the past. The respect due to those who hold the title of any elected official, whether it be local, state or federal. Yes, I am even talking about the president of the United States, and his cabinet members. Brethren, we must be understanding of God's will for us, His children. **"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"** (Eph. 5:17) God's people are not to be fools, or even to look to be as fools. Our conversation is to be upright, circumspect. We all may not agree on the policies of the president, but God's people are to not be as others who do not know of the commands of God. **"But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities"** (II Pet. 2:10). Over the years I have heard many "Christians" say many horrible things about the presidents in my life time. If you live in America, then your president is the one who holds

that post, no matter what.

I am reminded of a Scripture **"And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding"** (Dan. 2:21). Brethren, would it change your way of thinking towards our current president if I said "God put him there"? Have you ever wondered why, **"Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord"** (II Pet. 2:11), it has something to do with God placing them in authority, and it is not our duty to rebuke them.

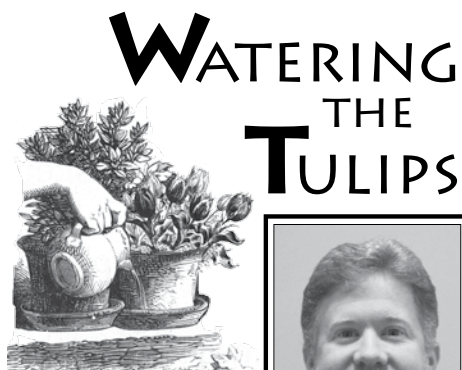
I finally figured out that I am a sovereign grace preacher who preaches the determinate council of God over all things. He has given me, to put into practice, faith in Him above all things. If I preach, **"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will"** (Pro. 21:1), should I not practice what I preach? When I teach that parents are to **"train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"** (Pro. 22:6), should I not also say, **"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God"** (Rom. 13:1). Please open your Bibles and continue reading to the 5th verse.

I will try to conclude this short article with the hope that those who have read this will see what the Scriptures say. As parents and as the ambassadors of Christ, the example we display before others, whether the seers be the world, Christians, or our own children, needs to be consistent with God's Word at all times during all seasons.



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By Todd Bryant
of
Northport, Alabama



Hasty Words

“Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him” (Prov. 29:20).

We all know the type – the man who constantly shoots off at the mouth without thinking. And certainly, we have all been guilty of just such actions. However, a child of God should be growing in maturity. And, one of the marks of maturity is to handle our words with wisdom.

Even in troublesome situations, there is a proper way to handle ourselves. What we may call “standing up for God,” God may judge to be arrogant or self-serving. What we may call “contending for the faith,” God may judge to be a gross misrepresentation of His character, as our Father. Do not misunderstand; we certainly must always be willing to stand up for the truth. However, there is a right and proper way to do this. We must stand in a way that is in accordance with God’s holy character.

Paul was clearly a man that stood up for God and His Word. Yet, Paul’s instruction to the church at Colosse was, **“Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6).** He lived this. A casual reading of the history of Paul’s ministry in the Book of Acts will show forth speech full of grace. As he instructed the Ephesian saints, so Paul sought to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). We should do the same.

One of the marks of maturity in the faith is the ability to hold one’s tongue. James said, **“For in many things we offend all. If any man**

offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2). In a society where being outspoken seems to be commended, this can certainly be difficult. Does that outspoken obnoxious person sometimes get their way? Sadly, the answer is yes. But, this does not give a child of God the right to violate God’s Word and misrepresent His character.

In a generation of outspoken religionists, Jesus said, **“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9).** This is not a suggestion for the people of God. This is a description of the people of God. And, if we look back through history since Jesus first established His church, we see a meek, quiet people that sought to share the love of Jesus through the Gospel. We do not find a loud, arrogant group. These people were **“called children of God.”** Let us seek to be recognized in such a way.

One of the hardest things to do as a child of God is to fight the temptation to conform to society’s standards. While our society may promote and even glorify outspokenness, let us do our best to properly represent our Heavenly Father by conforming to His character and His Word.

Christian Fishing

“Go ye therefore and teach (“make disciples of” -NKJV) all nations” (Matt. 28:19).

A preacher friend recently said, “We have moved from making disciples to building churches.” Without a doubt, he is correct. The entire missionary effort today seems to be backwards from what Jesus instructed us to do. When commissioning His church, Jesus said, “Go...and make” and yet we would rather sit and wait. It seems our missionary zeal has died. Disciplining has been replaced with recruiting, at best. The Gospel has been replaced with worldly gimmicks. And our discomfort in sharing the message of Christ has led us to merely invite people to church. Then sadly, we have convinced ourselves that a simply “come to church sometime” is fulfilling our instruction to “make disciples of all the nations.” In this,

we have critically erred.

Two times we read where Jesus told the disciples that they were to be **“fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17).** If the Holy Spirit inspired this to be written twice, it must be important. Each of us... every believer... is called to be a fisher of men. We are called to plant seed. Now, lest any of us become conceited, we have no ability to make seed grow – that is God’s business. Paul says the same when he wrote, **“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (I Cor. 3:5-7).** Yet, even a casual reading of the Book of Acts will reveal that Paul spent His life sowing the Seed of the Gospel.

These days, missionary work seems to be done in reverse – by pretty much everybody. Jesus said, **“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).** Yet oddly, we want to reverse the order most of the time. Most of us these days are willing to send missionaries and dollars to foreign lands but unwilling to do anything locally where the Lord has planted us. Then, when our churches dry up, we wonder why. Is it possible we are not following the instructions of Jesus very well? I do believe so. Paul said, **“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (II Cor. 9:6).** Most of us are proving this verse to be true every day – we are sowing sparingly and, as a result, we are reaping sparingly.

Not only that, even the idea of local missions is confused today. The local church is not to be “gimmicky” by drawing people in with worldly attractions. Our focus must always remain on Calvary’s cross. Yet, this “gimmick gospel” which we see so much today is just the fruit of a

bigger problem. Most believers think their job is to merely get somebody to church so the preacher can share the Gospel with them. This is why we often see gimmicks. But, we ALL are to be witnesses for Christ. We all are to be fishers of men. We all are to be making disciples! God’s means to reach His own is the message of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 1:21). If we would put aside the gimmicks and do what God has called each of us to do, we may be surprised by the results.

So, what is the hindrance? Why are we so unwilling to do what God has plainly told us to do? Simply, it is uncomfortable. It gets us out of our comfort zone. If we can ever come to realize that the power to save is not in us, it will give us great courage to go forth. When the Holy Spirit empowers the Gospel message, lives are changed (I Thess. 1:4-5; II Thess. 2:13-14). The power does not abide in us, but in Him. So, child of God, “Go therefore and make disciples...” It is your calling and it is your duty. But, oh what an honor God has bestowed on us that we are given the opportunity to share the message of His Son with a lost and dying world!



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Riding the Fence

By Roger Reed
of Mansfield, Ohio

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isa. 28:10).

"But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (Isa. 28:13).

I have noticed lately there seems to be a decline in standing for the truth. When I was a young Christian I remember having disagreements with others over my scriptural beliefs and the phrase "That is a grey area in the Bible" would keep coming up. I soon became aware that if there was any "grey area" it was not in the Bible, but in the mind of those who can not stand on what they believe. It is just another form of compromising, **"But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil"** (Matt. 5:37). What Matthew 5:37 is saying is, "Say what you mean and mean what you say." In Isaiah every precept and every line does mean something in the Word of God. It is very unsettling to hear someone say, "It does not matter," or "You can do it anyway you feel is right." That is like saying, "Let your conscience be your guide." The Bible is in absolutes, it is black or white, right or wrong, God says what He means and means what He says. Just because we can not come to grips or totally understand some Scripture does not make it a "grey area"!

Even if you are wrong **"let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay."** Saying that it does not matter, or as the title states, "Riding the Fence" we find it offensive for anyone who would say that on any given subject in the Bible. We would expect that from other religious groups, but not true Baptists. We would rather a person say, "I do not believe that way and state their reasons and go on." It is a sure thing that we as Baptists



can not come to agreement on every point and we accept that as part of our depravity and stubbornness. There is not a true Baptist alive that is not **h a r d h e a d e d**, some worse than others.

But to "Ride the Fence" is not acceptable as far as I am concerned! Let us say a person studies a particular subject and comes to the understanding that this is how they see it, then we can debate all day long and unless the Holy Spirit intervenes then we will both still be at odds, and that is okay, we all are entitled to our opinions. But there still is only one right answer. There are some doctrines, that if we do not agree on then you are just wrong and being silly about a particular point, like baptism (not receiving alien immersion), how the Lord's church is started (there should be a mother church), the doctrines of grace (all five points), and how one is saved (by the shed blood of Jesus Christ) just to name a few. To me those are absolutes; you believe differently then you are just wrong and that is all there is to it. But again, that is what I believe, if you believe different, like I said, you are entitled to your opinion. But one of us is wrong, we are not both right, therefore I would not say, "Well, it does not really matter."

But there are other issues in the Bible that have been debated for years. Not that we like to take sides, but one side believes this way on a subject and another believes the opposite; we do not like it, but that is the way it is and in most cases we can still have fellowship without any turmoil. That is, unless someone wants to push the envelope and then we have problems.

Another good example is the Lord's Supper, wine or grape juice, which is it? It certainly can not be both. But I have heard, "Well, it does not really matter, and we will find out when we

get to heaven." I do not know about you, dear reader, but for me that is "Riding the Fence." It does matter. We need to heed Paul's instruction to young Timothy, **"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"** (II Tim. 2:15). How does rightly dividing the truth say, "Well, you can do it that way or the other, it does not really matter"? **"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"** (II Tim. 3:16-17).

If we get to the place that we start accepting that it does not matter, then we have lost and we might as well join the Southern Baptists, who soon will join the Catholics because it does not matter what we believe! I mean, is not that what they tell us, "We are all Christians and we should not let these little things keep us apart"? It is not just the little things that keep us apart; it is Biblical and doctrinal issues. We will start saying, if we stay on this path, "Well, yes, that is what it says, but it does not matter- do what you feel is best for you, God will understand." Then we will have problems? Ah, but we do have problems- Big problems! Why? Because some hold the view, **"IT DOES NOT MATTER!"**

Dear reader, I have learned that if there has been a certain subject I have struggled with or have held a different view than some others, I have no peace until I find out the truth. I find it hard to believe that anyone could be at peace with "it does not matter." I am not a perfectionist, but I want to serve God in the correct way; I want to please Him, so that means I want to do it right. The question the reader may ask here is, "Well, what if you are wrong?" Then I am wrong and I pray the Lord will give me the right answer, but I will not say it does not matter. I hope the Word of God matters to you today and that you will seek out the truth and if you are wrong, then that is your stance and I will respect your decision, even if I feel you are wrong. God Bless!



Repentance

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Saviour.

Now, many folks will tell you today, that the faith comes from within you – that there is some measure of faith in every man, and we must utilize that infinitesimal measure of faith, and grab hold of it, and believe and trust in God. Of course, despite the ignorant ravings of the Arminian, you and I know that faith comes from God, and that none of us have any inborn ability to believe, apart from the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the quickening power and the faith that He brings to us. (See Eph. 1:19, 2:8).

However, even within the ranks of those of us that will attribute the saving faith of our salvation to the direct intercession and power of God, there are still some folks who will say something preposterous like this: "Both faith and repentance are necessary in salvation. Faith is the gift of God; therefore, faith is His part. However, repentance is a work that the sinner performs; therefore, repentance is your part in salvation."

Brethren, I want you to know today, that you can no more repent of your sins based upon your own abilities, then you can believe in Jesus Christ based upon your own abilities! Let me remind you today, that when the Lord saves a soul – including your own miserable soul, if you are saved today – then He will grant both faith and repentance. He will never grant one without the other! "Belief" speaks of our trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. "Repentance" speaks of the forgiveness that God has granted to us. You could say that both "belief" and "repentance" are the earthly views of the Heavenly acts of "redemption" and "forgiveness." God is responsible for both; and yet they must be related to us in human terms. Those human terms that are most often used are "belief and repentance."

I have often heard the matter of belief and repentance in salvation, described as "two sides of one coin." The coin exists – but there are two sides to it. In the same way, we can say that salvation exists – but there

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Repentance

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are two primary ways in which it is described to mankind. Sometimes salvation is described as a belief or faith, which God grants to those that are saved. (See John 5:24, John 6:47, Rom. 1:16). On other occasions, salvation is described as a repentance or turning away which is required in those that are saved. (See Matt. 4:17, Luke 13:3; 15:10, Acts 3:19; 17:30). In reality, both are necessary. And, we must say that both faith and repentance – as they are demonstrated in men – are the work and the gift of God.

Let us think a little further about “repentance.” I want us to consider how it is wholly and utterly from and of God.

IMITATED BY MEN

As I mentioned earlier, religion today – even Christianity – has, for the most part, forsaken or ignored the Scriptural teachings concerning true “repentance.” Instead, most of religion – and even much of Christianity – will teach folks that they must demonstrate some sort of sorrow (if they even acknowledge the need for repentance in the first place). In fact, most people today, believe (as I have already pointed out) that they must needs manufacture their own sorrow, and their own grief over sin. And, then, this mortal sorrow, and this emotional grief will be enough to elicit pity from God, and salvation will be granted. In other words, the forgiveness is God’s to give, if you can only muster the repentance.

However, this is not true! Your own grief or sorrow that your emotions might demonstrate; or, the mortal grief or sorrow that some evangelist or preacher might inspire in you, is not enough to garner pity (much less salvation) from God! I tell you today, that unless your repentance and sorrow is genuine and inspired by God Himself, there will be no salvation for you! Consider the state and the condition of Esau, as his account is related to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews: **“Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when**

he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears” (Heb. 12:16-17).

It seems to me, that the writer to the Hebrews, identifies Esau’s repentance as something that was worldly, and disingenuous. Yes, he was sorry that he had betrayed his own birthright. And, we know from the Old Testament account of these things, that he was sorry when he lost the blessings of Isaac his father. But, apparently, his sorrow over his own condition was based merely on his own fleshly desires and lusts. Just as a child today may be sorry when he is caught doing wrong – Esau was only sorry because of the consequences. Do you see what I mean? Earthly and mortal sorrow, such as that which is inspired at the mourner’s bench or the Arminian altar, is no more than that – earthly and mortal sorrow.

Repentance can be imitated by men; or, imposters may show a pretense of being sorrowful and penitent. But, true repentance must come from God, and from the workings of the Holy Spirit within the hearts and minds of those that are destined for salvation. Paul had this to say to the Corinthians: **“Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death”** (II Cor. 7:9-10). Though it is hard for us to consider, Paul makes it plain that there is such a thing as **“godly sorrow,”** which **“worketh repentance not to be repented of;”** and, there is also such a thing as a **“sorrow of the world”** which **“worketh death.”** The one is not related to the other! The earthly and worldly sorrow (repentance) is inspired by a fear or a dread of “being caught” or “being punished.” Godly sorrow (repentance) is inspired by a thrice-Holy God, that shows us our miserable condition, and the terrible nature of sin itself!

“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed

to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth” (Jer. 31:18-19). Scripture teaches us that true repentance includes a “turning away” from sin. And, true repentance includes sorrow and shame and even being **“confounded”** because of our sins. Oh, how awful are our sins! Oh, how miserable is our condition, when compared to the Holy God and Creator! The false repentances and the false sorrow and the false confessions of sin that the world puts forth, are only poor imitations of the true repentance that God gives to those that He loves. I hope you, who are under the sound of my voice, have felt and experienced this godly sorrow.

GRANTED BY GOD

Now let us move on to a consideration of the appearance of true and godly repentance.

As salvation is the work and gift of God; and, as faith is the work and gift of God; it must be that repentance (which is vital and integral to salvation itself) must also be the work and gift of God. After all, if repentance is a work that you or I perform wholly from within ourselves, why is it that we have never repented before we were saved? Why is it, if repentance comes from within, that you and I so long labored in sin, and so long we even enjoyed the pleasures and the lusts of sin and the flesh? Well, the simple answer is this: God changed you, and God changed me. The change did not come from within ourselves, nor was even the potential of change ever found within ourselves. If you are saved today, then, necessarily, God granted unto you both faith and repentance unto salvation.

One time Paul reminded Timothy that he should preach and teach in this manner: **“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth”** (II Tim. 2:25). Apparently, Paul believed that **“repentance”** was something that

God gave. The word **“peradventure”** in this verse does not imply that the gift of repentance is random, or that it only comes as a matter of chance. Rather, the word **“peradventure”** in this verse reminds Timothy (and us) that he (and we) cannot know who it is that God will save. Therefore, we must be faithful to instruct the sinners of the way of belief and repentance. Who knows which one, or how many, the Lord God might intend to save?

Therefore, it must be that salvation – from the beginning to the end – must be according to the grace and power of God. God has ordained that men would be saved. Jesus Christ covenanted with the Father to be the Sacrifice and the Redemption for the sins of His people. And, the Holy Spirit will bring the knowledge of that salvation to all of those that are saved. The knowledge of that salvation includes the burning need that the broken-hearted sinner has to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. There is no part of this salvation that is performed by the inherent powers or strengths of men. Nor is there any part of this salvation that is owed to man, based on his own inherent worth or works.

Peter told the high priest and the council in Jerusalem, **“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him”** (Acts 5:30-32). Men were ignorant of the workings out of the salvation that God ordained to accomplish before the world was. They were ignorant at the beginning; and, they were even ignorant of the working out of our redemption – even as the process was played out before their eyes. What part can we say that we played in this great salvation? Really, the only role that man played, was to be the tool of Satan which he would use to slay the Saviour of our souls.

It is an amazing thing, that the Lord God would use such means and such vile (yet glorious) circum-

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Repentance

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stances to accomplish our salvation! And, even now, you and I would be ignorant of these things. We, too, would be content in our own condition – at least we would not have any desire to cry out to God for forgiveness. You and I would be about the things of this world, if we were left to our own devices and our own desires. You and I might possibly proclaim Jesus Christ as a “good man” or as a prophet. But, we would not have the faintest desire to acknowledge Him as a Saviour – much less acknowledge ourselves as sinners – were it not for the fact that God has “granted repentance” to those who are ordained unto salvation. What miserable persons we are – yet Jesus Christ has saved us! What rebels we were – yet God gave unto us faith and repentance!

GIVEN TO HIS SHEEP

So, forgiveness and repentance of sins is granted by God unto men. But, to whom is it granted? Is repentance granted to every man without exception? Since repentance is the prerogative of God, to whom does He grant it? Well, the Scriptures answer this question as well: **“When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”** (Mark 2:17). Jesus Christ did not come to grant repentance to the righteous – for why would they have need of repentance if they considered themselves righteous? Rather, Jesus Christ came to grant repentance and forgiveness of sins to the sinners! Indeed, those folks that the Holy Spirit inspires to know their own lost and worthless conditions, these are the ones that will cry out for forgiveness, and repent and turn from their sins! God does not grant the potential to repent in every man. Rather, He grants a definite and effective repentance to certain men. **“But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous,**

but sinners to repentance” (Matt. 9:12-13).

The fact that repentance is granted to sinners might seem obvious, because one that is not a sinner does not need to repent. However, you and I know that none of us will ever express a knowledge of our true lost condition, except the Holy Spirit would show us our lost state. I suppose that you and I can both attest to the fact that many folks come to church services, and never really know that they are sinners. And, many folks claim to be saved, and claim to worship Christ – and yet, they have never really repented of their sins, nor have they ever acknowledged that they are truly sinners. I suppose that much of Christianity goes about claiming to be somehow better than those miserable sinners that they see down the street. And yet, the Scriptures tell us it is those same “miserable sinners” which others scorn, that Jesus Christ came to save.

I tell you this: Jesus Christ did not come to save you, unless you know you are a sinner. God will not save you, unless you will admit you are a hopeless case, and that you are bound for hell based upon your own sinful condition. Even the apostle Paul had this to say about salvation, and his own wretched state: **“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief”** (I Tim. 1:15).

You might ask then, “Who are the ones that are saved? Who are the truly penitent sinners?” Well, it must be plain by now; and based upon the teachings of the Scripture you must admit; no man will ever truly admit that he is a sinner in need of a Saviour, unless God will reveal unto him both his own wretched condition, and the glorious prospect of salvation in Jesus Christ. Therefore, as we have often said, salvation is by grace, and repentance is given by God at His discretion. So it must be that those that are saved – those that are granted repentance – are those that God has elected unto salvation.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to

repentance” (II Pet. 3:9). This verse (and the context around it) teaches us that God has promised to return, and that judgment will be poured out upon the earth. However, the implication is also present, that some will be saved. In other words, we can safely say that God has promised to both judge the wicked, and save the ones that are destined for salvation. Some folks will twist this verse, lift it out of context, and (wrongly) use this verse to teach that God does not want any man to perish, but that He wants every man to be saved. Actually, this verse (and the surrounding context) teaches very nearly the opposite. This passage teaches us that God will certainly judge the world; and God will certainly save His people. He is not willing that any of His people should perish; instead, He wills them unto repentance and newness of life.

AN EVERLASTING STATE

Previously, we noticed that Paul told the Corinthians that **“..godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.”** And the Scriptures are replete with examples and teachings that confirm that those who are saved by the grace of God, will not and cannot be lost. (See John 6:39; 10:28-29; 18:9; Rom. 8:29-39). These Scriptures prove to me, that those who once repent of their sins, and those that once demonstrate the true and godly sorrow that God delivers unto His sheep; these, shall never be lost again. Now, I know that we will all sin after that we are saved. And I know that none of us can live a holy and perfect life after that we are saved. Surely, I will confess immediately before you, that I cannot constantly attain to even the standards that I set for myself – much less can I attain to the perfect standard that was set by my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, while He was here on this earth!

And yet, I believe that those of us who are saved, will know and understand that we have a continual access to the Throne of Mercy and Grace – and even continual access to the forgiveness and pardon of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! In the ninth chapter of the book of Hebrews, Jesus Christ is revealed as our High Priest. **“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come,**

by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building” (Heb. 9:11). And throughout this chapter He is proclaimed as the One who will continually represent us before the throne of God in Heaven. I am so glad my salvation does not depend upon some earthly or mortal sorrow or repentance that I was able to exhibit! I am so glad my salvation is wholly and totally of and by and through God! I am so thankful that, even now, it is the blood of Jesus Christ that atones for my sins, and it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is my High Priest in Heaven! There is no additional sacrifice that is necessary. Nor is there any additional salvation that must be performed again. Sure, we must constantly repent of our sins, and we must express sorrow for the poor service that we render unto God. However, we cannot ever be asked to pay the eternal price for our sins – Jesus Christ has paid that price. Yes, we may suffer some chastisement for our sins in this life. But from everlasting to everlasting, we are now made clean, pure, and righteous in the eyes of God, based upon the salvation and the redemption that has been provided for us! **“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”** (Heb. 9:23-28).



The Hypocrite's

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itself to the inward and spiritual part of the command; as you may see in the scribes and Pharisees. Their obedience was all outward; they had no regard at all to the inward and spiritual part of any command. They did not murder, they did not commit adultery, they had an eye to the outward part of the command; but Christ charges them with unjust and adulterous thoughts, unchaste glances, contemplative wickedness, speculative uncleanness, etc., they having no regard at all to the inward and spiritual part of any command.

Common grace looks only to some particular duties, but saving grace looks to all. Renewing grace comes off to positives as well as negatives. It teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and also to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. These words contain the sum of a Christian's duty. To live soberly towards ourselves, righteously toward our neighbors, and godly toward God, is true godliness indeed and **"the whole duty of man"** (Eccl. 12:13).

A hypocrite has always a squint eye and squint eyed ends in all he does. Balaam spoke very religiously, and he multiplied altars and sacrifices; but the thing he had in his eye was the wages of unrighteousness. Jehu destroyed bloody Ahab's house, he executed the vengeance of God upon that wicked family; he readily, resolutely and effectually destroyed all the worshipers of Baal, but his ends were to secure the kingdom to him and his. Ahab and the Ninevites fasted in sackcloth, but it was merely that they might not feel the heavy judgments that they feared would overtake them. The Jews in Babylon fasted and mourned, and mourned and fasted seventy years, but it was more to get off their chains than their sins, it was more to be rid of their captivity than it was to be rid of their iniquity. As the eagle has an eye upon her prey when she flies highest, so these Jews in all their fasting, praying, mourning; they had only an eye to their ease, deliverance, freedom, etc.; in all their righteous duties they were acted from evil principles, and carried

on by self respects; and therefore Daniel denies that in all that seventy year's captivity they had prayed to any purpose. "And this has come upon us, yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth" (Daniel 9:13).

It is the end that dignifies or debaseth the action, that rectifies or adulterates it, that sets a crown of honor or shame upon the head of it. He that commonly, habitually, in all his duties and services, proposes to himself no higher ends than the praise of men, or rewards of men, or the stopping the mouth of natural conscience, or only to avoid a smarting rod, or merely to secure himself from wrath to come, he is a hypocrite. The ends of man's actions are always a great discovery, either of sincerity or hypocrisy. As great gifts, not sweetened with sincerity, are no ornaments to us; so great infirmities, not soured with hypocrisy, are no great deformities to us. A hypocrite's ends are always below God; they are always below glorifying of God, exalting of God, walking with God, and enjoying communion with

God. A hypocrite, in all he does, still proposes to himself some poor, ignoble, self-end or other.

But now mark, a sincere Christian. If he prays or hears, or gives or fasts, or repents or obeys, etc., God's glory is the main end of all. The glory of God is his highest end, his ultimate end. A sincere Christian can be content to be trampled upon and vilified, so God's name be glorified. The bent of such a heart is for God and His glory; nothing but sincerity can carry a soul so high, as in all acts natural, civil and religious, to intend God's glory. A sincere Christian ascribes the praise of all to God; he sets the crown on Christ's head alone; he will set God upon the throne, and make all things else his servants, or his footstool. All must bow the knee to God, or be trodden in the dirt. He will love nothing, he will embrace nothing but what sets God higher, or brings God nearer to his heart. The glory of God is the mark, the white, that the sincere Christian has in his eye. The sincere Christian lives not to himself, but to Him Who lives forever; he lives not to his own will, or lusts, or greatness, or glory in this world, but he lives to His

glory Whose glory is dearer to Him than his own life. As bright shining golden vessels do not retain the beams of the sun which they receive, but reflect them back again upon the sun; so the sincere Christian returns and reflects back again upon the Son of righteousness the praise and glory of all the gifts, graces, and virtues that they have received from Him. The daily language of sincere souls is this: Not unto us. Lord, not unto us Lord, but to Thy name be all the glory.

A hypocrite never embraces a whole Christ; he can never take up his full and everlasting rest, satisfaction, and content in the person of Christ, in the merits of Christ, in the enjoyment of Christ alone. No hypocrite did ever long and mourn after the enjoyment of Christ, as the best thing in all the world. No hypocrite did ever prize Christ for a Sanctifier as well as a Savior. No hypocrite did ever look upon Christ, or long for Christ to deliver him from the power of his sins, as much or as well as to deliver him from wrath to come. No hypocrite can really love the person of Christ, or take the satisfaction in the person of Christ.

The inward nature of a Christian is to be judged by the universal contrariety of his inward man to all sin. Now this universal contrariety to all sin will beget a universal conflict with all sin. O Sirs! Remember this: Universal contrariety to sin can be found in no man, but he that is sincere; and this universal contrariety to sin argues an inward nature of grace, and this is that which differentiates a real Christian from a hypocrite, who may oppose some sins out of other principles and reasons. A hypocrite may be angry with this sin and that, which brings the smarting rod, and wounds his conscience, and disturbs his peace, and embitters his mercies, and strangles his comforts, and that lays him open to wrath, and that brings him even to the gates of hell, but he can never hate sin as sin.

A hypocrite hates some sins, but likes others. He loathes some, but practices others; like the angel of the church of Ephesus, that hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, but had **"left thy first love."** Many men detest theft that love covetousness, abhor

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From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



The Heart Demanded

"My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Prov. 23:26).

This text is the claim of Divine Wisdom, speaking through Solomon, for the surrender of the heart. "Heart" here does not refer to the bunch of muscles that beats the blood through the veins of the body; nor does it mean merely the emotional part of human nature, the fountain of our affections and sympathies. Heart in this text signifies the whole mind, both soul and spirit. It is the rational nature in its entirety, all that distinguishes us from the beasts of the field. It is the man of the man.

Heart in the Scriptures often has a variety of meanings. Some times it means the mind or understanding (Prov. 10:8; Hos. 7:11; Matt. 13:15). At other times it points to the memory (Ps. 119:11, 36). At still other times it signifies the will and affections (Deut. 6:5), or even the conscience (I John 3:20). Man's heart is the center of his bodily life, the center of the rational spiritual nature of man. It is the innermost center of the natural condition of man. The term is similar to the word "soul" which is used in the Bible language.

In this text God calls for the heart, not just the body of man. But to which were these words addressed? Is this what God requires of the lost sinner in order to obtain salvation? Or, is it what He demands of His own children to whom He has given a new heart? The answers to these questions have a far reaching doctrinal effect upon the methodology of evangelism. Many would say that this Scripture is God's call to a lost sinner separated from God. But is this the true meaning of Proverbs 23:26? My answer is no!

THE SINNER CANNOT GIVE HIS HEART TO GOD

I hold that this text is addressed to one who is already saved. God calls him: **"My son."** No one is a son of God unless he has already received

Christ as Savior: **"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). "My son" speaks of a relationship which God acknowledges. It is not addressed to a stranger or an enemy, but a son! The same one called **"my son"** is said in Proverbs 3:11 to be chastened of the Lord. The writer of the Book of Hebrews quotes this passage in Proverbs and applies it to God's born-again children (Heb. 12:5). Thus, I conclude the words of Proverbs 23:26 were addressed to one who already had the blessings of grace.

What is the condition of man's heart by nature? It is in a fallen, debased and unholy state. Its thoughts and conceptions are darkened by sin. Romans 1:21 says: **"Their foolish heart was darkened."** The natural heart has its perceptions blinded: **"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart"** (Eph. 4:18). Man's heart is such from an early date in his existence: **"The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth"** (Gen. 8:21).

The natural heart of a man is the residence of evil lusts and passions. Jesus Christ listed thirteen evil monsters which lurk inside the heart of a lost man: **"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness"** (Mark 7:21-22). It is the seat of evil, and it perpetrates evil.

A corrupt fountain sends forth a corrupt stream. The carnal mind sends forth corrupt reasonings and passions. Wicked words and actions are produced by the evil in the heart.

"For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongues" (Ps. 5:9).

The heart of the unsaved man is incurably wicked. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us: **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"** Man's heart is subtle and false; it is so deadly and desperately evil that it is past relief. It is alienated from God and opposed to God. Only the all-knowing One knows the true depth of its depravity: **"Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?"** (Prov. 15:11).

In the heart of the Adamic man is the ability to do unknown and unheard of wickedness. Except for God's restraining grace, every man living in the world would be an infidel, or a slave trader, or a criminal, or a dope addict. The most deceitful thing in the world is the heart of an unsaved man. It is the mother of all falsehood. Being a self-deceiver, it often becomes a self-destroyer. Left to itself, it will be for ever without peace, joy, or hope.

No one is as foolish as the person who believes he can give God his old wicked heart in exchange for salvation and eternal life. **"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered"** (Prov. 28:26). The person who trusts his own strength and sufficiency, his own worth and works for salvation, is the biggest fool this side of Hell. He is trusting that which is deceitful above all things.

THE LORD MUST GIVE THE SINNER A NEW HEART

The unrenewed man cannot know God. Jesus Christ declared: **"No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him"** (Matt. 11:27). A real knowledge of God brings eternal life: **"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"** (John 17:3). No person can know the Father unless the Son be pleased to reveal Him. Since the lost sinner cannot know God (I Cor. 2:14), he

must be given a heart to know God. I John 5:20 says: **"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true."**

In Jeremiah 24:7 it is written: **"And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart."** It is the operation of God's grace upon a man which gives him a right knowledge of God. It is God Himself who gives a heart to know Him, else we would perish in our ignorance and blindness. Had it not been for efficacious grace, we would have for ever forgotten God and been eternally banished from His gracious presence.

Those to whom God gives a new heart are then said to turn to God with all their heart: **"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart"** (Jer. 29:13). When God circumcises a man's heart, then he will **"return unto the LORD. . . with all" his "heart"** (Deut. 30:6, 2). The Bible says that God gives the sinner a new heart: **"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh"** (Ezek. 36:26).

Regenerating grace gives a new disposition of mind vastly different from what it was before. Renewing grace in the heart of a man is as great a change as the turning of a dead stone to a living flesh. In this process God takes out the heart of stone and gives the sinner a new heart of flesh, a soft heart which complies in every thing with God's will. God must work this inward change because the old heart is insensible to any Divine impression. Zealous preachers and ill-informed soul-winners often seem to forget that this work of grace must be done upon any sinner before he can respond to the gospel.

The alien sinner does not give his heart to God. To ask the sinner to give his old wicked heart to God is to ask him to do the impossible. I say impossible because the sinner has not the power to give it, and because a holy God would not accept such an abominable thing. I am convinced

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The Heart Demanded

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that God would rather have a person's liver than his old depraved heart.

An unsaved man can not open up his heart and let Jesus come in. **"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life"** (John 5:40). The sinner's heart is bolted up against the Lord, and he is without strength to open it (Rom. 5:6). The heart of a lost sinner is as fortified against Christ as Jericho was against Joshua and the Israelites. Christ, in dealing with the soul of the unconverted, finds a heart shut up against Him. Man has no desire in his heart to come to Christ for life and salvation, but he had rather go anywhere else, or trust anything else, save Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches that God must open the sinner's heart and make him willing to receive the gospel. **"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul"** (Acts 16:14). There would have been no need for the Lord to have opened Lydia's heart, if she could have opened it herself! Nothing less than Divine power can open the heart of the sinner. Conversion work is God's work. Conversion work is heart work. Efficacious grace opened her heart to receive Divine truth. With her heart thus opened to Christ, her ears were opened to the gospel message of Paul. She not only gave attention to Paul's words, but she also gave attendance to his preaching. This was the proof of God's opening her heart.

WHAT GOD REQUIRES OF HIS PEOPLE

My text is addressed to God's people. It shows what God requires of those saved by His amazing grace. He says: **"My son, give me thine heart."** God will never abate one atom of His full requirement. He asks not for beautiful temples, costly sacrifices, impressive rituals, or the body only. Not merely your ear, tongue, head, money, or property, but your heart! It is all that God desires. Withhold the heart, and God rejects all else. **"How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me?"** (Judg.

16:15).

The world is filled with many who would claim the heart. Heaven and Hell contend for it. The world with its riches, honors, and pleasures says: "Give me thine heart." Science with its plausible charms says: "Give me thine heart." Satan puts forth a loud and urgent plea: **"If thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine"** (Luke 4:7). We must not hear these cries and pleas, for they would take our hearts off of the Lord our Savior.

The heart is claimed by the blessed God, whose smile is Heaven, whose frown is Hell. It is claimed by the one Who, by an expensive sacrifice, has redeemed it. Think not of dividing the heart between God and the world. God spurns a divided heart. Satan will be content with a part, for he knows that God will accept nothing less than the whole heart of a man.

The Lord God commands His people to love Him with all their heart: **"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment"** (Mark 12:30). In our worship of Him we are to **"draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith"** (Heb. 10:22). We must ever set Him apart in our affections as holy and reverend: **"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"** (I Pet. 3:15).

A SAVED MAN SHOULD GIVE HIS HEART TO GOD

Christians are to keep their hearts right in the sight of God. We are to keep our emotions under control and keep our attitude according to the standard of godliness. We must love God above all others. The intents of our hearts must be fastened upon Him. He requires **"singleness of heart"** (Col. 3:22). He desires this; He has designed this, He will accept nothing less than full surrender. We should be ashamed of the gift, for nothing could be more unworthy. But because He calls for it, we must give it to Him. He alone can fill it. He alone is worthy of it. Had we a thousand hearts, we should give them all to Him!

God requires the best of our love and affection. The psalmist wrote: **"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God"** (Ps. 42:1-2). There is nothing higher that we can give to Him. A man's heart is given when he sets his strongest affections upon an object.

If our hearts are given to God, then we will obey the Divine pattern. The Lord said of David: **"My servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes"** (I Kings 14:8). The Lord's Word should rule us at all times, if we have given our hearts to God. **"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee"** (Ps. 119:11).

All service rendered to God must come from the heart. We are to obey from the heart that form of doctrine which is delivered unto us (Rom. 6:17). When we sing praise to God, we are to make melody in our hearts unto the Lord (Eph. 5:19). The Christian life involves doing **"the will of God from the heart"** (Eph. 6:6). If our prayers reach the heart of God, they must come from our hearts (II Sam. 7:27).

Our great concern is to keep our hearts right before the One Who knows **"the hearts of all men"** (Acts 1:24). Our constant cry ought to be like the psalmist: **"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer"** (Ps. 19:14). Again he said: **"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"** (Ps. 139:23-24).

We must be on guard against what the writer of the Book of Hebrews called **"an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God"** (Heb. 3:12). This was the tragic sin of Israel in the wilderness. Believers must not be always straying in heart. The means which God prescribed to prevent this is seen in Hebrews 3:13: **"But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."** Our greatest

protection is mutual and constantly repeated exhortation.

Dear Christian brother, God has given you a heart to dispose of while you live in this world. When you give God your heart you give Him more than worldly possessions and your body. You give Him more than if you gave Him a crown or a kingdom. God will not take your heart from you by force. He expects each believer priest to present it to Him in cheerfulness and thankfulness. Do not give it to Satan, for he will destroy it. Do not give it to the world, for the world will pollute it. Do not give it to sin, for sin will corrupt it. My believing friend, give your heart to God wholly right now.

Do not think that you can give God a little of your heart. He wants all or none. Give Him all your heart, every faculty and power of your soul. Give it to Him unreservedly and irrevocably. Choose Him as your present and perpetual portion. Do not hesitate. To delay is to refuse. Why delay? Has the Devil been so good a master that you are reluctant to leave him? You can not give your heart to God too soon or too often. All performances, however costly, without the heart, will be rejected. The best and most useful men have been those who gave their hearts to God in their early Christian life and consecrated to Him the prime of their being.

Sir Walter Raleigh, who was atrociously sacrificed by the impious James I, and condemned to be beheaded, on a false charge of treason, in reply to the executioner, who asked him which way he should lay his head, said, "So the heart be right, it is no matter which way the head lies."

A SINNER BELIEVES WITH ALL OF HIS HEART

The unregenerated man is **"uncircumcised in heart and ears"** (Acts 7:51). He is under the power of unmortified lust and corruptions. His heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. The unbeliever is destitute of the disposition to hear and love the truth. His **"heart is not right in the sight of God"** (Acts 8:21).

Of some in Israel it was written: **"They made their hearts as an adamant stone"** (Zech. 7:12). Nothing is so hard, so inflexible, as the

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Could you please explain the meaning of Ecclesiastes 9:10?

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God has given us Christians a work, commission, and a command to use our hands (whole body), **"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand"** (Eph. 6:13) to do that which is pleasing in His sight. We are not to do evil and abominable things that go against His Word.

We have all the tools; for He has given them all to us, knowledge, wisdom, and His Word to spend our time here on earth with every fiber of our being to do good and set an example to the world, **"Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily"** (Col. 1:29).

Everything should be done in obedience to God, not man. Whatever is found written the Word of God should be done as well. Whether it be preaching, teaching, taking care of the poor, should be done with all our might, without wavering, **"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)"** (Heb. 10:23). **"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"** (Gal. 6:9-10).

Let us always remember, even though it says, **"do it with thy might"** we can do nothing without Christ.

"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isa. 40:29).

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"

(Phil. 4:13).

This is our time to work for when we are dead our work will cease and it will be too late at that point. That is why we need to make the best of our time and talent while we live, **"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work"** (John 9:4). **"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them"** (Rev. 14:13).

We have a time to be born, a time to work, and a time to die (Eccl. 3:1-15). We need to work while it is day (while we are alive) for when we are dead our work will stop! **"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"** (James 4:14). **"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear"** (I Pet. 1:17).

I had a man tell me one time that the study of the Book of Ecclesiastes was boring. I hope that is not the case with you, dear reader, I find it most invigorating, exciting, and instructive. God Bless!

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"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). God's Word is replete with verses that command us to be single minded, and always abounding in the work of the Lord

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

I want to answer the question in a way that starts from the end. When we die and are buried in the grave we can no longer work. Good works are done, working with our hands, done, work is done. When we enter heaven we have ceased from our works and will enter into rest. **"For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his"** (Heb 4:10).

The first part of the verse tells us that we are to labour while we are alive and to do so with all our strength. **"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men"** (Prov. 22:29). This work we are to do is Godly work that shows our faith **"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works"** (James 2:18).

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"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, wither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10). Solomon is urging his readers to live life with a sense of urgency and diligence. Everything undertaken should be done with a passion and a purpose in mind. We should strive to do the very best we can do for the glory of God. Our time to serve the Lord is short in comparison to eternity, so everything that we endeavor to do should be done by giving maximum attention, energy, and effort. Once we are laid in the grave we will no longer be able to work for the Lord or personally dispense wisdom to others.

Jesus made a similar statement in John 9:4: **"I must work the works of**

him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." Jesus Christ gave His all during His earthly sojourn. Every step He took was on purpose, every work He engaged in was aimed at fulfilling the will of His Father. He was wholly dedicated to the task at hand, which was the redemption of the elect. Christ could honestly say what no other man can: **"And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; FOR I DO ALWAYS THOSE THINGS THAT PLEASE HIM"** (emphasis mine, TWR; John 8:29). Every fiber of Christ's being was engaged in doing the will of His Father. Christ proclaimed the very reason why a human body had been prepared for Him was to do God's will in Hebrews 10:7: **"Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."** As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ we are commanded to **"...follow his steps"** (I Pet. 2:21) and **"...so to walk, even as he walked"** (I John 2:6). Christ Jesus calls us to a life of complete surrender and sacrifice of body, soul, spirit, will, heart, and mind.

Paul the apostle gave a similar inspired exhortation in Colossians 3:17 and 23: **"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him...And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."** Convicting words indeed! May God deliver us from all half-hearted, superficial, apathetic, careless, thoughtless, lazy, and unprepared attempts at service. Our Lord deserves our very best every moment of every day with every fiber of our being fully engaged for His glory. Romans 12:1-2 declares: **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."** Our time is short so we must heartily obey the admonition of Romans 13:11-12:

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. What are the “keys of the kingdom” in Matthew 16:19?

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Keys are what open a door from the outside, or open a door to the inside for those outside. Those who possess keys are those who are from the inside. The Lord's churches are the only ecclesiastical entity on this earth that has the authority to preach the gospel, and the only *ecclesia* with power to open or shut the doors of membership.

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Keys in the Bible are the same thing that keys are today. They basically open locked doors. Or they can lock a usable door and make it unusable. That is the context of our text verse: **“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”** The verse simply means that Jesus is allowing or mandating that someone or thing will be bound (locked) or loosed (unlocked). Selah! Think about it!

An angel is given the key to the bottomless pit in Rev. 9:1 and 20:1. He opens the pit with the key, throws in Satan, and locks it again (for 1000 years!) with the key. Binding and loosing is referenced as an ability of the Lord's churches in Matthew 18:18-20 where church discipline is taught in very similar language to our passage. I believe that will give

us some insight into our text, where in the previous verse the Lord states that He will edify His church to the point that the **“gates of hell shall not prevail against it...”**

So who has a key? If we are talking about my wife's car, then in whose possession would you expect to find that key? I would ask Becky, if I were you! Selah! Think about it! Therefore, the next important point to get under our belts, is that a key is very much a talisman of authority. If my wife hands over the key of her new car to her son, Andrew, then she is delegating authority for him to drive it! God demands authority and order in His universe. One can not just jump to Jupiter without considering the laws of gravity, distance and time. In the same manner, one cannot make a decision to go to Heaven or Hell arbitrarily. There is a door, and someone has the key! **“And when I saw him (Christ-TMS insert), I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death”** (Rev. 1:17-18).

The next aspect of our study is the question of what is the kingdom of Heaven? Of what are the keys the emblem of authority; and the power of binding and loosing? The phrase “kingdom of Heaven” is unique to the gospel of Matthew, but I believe it is readily apparent that it is synonymous to the “kingdom of God” in the other gospels. But staying in Matthew's gospel, we can find out much about this kingdom.

It is something folks can enter (or be denied entrance): **“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”** **“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”** (Matt. 5:20,

7:21).

It is something that can be a possession or inheritance. **“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”** (Matt. 5:3, 10).

One can be in a great position within this kingdom, meeting certain qualifications: **“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”** **“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? ...Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven”** (Matt. 5:19, 18:1, 4).

According to Scripture, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and possibly John the Baptist are currently citizens of this kingdom of Heaven. **“And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”** **“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he”** (Matt. 8:11, 11:11).

Christ Jesus preached the Gospel that the kingdom was near at hand, as did John before Him and the church after Him, **“And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand”** (Matt. 3:2, 4:17, 10:7).

So what is this kingdom? It is not a physical kingdom as Matthew 8:10-12 contrasted the kingdom of Israel with God's kingdom. Christ Himself distinguishes the two in John 18:36, **“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but NOW is my kingdom not from hence”** (emph. TMS He intimates in the last phrase that there will come a time (the Millennial Reign) when His kingdom will be an earthly kingdom,

but for NOW (our study), it must be understood to be a spiritual kingdom.

With the above Scriptures and clues (and reading the “KEY” chapter of Matthew 13, with the parables of the kingdom of Heaven), we must come to the conclusion that the new birth puts us into a spiritual kingdom, ruled by our King of kings and Lord of lords. We, in the newness of our walk, will uphold the banner of the cross of Christ and labor in His vineyards, sowing the word, reaping the elect of the heavenly Father, and growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. As saved individuals, we are currently citizens of the kingdom of Heaven.

Finally, I believe we can answer the question of “what are the keys of the kingdom of Heaven?” And just as importantly, what was Christ intimating by delivering the keys (of Becky's new car) to the twelve apostles as the nucleus of His infant church? Selah! Think about it!

Let us go back to the Old Testament for the picture! As you read this account, remember that a porter was the “holder of the keys!” **“And Zechariah the son of Meshelemiah was porter of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. All these which were chosen to be porters in the gates were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned by their genealogy in their villages, whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office. So they and their children had the oversight of the gates of the house of the LORD, namely, the house of the tabernacle, by wards. In four quarters were the porters, toward the east, west, north, and south. And their brethren, which were in their villages, were to come after seven days from time to time with them. For these Levites, the four chief porters, were in their set office, and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God. And they lodged round about the house of God, because the charge was upon them, and the opening thereof every morning pertained to them”** (1 Chro. 9:21-27). This last phrase is the Hebrew equivalent of “the usage of the key every morning pertained to them.” In other words, Matthew 16:19, **“And I will give**

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The Hypocrite's

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whoredom that like irreligiousness, etc. There is no hypocrite under heaven that can truly say, I hate every false way; but a sincere Christian hates all sinful ways, but his own first and most. An upright heart leaves no nest-egg for Satan to sit on, but the hypocrite always does.

Remember this forever, there are three things a hypocrite can never do. He can never mourn for sin as sin. He can never mourn for the sins of others as well as his own. Moses, Lot, David, Jeremiah, Paul and those in Ezekiel 9:4,6, mourned for others' sins as well as their own; but Pharaoh, Ahab, Judas, Demas, Simon Magus never did. He can never hate sin as sin.



The Heart Demanded

(Continued from page 209) ♦

heart of a presumptuous sinner. His impenitent heart is enmity against God. Of such people the Scriptures say: **"They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways"** (Heb. 3:10). It may be said of every lost sinner what was said of Simon Magus: **"...for thy heart is not right in the sight of God"** (Acts 8:21).

The Bible teaches heart-felt religion. All some have is a dry, formal religion. Some joined the church by responding to the invitation of some high pressure evangelist. Yet the heart has never been changed. You are the same person you were before you joined the church. You have never given your heart to God. The reason is, that God has never given you a new heart in regeneration. You cannot give your heart to God until God gives you a new heart and a right spirit. You can not believe with all your heart (Rom. 10:9-10) until God gives you a heart to know Him.

People present themselves as candidates for baptism. To all such persons coming to our church I ask: "Has your heart been changed?" I dare not baptize anyone who does not believe with all his heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I take

the same position that Philip the evangelist took. When the eunuch asked for baptism at his hands, he said: **"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."** The eunuch replied: **"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"** (Acts 8:37).

Our Savior said: **"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"** (Matt. 5:8).



Forum #1

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"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

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The book of Ecclesiastes starts off in the first two chapters trying to find the meaning of life. It is a good journey for every Christian to take, finally recognizing that there are no works or accomplishments in this earth that can make our life worthwhile. The common refrain of the Preacher is **"This also is vanity..."** which has the thought of emptiness and unsatisfying transience. (now you see it, now you do not...) It is capped by the frustration of verses 15-18, **"Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool. Therefore I hated life... Yea, I hated all my labour...."** Selah! Think about it!

The Holy Spirit then gives us a nugget of wisdom that gives meaning

to our lives toward the end of the second chapter. **"There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God"** (Eccl. 2:24). Only when we comprehend the presence of God, will our lives have purpose and direction.

By the time we get to our text in chapter nine, these thoughts of practical wisdom have been threshed out and we get to the crux of the entire book in this passage. **"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God NOW accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest"** (Eccl. 9:7-10) (emph. MS).

Our text is the summation of these thoughts that life has purpose through service to God. So the Preacher is exhorting us to labour with all of "our might" while we have the opportunity. NOW! NOW is the time! It is a JOY to serve Him with our spouse and family. **"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might..."**! Surely, Selah, Think about it!

The last half of the verse is a warning to each of us. We are heading for the grave, where it will be too late to serve God. Certainly we will have an eternity to rejoice and worship Him, but the opportunity to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to Him is for a very limited time only. The works that we do for Him since He has saved us are very precious to Him and should be also to us. The Judgment Seat of Christ will determine our standing for all of the eons of timeless glory. **"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall**

confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:10-12). **"Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"** (II Cor. 5:9-10).

The picture I have in my mind is hardening concrete. The kids all want to put their name in the wet concrete that we have just poured and I remember taking the little ones out there and putting the print of their feet in the yet moldable stuff. When we come out and look at it the next day, it is hardened. If one of the kids misspelled their name- too bad! It is too late to change it now. Yesterday, they could have smoothed the spot in the concrete out and erased all of their errors, but not now. Now they are evident for everyone to see for all of the eternal ages! Selah! Think about it!

And that is the way our mortal lives are, the Preacher warns us. Today we need to work and labor, for tomorrow there is no more opportunity. No work, no device, nor knowledge or wisdom in the grave- on the other side of the physical death of our mortal bodies. The Apostle Paul passes on the same admonition in II Corinthians 6:1-2, **"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. ...behold, now is the accepted time; ...behold, now is the day of salvation."** May God help us to realize the importance of knowing Jesus Christ as our Saviour and LORD! Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



Forum #2

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unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Selah! Think about it!

God gave the Levite porters the keys to the house of God. They were the ones that opened the door to the wisdom and instruction that was vital to entering the kingdom of Heaven.

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Forum #2

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And Jesus was giving those same keys to His apostles (and the church throughout history thereafter) to open the door of the precious Word of God to salvation and service! In the kingdom of Heaven! That this is the case is proved indubitably by the negative aspect of what the Pharisees were doing in Matthew 23:13, **"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."**

The dry and dead religious efforts of the legalists and free-willers was actually LOCKING THE DOOR of the kingdom of Heaven! How? Not with the authority inherent with the real key, but by obscuring the door and blocking it with blinded eyes and untempered mortar! **"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture"** (John 10:9). They denied Christ and blasphemed His precious name to all that would listen to them!

What Christ gave to the apostles were the keys of the kingdom of Heaven! The authority to instruct in the way of righteousness and point out Jesus Christ, **"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29). Again, the opposite of a parallel passage where the ruling elite were denying the key of instruction! **"Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered"** (Luke 11:52).

So, the **"keys of the kingdom"** that Jesus gave His church is the delegated authority to proclaim the avenue of salvation - Jesus Christ, and Him crucified! More than that, it is the opening of the doorway to service in the Lord's churches. **"And they lodged round about the house of God, because the charge was upon them, and the opening thereof every morning pertained to them"** (I Chro. 9:27). Amen! Selah! Think about it!

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We believe the **"keys of the kingdom"** are not a physical set of keys as we would think of keys today to stick in a lock to either open, by unlocking a door, or to close the door and lock it by a physical set of keys. But the keys are here used in a figuratively sense for opening and explaining the gospel to a lost and dying world. The **"keys"** are the authority given to Peter and the other apostles to open up the knowledge of the gospel to others concerning the Messiah, His return, to display the riches of His grace, and to give an account of the kingdom of Heaven.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33)!

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).

Some would say that Matthew 16:19 proves that Peter was the first Pope and much has been stated that Peter is the door keeper to heaven. But we count these as false teachings and an attempt to make Peter to have the sole authority over the church and the other apostles. A short study of the Scriptures will show that Peter had no more authority from the Lord than the rest of the disciples.

So in short, the **"keys"** are the abilities given to the saved to open and explain the Gospel truths. We could use a lot of space here but we will try to keep the answer in the scope of the question. We can see this all played out when the Holy Spirit filled all of them (not just Peter) on the day of Pentecost and then they started preaching, first in Jerusalem (Acts 2) then throughout the rest of region (Acts 13:49).

We have to agree with John Gill when he said "Christ gave His apostles both a commission and gifts, qualifying them to open the sealed

book of the Gospel. And unlock the mysteries of it both to the Jews and Gentiles, especially the latter."

I hope this answer will spark the questioner and reader to dig deeper into the Word of God and unveil the mysteries contained therein. God Bless!

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"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19).

I must confess that this verse has always been a difficult one for me to fully understand. I trust that when the Lord is pleased to glorify my feeble mind I shall have a better grasp of the depth of its meaning. It is verses like this one that reminds me just how high God's ways and words are above my finite understanding. As I read several commentators on this verse I found that there was very little consensus regarding the interpretation. With that in mind I offer the following comments.

Negatively, this verse does not teach the superiority of Peter or the Romish doctrine of absolution where priests have special, magical powers of forgiveness. Nor does it teach the Catholic heresy that the pope has the keys to heaven and hell. Jesus Christ alone has those keys according to Revelation 1:18: **"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen; and have the keys of hell and death."**

Keys are used to open and lock doors. Those who possess keys understand their purpose and use them accordingly. The **"kingdom of heaven"** is a spiritual kingdom that consists of all those who are born again (John 3:3-7). There is a sense in which men may shut up the kingdom through heresy and hypocrisy according to Matthew

23:13: **"But woe unto you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."** In a very real and literal sense the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost had the effect of opening the door of the kingdom of heaven to Jewish believers (Acts 2:39). Later, God would use Peter to preach the Gospel and open the door of the kingdom of heaven to Gentile believers in Acts 10 when he was commissioned to preach to the household of Cornelius. In both instances the central message that Peter preached was Christ crucified, buried, and risen again as the only way of salvation. By way of extension, it is the responsibility of the Lord's New Testament Baptist Church to preach the same message all around the world (Matt. 28:18-20) trusting that God will open the kingdom of heaven to His elect.

Included in the verse is a reference to binding and loosing. Brother Milburn Cockrell commented: "The power of loosing and binding was given later to the whole church (Matt. 18:18). To bind is to impose an obligation as binding (Matt. 23:4). To loose is to declare a precept not binding...In a sense every preacher opens up the kingdom of Heaven when he preaches Christ and the new birth as the means of entrance into the kingdom. This proclamation of the Gospel has the sanction and approval of God." (Notes on Matthew, p. 73).

Since the context includes Christ's declaration of the perpetuity and succession of His church, I think the binding and loosing also applies to the teaching, practice, and discipline of the New Testament Baptist Church. Especially when similar language is used by Christ in Matthew 18:17-18: **"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."**

TOM ROSS



Successful Gardener

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In the context of His revealed greatness, let us think about God as a gardener: The Successful Gardener. When the Lord Jesus spoke of His Father being a gardener He said: **“...Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up”** (Matt. 15:13). That is a powerful statement. It is one that should immediately get our undivided attention! This is, of course, metaphorical language. Jesus is not talking about natural plants. He is talking about people. In fact, if you read the immediate context – the verses before and after this one – you will see that He was talking about the Pharisees. These Pharisees were one of two main religious groups among the Jews of that day. Back then they were the conservatives or the fundamentalists among the Jews. They believed all the Scriptures that then existed. Jesus said about them, **“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not”** (Matt. 23:2-3). Another place He said, **“Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy”** (Luke 12:1). These people talked the talk, so to speak, but did not walk the walk. They believed all the right things, but all they had was an intellectual knowledge of the Old Testament. They had not been planted by God. Probably they had planted themselves. They did not know the God of the Bible nor did they know His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

By using these words, **“...Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up,”** God is presented to us as a gardener. In a well maintained garden – the kind you would expect God to have – there may spring up two kinds of plants. One kind has been planted by the gardener. And there are other plants – plants that God did not plant. For our thinking we will say the plants that God did not plant fall into two classes. There are the weeds, of course. These are immediately and easily identified for

the most part. These will produce no fruit. We would expect God to “weed” His garden. When He does so, these shall most certainly be rooted up and tossed aside. There may also be another kind of plant that God did not plant. These we will call “volunteer” plants. One botanist wrote this: “In gardening and agronomic terminology, a volunteer is a plant that grows on its own, rather than being deliberately planted by a farmer or gardener.” In a natural garden these volunteer plants may spring up from seeds left in the ground from the previous year or may have been blown in from a neighbor’s garden – or they may have been brought in by a bird of one sort or another. The point is that the gardener did not plant them. They were not a part of his plan for his garden. Jesus made it clear that both the weeds and the volunteer plants in His Father’s garden **“shall be rooted up.”** **“...Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up:”** those are His exact words! If the Father did not plant what grows in His garden, He shall root it up, be it a weed or a vegetable plant that just came up all on its own. One old preacher titled his sermon on this verse: “Are You Planted or Just Set Out?”

We urge the reader to forget about trying to figure out whether or not neighbors, friends or fellow professing Christians were planted by God. You and I do not have the ability to know of a certainty about that. What we ought to be concerned about is ourselves. Am I one that God has planted? That is the question each of us should be asking. Paul wrote these words to the congregation in Corinth: **“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith...”** (II Cor. 13:5). These words set us on the right path. Self-examination is commanded.

In other words, are you a spiritual weed? We should liken weeds to those who do not profess faith in Christ. Or did you just volunteer to be a Christian? Or did God plant you? Those plants planted by God are the only ones that shall not be rooted up. The others – weeds and volunteer plants of all sorts – shall be rooted up. We say this because Jesus said it. He also 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.” Again He said, **“...that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father”** (John 6:44, 65). The Bible makes it clear that God is the cause of men and women coming to Christ. He initiates the salvation of those who shall be saved. He does not leave it up to the individual to take the first step. He plants in His garden those plants He wants to grow there! The natural mind and the untaught believer will object to such a Sovereign who does as He pleases with His own creatures. Human beings have a will that they like to think is free. But in reality the will of an unsaved person is bound by their carnal nature. Because of their depravity and the spiritual deadness of their condition, they lack the ability to come in a saving way to Christ. The last-quoted verses are clear on that matter. God must first work in men and women enabling them to repent and believe the gospel in a saving way. God must do the planting!

Do not look around at others. Look at yourself. Has God planted you? Or did you just set yourself out? Do not be filled with self confidence. Do not trust in some religious or emotional experience. Do not trust in your own acts such as praying a prayer or going forward in a religious service. Do not trust in having made “a decision for Christ”! Do not think you are saved because you set yourself out! People are headed toward the lake of fire from church pews with a Bible in their hand and a supposed Christian song on their lips. Whether or not they realize it they are singing a song without Bible foundation: they are singing “A Volunteer For Jesus.” Part of the chorus goes, “A volunteer for Jesus, a soldier true: Others have enlisted, why not you?” That song is misleading because God does not accept volunteer enlistment. According to the metaphor on gardening, you cannot plant yourself! God does not accept plants that plant themselves. Someone said that the Lord Jesus turned down every person who ever volunteered to serve Him. The Lord certainly set a standard for the rich young ruler which He knew would dissuade him from following after Him (See Mark

10:21). The reason God does not accept volunteers is that no person in his or her natural state seeks after God. No one volunteers to serve God for the right reason. We freely admit that unsaved people think that they are seeking after God. However, Paul plainly stated in Romans 3:11: **“There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God”**. People may seek after a thousand things associated with God, but they do not, will not and cannot seek after God. Their motives are ulterior. Their motives are hidden. They may profess to seek after God, but really they want what they think they can get out of Him. Like a “gold digger” they only want Him for His riches! They may want healing, or prosperity, or an escape from the lake of fire. Sometimes they just want a better quality of life and think to find it by professing faith in Christ. The Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples about these natural kinds of things: He said, **“...all these things do the nations of the world seek after”** (Luke 12:30). Everybody wants to better themselves. Everybody wants a better quality of life. Nobody wants to spend eternity in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Normal, natural people seek these things and many of them try to ingratiate themselves with God thinking that by doing so they will obtain what they seek. Not long ago a young relative asked this preacher, “If I get saved will God give me...” this and that and the other thing. The answer, of course, is that God may let His children suffer under financial distress as well as other trials and tribulations. But these volunteer plants who think to grow in God’s garden do so for wholly selfish reasons. God is not glorified by such selfishness! Covetousness is never blessed or honored by God! These kinds of “seeking” are not seeking after God! To want the perceived benefits of salvation rather than the God who saves is unacceptable to Him. Dare we think that God rewards such selfish carnality as this? Will He save those who do not want Him and His righteousness, but rather seek after comforts and security – all the things that the nations of the world seek after? God’s blessing is upon

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Successful Gardener

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those who **“...hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”** (Matt. 5:6). The exhortations in the Bible are to **“seek the LORD”** not His gifts!

It is so with those whom God plants! They are brought to seek Him and His righteousness! We deny that men can seek God aright in and of themselves because the Bible denies that idea. When God draws a person to Christ He works repentance in them. He does this by showing them both His holiness and their sin. Of his own personal experience, one Old Testament prophet wrote: **“Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts”** (Isa. 6:5). Isaiah was brought to see his sin and hopelessness! Job was brought to a similar place in his experience. He said, **“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes”** (Job 42:5-6). Is your experience similar to these? To those whom God plants He shows their helplessness. They can do nothing about either their rotten sin nature or their sinful acts. In this way He shows them their true condition and causes them to take their rightful place before Him. As a result their hearts are broken over their sin and their sins – i.e. their sinful nature and their sinful acts. This godly sorrow or broken-heartedness is one of the missing ingredients in the experiences of those who only volunteer. Those who merely plant themselves do so by a mere decision. In fact, in most “evangelical” churches people are told to “make a decision for Christ” as if this is what will make them a saved person. A decision is mental. It is made in the mind of man based upon what he thinks are sound reasons. Conversion, on the other hand, is much deeper. It involves the whole soul of man – not just his mental capacity. In reality, by telling folk to make a decision, most Baptist preachers and churches tell folk to plant themselves! They do not believe

that God must do the planting for the work to be done right. In this way many are deceived by preachers and religious systems that are deceivers (See II Timothy 3:13). But the Bible still says, **“...godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death”** (II Cor. 7:10). This is true in the life of an unbeliever being brought to Christ and in the lives of believers whose continual repentance is a part of the spiritual life.

Someone said that the emotions are the mainspring of the will. We do not mean that a natural man's emotions can be affected by preaching or the singing of sad songs, etc., in such a way as to cause him to repent. But God who regenerates the dead spirit in a person uses means to bring those whom He has regenerated to experience conversion. And repentance – along with its ever-present twin, justifying faith – is a part of the conversion of a soul. It is the spirit that is made alive and the soul which is converted. The relationship between the new birth and conversion cannot be better stated, we think, than in the old New Hampshire Baptist Confession printed in A.D. 1833. That confession says in part: “We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again;¹ that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind;² that it is effected in a manner above our

comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth,³ so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel;⁴ and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, and faith, and newness of life.⁵” Several things were believed by these old Baptist forefathers as evidenced in this statement. We point out three as follows: 1) regeneration or the new birth is a work of the Spirit unobserved by us: 2) this new birth secures our voluntary obedience to the gospel: and 3) repentance, faith and a changed life are the evidences of this new birth. And as we have pointed out before, repentance is worked by **“godly sorrow”**. In our Baptist rush to get folk saved, we very often omit patiently waiting on God to work genuine godly sorrow in them. If we really believe that God is able to save whom He wants to save, let us cease from “pulling them green and spoiling the vines.”

[¹John 3:3, 6-7; 1 Cor. 1:14; Rev. 8:7-9; 21:27 -- ²2 Cor. 5:17; Ezek. 36:26; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 2:28-29; 5:5; 1 John 4:7 -- ³John 3:8; 1:13; James 1:16-18; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 2:13 -- ⁴1 Pet. 1:22-25; 1 John 5:1; Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:9-11 -- ⁵Eph. 5:9; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 5:16-23; Eph. 3:14-21; Matt. 3:8-10; 7:20; 1 John 5:4, 18 – Note: numbering of proof texts is ours and not the numbering of the original confession].



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.

NEAR-UNANIMOUS HOUSE APPROVES RELIGIOUS MINORITIES SPECIAL ENVOY

(WNS)--In an age when bipartisan political agreement is nearly non-existent, the U.S. House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly on Thursday to create a special envoy for religious liberty in Central America and the Middle East.

Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., and Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Calif., authored the legislation that was approved 402-22. The nay votes came from 21 Republicans and one Democrat. “Religious minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia are confronting deadly threats every day, ranging from discrimination and marginalization to outright violence,”

Eshoo said. “This legislation responds to the urgent needs of those Christians and other religious minorities. ... A special envoy will help develop policy options to ensure the protection and preservation of these ancient faith communities.” The special envoy would advocate for religious minorities who often have no voice in politics. Wolf said the U.S. State Department is not doing enough to help them.

MORMON MOVEMENT ON MARRIAGE

(WNS)--Former NFL great Steve Young was one of the keynote speakers at a three-day conference in Salt Lake City exploring how the Mormon Church – officially, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) -- deals with homosexuality. The 32nd annual Affirmation International Conference attracted about 300 people. The Youngs said in a statement they are happy to be a part of the conference and “lend their voices to the healing work of making our families, our society and our church more welcoming places for our LGBT brothers and sisters.” It's the latest example of Mormon movement on this issue. Officially, the LDS church teaches that marriage is between a man and a woman, and that same-sex relationships are sinful. But according to Yahoo News, “the church launched a campaign earlier this year encouraging members to be more compassionate toward gay and lesbian members of the church. The church also threw its support behind a new policy passed this year by the Boy Scouts of America that opens the door for gay youth to join the ranks.”

FDA STANDS FIRM ON GAY BLOOD DONOR BAN

(WNS)--Despite pressure from gay rights groups to lift the ban on gay and bisexual men donating blood, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has stood firm, citing the agency's charge to safeguard American health. The FDA said it will consider lifting the ban, “only if supported by scientific data showing that a change in the policy would not present a significant and preventable risk to blood recipients.” Today's U.S. blood supply is remarkably safe, but that wasn't always the case. Thousands contracted AIDS in the 1980s from blood tainted with HIV, a death sentence

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at the time. As a result, the FDA began its lifetime ban on gay and bisexual blood donations: Any male who has had sex with another male since 1977 is excluded. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports gay men are more severely affected by HIV than any other group, accounting for 63 percent of HIV infections and 78 percent of newly infected men in 2010. Since banning their donations, the risk of getting and HIV infection from today's blood supply is now less than one in a million, according the CDC.

STUDY SAYS KIDS RAISED BY SAME-SEX COUPLES SUFFER

(WNS)--A key pillar in the propaganda of pro-homosexual activists is that children raised by same-sex couples do as well in life as those raised by opposite-sex parents. That notion took a direct hit from a study published by the Review of Economics of the Household. The study says, among other things, that Canadian children living with same-sex parents were only 65 percent as likely to graduate from high school as those living in opposite-sex families. According to the study, "daughters of same-sex parents do considerably worse than sons." The study, done with 2006 census data, is perhaps the largest of its kind ever done. According to the study's publisher, the "large random sample allows for control of parental marital status, distinguishes between gay and lesbian families." They say it is "large enough to evaluate differences in gender between parents and children."

STIFLED SPEECH

(WNS)--The U.S. Supreme Court in early October let stand a lower court's decision supporting a university's right to fire a human resources manager over her views about homosexuality. Last year, the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sided with the University of Toledo in its decision to fire administrator Crystal Dixon after she penned an op-ed in the *Toledo Free Press* outlining her beliefs about how gay rights differed from civil rights: "I take great umbrage at the notion that those choosing the homosexual lifestyle are 'civil rights victims.' Here's why. I cannot wake up tomorrow and not be a Black

woman." University President Lloyd Jacobs said Dixon's public expression of her beliefs called into question her ability to do her job. The lower courts agreed, dismissing Dixon's claims the school violated her right to free speech. Although the Supreme Court's decision not to take the case cannot be counted as an endorsement of the lower court's ruling, it does mean that within the 6th Circuit's jurisdiction, Christians like Dixon can't count on constitutional protections for proclaiming their beliefs.

NJ JUDGE DEMANDS SAME SEX MARRIAGE

(WNS)--A New Jersey judge on Oct. 10 refused Gov. Chris Christie's request to postpone her demand that the state start issuing same-sex marriage licenses. New Jersey currently allows gay couples to enter civil unions but not marriages. Christie maintains the voters should decide the issue in a referendum. But Judge Mary Jacobson ordered the state to start issuing marriage licenses on Oct. 21, based on the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act earlier this year. Christie's administration is challenging her decision. Jacobson has refused to stay the ruling while higher courts debate its legality.

CHAPLAINCY CRISIS TESTS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

(WNS)--The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has nearly 1,500 chaplains serving in the U.S. military. But the future of those chaplains seems uncertain, given the federal government's growing affirmation of homosexuality and gay marriage. The SBC's North American Mission Board recently published guidelines stating that SBC chaplains "will not conduct or attend a wedding ceremony for any same-sex couple, bless such a union or perform counseling in support of such a union." This clarification follows a 2012 controversy in which a chaplain resigned his SBC affiliation after attending a same-sex wedding. The Catholic Archdiocese for the Military Services issued a similar policy in September. Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, sees the chaplaincy crisis as testing whether religious freedom can "survive under America's new moral order." Numerous chaplains have already encountered pressure to stop expressing exclusive

Christian beliefs.

STREET EVANGELIST WINS VICTORY

(WNS)--An appeals court handed a victory last month to a man who tried to hand out Bibles at the Twin Cities (Gay) Pride Festival in Minnesota. The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said city officials and festival organizers had no right to restrict Christians to the festival's outskirts while allowing other street performers and vendors to roam through the crowd unhindered.

TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE ON TRIAL IN MICHIGAN

(WNS)--A federal judge in Michigan declined to rule Oct. 16 on the constitutionality of the state's ban on same-sex marriage, choosing instead to send the issue to trial in February. Several homosexual couples have challenged the ban, an amendment to the state's constitution voters approved in 2004. The challengers argue the ban violates the U.S. Constitution's equal protection clause. Although they had hoped U.S. District Court Judge Bernard Friedman would decide the issue yesterday, gay marriage supporters say they will provide overwhelming evidence to support their position when the case goes to trial. Until then, state Attorney General Bill Schuette warned county clerks not to issue same-sex marriage licenses until the case is decided. Michigan's marriage challenge is just one percolating through federal courts in several states after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act earlier this year. The nation's high court might have bought itself some time by not ruling on whether states could ban same-sex marriage, but the justices likely will have to make that call in the near future.

N.C. OFFICIAL CHALLENGES STATE'S GAY MARRIAGE BAN

(WNS)--A Buncombe County (N.C.) official has become the latest local politician to try to force courts to change a state's ban on homosexual marriage. Buncombe County Register of Deeds Drew Reisinger announced Monday he would accept same-sex marriage applications, despite his state's constitutional amendment banning the unions. As other county officials in other states have recently done, Reisinger cited as his justification this summer's U.S.

Supreme Court ruling striking down part of the federal Defense of Marriage Act: "I have concerns about whether we are violating people's civil rights based on this summer's Supreme Court decision," Reisinger said in a statement. For now, Reisinger said he will hold the license applications while he seeks approval from Attorney General Roy Cooper, a Democrat, to process them. Although Cooper supports same-sex marriage, he has said in the past he would not let his personal views prevent him from defending the state's laws, a very different stance from that taken by Pennsylvania Attorney General Kathleen Kane.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS SCOUT SLIDE CONTINUES

(WNS)--According to NBC News, British Scouts can now recite a new "atheist" version of the Scout Oath that makes no mention of God or faith. The 106-year-old British Scouting Association's has until now required this pledge: "On my honor, I promise that I will do my best, to do my duty to God and to the Queen, to help other people and to keep the Scout Law." The new wording changes the first phrase to read: "I promise that I will do my best to uphold our Scout values." Wayne Bulpitt, U.K. Chief Commissioner of The Scouting Association, said, "Throughout its 106-year history the Movement has continued to evolve and today marks an important step in that journey. It also signifies the determination to become truly inclusive and relevant to all sections of society that it serves. We are a values-based movement and exploring faith and beliefs remains a key element of the Scouting Programme. That will not change." This non-change will go into effect in January 2014.



The Results of Revival

By Tom Ross
of South Point, Ohio



tokens of God's presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in families on account of salvation being brought to them; parents rejoicing over their children

as new born, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands. The goings of God were then seen in His sanctuary. God's day was a delight, and His tabernacles were amiable. Our public assemblies were then beautiful; the congregation was alive in God's service, every one earnestly intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth. The assembly in general were, from time to time, in tears while the word was preached; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors." (Cited by H. C. Fish, in *Handbook of Revivals*, pp. 23-24).

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psa. 42:1-2).

I think that the Psalmist gets right to the heart of my assigned subject. David had drank deeply from the well of salvation. He was a man after God's own heart who had tasted that Lord is gracious. He was a man of faith who had experienced the presence and power of God in a remarkable way on numerous occasions. Yet, he was also a man who had strayed from God through the wickedness of sin. He had fallen from the pinnacle of God's presence to the depths of despair causing him to cry out: **"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance"** (Psa. 42:5). He knew what it was to feel spiritually barren, dry, and chastened. He had been made to drink the bitter dregs of sin and feel the pangs of repentance. Yet there was an intense, inward, spiritual longing in his soul

that thirsted, panted, and craved for the presence and power of God to work in his life. This kind of insatiable longing for God, is in my estimation, the first fruits of a revived soul.

There is no doubt in my mind that there is a great and pressing need among God's people at this very hour to experience the power of a genuine Heaven-sent revival. I am not talking about a stirring of fleshly excitement that comes and goes. I am talking about a deep stirring of the soul by the power of the Holy Spirit. A rekindling of love and devotion for God, His Word, His church, and the souls of men. A revival of spirituality where there is a genuine hunger for God, a holy delight in worshiping Him, and a sincere longing to be holy as God is holy. Oh, that God would stir our hearts and minds to earnestly seek His glory! Oh, that He would give us enlightened eyes to see His supremacy and sovereignty, to live every day in sweet resignation to His Word and in submission to His Lordship! This renewed interest in pursuing the presence of God, basking in the light of His holy countenance, and being conformed to the image of Christ by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit is the essence of real revival. When this good work takes hold upon a child of God and a church it will impact and influence the souls of men and the communities in which they live. It will be a time of refreshing from the Lord. Souls will be rescued from the ravages of sin, relationships will be repaired, biblical morals restored, and the work of the Spirit will be renewed in our midst. No wonder the Psalmist fervently prayed: **"Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation. I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land"** (Psa. 85:6-9).

The results of revival are produced entirely by God. They are not conjured up by some magic formula devised by men. This is why we must fervently pray for God to send a great revival to our souls, our homes, our churches, and our world. **"Oh, that**

thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence" (Isa. 64:1-3).

As far as I can tell, the results of revival must be considered under three separate categories that build upon one another. First, there must be the personal revival of a child of God. When personal revival spreads it has a larger impact of corporate revival among the churches of the Lord. When corporate revival grows among churches it has a wider impact upon the culture and society at large and it becomes a community revival.

THE RESULTS OF PERSONAL REVIVAL REAL REPENTANCE

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa. 57:15).

1. Some may argue that repentance and contrition by God's people is the cause and not the result of revival. However, whenever God is pleased to send revival among His people the gift and exercise of genuine repentance is ongoing and evident.

2. When God's people are confronted with their worldliness, covetousness, prayerlessness, selfishness, idolatry, coldness, apathy, waywardness and disobedience they are made aware of the severity of their sins. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin and awakens God's children of their need to repent. They are made to understand their sin has caused distance between them and God. Isaiah 59:2 declares: **"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."** Sin not only blocks fellowship with God, it also stops the showers of blessing: **"...and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and**

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with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed... Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you" (Jer. 3:2-3; 5:25).

3. When revival sweeps over the soul there will be a sincere sorrow, conviction of sin, accompanied by confession of sin, and a forsaking of sin. Proverbs 28:13 states: **"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."** The light of God's holiness is shined upon the heart illuminating the need to change course and repent. Revival brings repentance and restoration of fellowship to walk in the light of God's grace in an honest, transparent way. I John 1:6-9 declares: **"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

4. Wherever there is revival you will also find real repentance, a turning from sin unto God. Where there is genuine repentance there will be a new openness and transparency in our fellowship with God. Psalm 139:23-24 reveals the attitude of a repentant and revived saint of God: **"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."** Those who experience the power and glory of revival are more sensitive about offending the Almighty. Sin in all its forms becomes exceedingly sinful and sincere repentance is a daily exercise that yields the precious fruit of closeness to God.

A Mr. Kemp describes a prayer meeting he attended during the Welsh Revival of 1907:

"A deep conviction of sin, even where the outward life appeared blameless. Nothing has been so remarkable as the searching of heart and the revealing of the 'hidden things.' Many things thought to be right have been seen to be wrong and sinful.

At one never to be forgotten prayer meeting, as we were approaching midnight, a request for prayer was made by one, that grace might be granted to give up an unconverted sweetheart. No fewer than four similar cases were the subjects of prayer that night, and in each case these unholy attachments were dropped. To many, 'sin does not appear sin'; but in few things does sin hide its true colors more effectively than in the matter of the 'unequal yoke.' For a child of God, be they man or woman, to allow the affections to be placed upon one who is unconverted, is to commit no light offence against the plain teaching of the Word of God, and must bring with it a whole horde of sorrows. Thank God, many during these weeks of quickening have had shown to them the sinfulness of that line of action, and grace has been given to forsake the evil way.

Others have been convicted of prayerlessness, indolence, worldliness, temper, bitterness, and so on. Here the 'Doctrine of doubtful things' applies. A thing which may have been in itself perfectly lawful, has been abandoned because it stood in the way of full surrender and wholehearted consecration." (pp. 128-129 in *Heart Cry for Revival* by Stephen Olford).

RENEWAL OF FOCUS

"Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:9-10).

1. Another result of personal revival is a genuine renewal of focus upon God, His will, His glory, and His way of holiness. In the post-modern Christian era it seems as though it is so easy to lose our sense of purpose in the Christian life. The minds and hearts of many are distracted by gimmicks, gadgets, and gizmos that vie for our time and attention. How many have made television, sports, I-phones, I-pads, the internet, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and a whole host of other THINGS the main focus

of their life? In essence, we have embraced so many THINGS, that they have become idols that crowd out our time for God, His Word, the prayer closet, witnessing, and worship. Take an honest look at how you spend your hours, days, weeks, and years! How much time is devoted to the very THINGS that distract us from our real purpose in life? How often do we exhaust ourselves in the pursuit of pleasure, popularity, and possessions to the point that we have little or no time for what is really important? To make matters even worse, we often render mere lip service and half-hearted devotion to the things of God. We are often satisfied with giving God the leftovers of our life which is condemned by Scripture. Deuteronomy 17:1 declares: **"Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness: for that is an abomination unto the LORD thy God."** Paul's desire for the Corinthian believers was that they might renew their focus: **"...and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction"** (I Cor. 7:35).

2. When revival sweeps over a child of God his heart and spirit will be renewed with a laser focus on glorifying God. God's will and purpose becomes the primary focus of a revived heart. Everything else takes second place. Psalm 119:10 expresses the heart-cry of a revived soul: **"With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments."** All of our affections, desires, and inward attitudes will seek the glory and honor of God! Jesus commanded us to: **"...Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"** (Matt. 6:33). Colossians 3:1-2, 17, 23 commands: **"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth...And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him...And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."** A similar exhortation is recorded in I Corinthians 10:31:

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Personal revival gives a child of God spiritual eyesight that is focused upon what pleases God instead of pleasing himself.

H.C. Fish commented on this renewal of focus during times of revival:

"For an engagedness like that would transform one's whole being into a living power for good. The whole depends, under God, upon whether we will act, henceforth, under the constant presence of a high purpose to live, not unto ourselves, but unto the Lord...So only let the manifold energies of one's being be molten into a single force, by the potent heat of a mighty purpose to serve God always and in all, and that holy and steady resolve will shape a life invincible by aught except almightiness itself." (p. 421, *Handbook of Revivals*).

3. Paul the apostle exemplified a consistent attitude of entire devotion of His being and his spiritual focus on the glory of Christ and His service. Philippians 3:7-8, 13-14 declare: **"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ... Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."** Oh, that God would grant us the same singleness of purpose! Oh, that every fiber of our being would be entirely consecrated to God's glory and focused on pleasing our Lord! May God be pleased to renew our focus, open our eyes to His will, and enable us to consistently walk in the way of holiness.

RESURGENCE OF LOVE TO GOD

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). **"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."**

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Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:4-5).

1. The two verses quoted above show the negative effects of coldness, apathy, indifference, and lack of love in our spiritual lives. Declension in love for God may be the greatest hindrance to personal and corporate revival. When our hearts are lacking in love our churches will be cold and lifeless. Where love is lacking every spiritual exercise will be dull, boring, and tedious. Where love is lacking we will merely go through the motions of religion. However, where God's children are exercising repentance and renewing their focus on the glory of God, there will be a resurgence of love to God. Hearts will be inflamed with love and churches will be filled with revival fires that will spread.

2. Can you not recall the early days of your conversion to Christ? Do you remember how fresh and powerful the love of God was to your soul? Remember when the love of God was shed abroad in your heart by the grace of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5)? Your love for God and devotion to Christ was so powerful you were willing to do anything, go anywhere, and obey any command that would exalt the name of the One who loved you and gave Himself for you. Nothing was too hard to do for Christ. You loved the Lord, His Word, His church, His people, and the souls of men. Reading the Word was a delight to your soul. Every new discovery of truth brought rejoicing to your heart and practical application in your life. Prayer was a time to talk to God as you poured out your heart to God in sweet communion. Each day you looked for opportunities to share Christ with others. You longed for each time the church doors opened so you could go to the house of the Lord and worship with your brothers and sisters in Christ. You loved to hear the Word preached in power. You were careful not to offend God or others with your behavior. You carefully guarded your heart so that nothing would come

between you and the Lord of glory. Your burning desire was to serve the Lord with every fiber of your being. Dear saint of God, have you left your first love? Have you allowed your heart to grow cold and iniquity to abound in your life?

Listen to the sage wisdom of Octavious Winslow offering instruction on how to return to your first love:

"Lord, I come to thee. I am a backslider, a wanderer, a prodigal. I have strayed from thee like a lost sheep. My love has waxed cold, my steps have slackened in the path of holy obedience; my mind has yielded to the corrupting, deadening influence of the world, and my affections have wandered in quest of other and earthly objects of delight. But, behold, I come unto thee." (p. 31, *Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul*).

3. When personal revival comes to the heart there will be a renewed and vigorous application of Matthew 22:37-38: **"..Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."** How powerful would it be if God's children expressed their love for God and others on a daily basis through cheerful obedience to His commands? What if all of our affections, all our inward desires, all of our thoughts were fully committed to loving God and others? When our hearts are full to overflowing with love to God it will have a lasting impact upon our homes, churches, workplace, and community!

Octavious Winslow wrote:

"There is nothing indolent in the nature of true love; it is not an inert, sluggish principle: where it dwells in the heart in a healthy and vigorous state, it constrains the believer to live not to himself, but unto Him who loved and gave Himself for him; it awakes the soul to watchfulness, sets it upon the work of frequent self-examination, influences it to prayer, daily walking in the precepts, acts of kindness, benevolence, and charity, all springing from love to God, and flowing in a channel of love to man." (p. 46, *ibid*).

4. It is not hard to discover why

we are not consistently experiencing personal revival. It may be that we love ourselves, the world, and pleasure more than we love God. Our affections are misplaced. We have divided hearts. We think we can serve God and mammon at the same time. We justify our sins because we are in love with them more than God. We are satisfied with mediocrity and the status quo of mere religiosity. Oh, that God would flood our souls with a resurgence of love so that we may say with the Shulamite girl: **"..I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love...My beloved is white and ruddy, and chiefest among ten thousand...His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend..."** (Song of Sol. 2:3-4; 5:10, 16).

REJUVENATION OF PERSONAL PRAYER LIFE

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not" (Jer. 33:3).

1. When personal revival takes hold prayer will no longer be viewed as a duty to be endured. Prayer time will not merely be another check beside the list of things we need to do. We will no longer go through the motions as we commune with our Heavenly Father. The heavens will no longer seem as brass. We will not continue to repeat the same prayers with dull monotony day after day. No longer will our prayers be faithless with little or no expectation of being answered. No longer will our prayers be self-willed or filled with carnal requests. Such lifeless, faithless, fruitless prayer wearies the Almighty according to Isaiah 1:12, 14-15: **"When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?...Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."**

Octavious Winslow made a keen observation regarding prayer:

"Prayer is the spiritual pulse of the renewed soul; its beat indicates the healthy or unhealthy state of the believer. Just as the physician would decide upon the health of the body from the action of the pulse, so would we decide upon the spiritual health of the soul before God, by the estimation

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BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 9-1-2013 to 9-31-2013

Beginning Balance	\$6,882.04
RECEIPTS:	
Ben & Linda Flkes, Fulton, MS	25.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	200.00
.....	550.00
TOTAL	7,432.04
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	363.98
TEAC Recorder repair	154.80
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$518.78
.....	\$6,913.26
interest (May & August)	+ .05
ENDING BALANCE	\$6,913.31

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance	\$123.72
RECEIPTS:	
TOTAL	123.72
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT	160.00
ENDING DEFICIT	\$-36.28
(Corbin fund closed---all moved to general fund)	

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 9-1-2013 to 9-31-2013

Beginning Balance	\$2,320.32
RECEIPTS:	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX	50.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	25.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	313.45
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	150.00
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	200.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Grinter Heights B. C., Kansas City, KS	500.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
King Mitchell, Surveyor, WV	50.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM	100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	25.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
Parkway Landmark B. C., Springfield, OR	100.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Pumerville, AR	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	162.00
Anonymous	1,200.00
Dividing checks	226.00
Sub Total	\$4,296.45
TOTAL	\$6,616.77
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	535.00
Postage	644.56
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.96
Supplies	47.08
Dividing checks	172.95
Total Expenditures	\$3,875.55
.....	2,741.22
Bank charge	-13.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$2,728.22

Results of Revival

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in which prayer is held by the believer. If the soul is in a spiritually healthy, growing state, prayer will be vigorous, lively, spiritual, and constant; if, on the contrary, and incipient process of declension is going forward in the soul--if the heart is wandering, and love waxeth cold, and faith is decaying, the spirit and the habit of prayer will immediately betray it." (p. 94, *ibid*).

3. Every revival of record has been bathed in prayer. I recently read about a poll taken from pastors in 1979 that revealed the average time spent in prayer was only three minutes a day. That poll was taken over 30 years ago and I shudder to think what the results would reveal in our day! Prayer-less pastors give way to powerless pulpits and problems in the pews. Could it be that the inroads of worldliness, sexual immorality, apathy, and coldness in our churches stem from the sin of prayerlessness? Take a hard look at your personal prayer life. Examine the interest or lack thereof in the Wednesday night prayer meeting in most churches. We are living in a day when many churches don't even have prayer meeting, or if they do it has been reduced to a time of entertainment rather than prayer. Oh that God would grace us with a rejuvenated prayer life so that we may say with the Psalmist: "As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55:16-17).

Stephen Olford wrote:

"It is my profound conviction that prayerlessness is the outstanding sin of the church of Jesus Christ today. The least popular and the worst attended gathering so often is the prayer meeting. Since the church is made up of individuals, the question comes back to you and me: What about prayerlessness in your life, in my life?" (p. 43, *Heart-Cry for Revival*).

3. When real revival sweeps across hearts prayer becomes a delight to the soul. There will be a spontaneity and spirituality in our prayer lives. There will be a renewed sense of familiarity with God that enables us to come boldly to the throne of grace. We will

begin to look forward to the special times that we are able to spend on our knees pouring out our hearts to the Almighty. We will relish each moment spent in the secret place of the Most High. We will look at prayer as an attitude of the heart where we must abide, rather than merely a posture that we occupy for minutes at a time. There will be a greater confidence in God's provision and protection. Psalm 91:1-3 declares: **"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence."**

4. During times of personal revival the power of prayer is demonstrated. Would not it be a wonderful thing to be a part of if we witnessed the power of prayer as manifested in the early churches? Acts 4:31-33 records: **"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."**

I again refer to the results of the Welsh Revival of 1907 as recounted by Mr. Kemp:

"Another feature is the prolonged intercession sometimes for hours. Our usual seven o'clock prayer meeting, held every Lord's Day morning, has

for several weeks commenced at six o'clock and continued until eight o'clock. The 5:45 p.m. prayer meeting starts at 5:30, and such has been the power of God in the meetings that it has been impossible to get to the open air at the usual hour...Then again at 9:30 p.m. after the Lord's Day work is over, about sixty have met again for prayer, and continued until after midnight.

Not only have lengthened meetings been a feature of the work, but the gift of prolonged intercession has been given to several brethren. Losing all consciousness of another's presence, the soul has poured itself out, often audibly, for over an hour. One brother, unknown to any of us prayed in agony for the people of his own town for fully an hour and a half. The perspiration was standing on his brow like beads. He was almost too weak to stand when the hour came for closing the chapel, and was literally lifted from his position." (pp. 129-130, *ibid*).

May God be pleased to fill us with a spirit of prayer and supplication characterized by fervency, earnestness, and power. James 5:16-18 declares: **"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availed much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."** Oh that God would raise up some Elijahs in our day to pray for the heavens to open and rain revival down upon our homes, churches, and society at large!

♦ (Continued in the next issue)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Caldwell, Kansas will be hosting their Annual Bible Conference November 1st -Nov 3rd. This year they will be having a "Missions Conference." Expected speakers are: Jerry Dodson, Jim Duke, Timothy B. Hille, Timothy J. Hille, Jimmy Nelson, David O'Neal, & Larry Wilson.

If you have any questions please contact Pastor Nathaniel R. Hille: nhille@gmail.com or visit their website: www.sgbccaldwell.org or by phone: (620) 845-3624.

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

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

The Liverpool Independent Baptist Church of Liverpool, New York (north of Syracuse) is searching for a sovereign grace pastor. The church believes in the doctrines of grace, the local church, and is pre-trib and pre-mil. Interested brethren should contact Bro. Greg Sigworth at (315) 677-3819.

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

The Glade Creek Baptist Church, Summersville, WV, is in need of a pastor. This church believes and preaches the doctrines of grace and church truth. Any interested Elder should call Bro. Rodney Perkins at (304) 742-3050, or Bro. Allen Frame at (304) 742-5775.

The Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Marion, IL is in need of a replacement pastor. Any interested Elder may contact Elder Ellis at (618) 983-8697, or Bro. Gary Ratley at (618) 841-0228.

The Twinbrook Hills Baptist Church of Hamilton, OH is prayerfully seeking a pastor. Please contact Bro. Chris Willis at Elohimfirst@gmail.com for more information.

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