# Waiting for A Sign

By Paul Stepp of Indore, West Virginia

My text is found in Matthew 16:1-4. "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern



the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a

sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed."

Most men generally require tangible physical proof, or evidence, before he or she will believe in <a href="https://www.continued.org/">(Continued on page 2)</a>

# Halting Between Two Opinions

By Christopher W. Burke, Sr. of Catlettsburg, Kentucky

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word" (I Kings 18:21).

#### INTRODUCTION

Our text is from the Old Testament account of Elijah on Mount Carmel, where he rebuked the children of Israel for worshiping and following



the idol Baal. Israel wanted to worship and serve the true God of Heaven and the gods of the heathen at the same time. But Elijah told

them that they just could not do that and get by with it. The true God of Heaven (Israel's God) does not permit His people to worship idols at all (Exodus 20:1-5).

The story continues with the • (Continued on page 10)

# Jesus Paid It All

By Milburn R. Cockrell (1941 – 2002)

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Cor. 6:20).

"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men" (I Cor. 7:23).

There was a redeeming and ransoming aspect to the atonement of Jesus Christ. He redeemed us with the price of His



own precious blood. It is wrong to fail to see a commercial aspect in the atonement, but we must see more than this.

We must see that this price was demanded by the holiness and justice of God. I understand the Bible to teach that Jesus Christ • (Continued on page 6)

# Despondent, Depressed, Deceived

By E. D. Strickland (1915 - 2003)

These are picturing words which sometimes even describe Gods' choice people. Not every time, but sometimes a saint is driven down to despair by the hand of our adversary, the Devil or Satan.

God gives us some good advice in I Peter 5:8. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

It is good to notice here this text or verse, but also the context. Take note of what comes just before and just after verse 8.



Care, concern or worry is the subject of Verse 7. We are to leave things beyond our control in the mighty hands

of a sovereign God since He has already been taking care of us, even before we trusted Him.

If misery loves company, then we have such in verse 9. Other brethren are suffering the same affliction as we are experiencing. In verse 10, we see the God of all grace available to perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle us.

Verse 8 will remind us that we • (Continued on page 2)



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

# Despondent

(Continued from page 1) &

have an evil adversary to attack us and if possible to swallow us up with despair and deceit. Our responsibility is not to resign at Satan, but to resist him steadfast in verse 9.

Satan's will is to swallow us up with a state of depression (hopelessness and discouragement) by means of deceit (deliberate misleading).

We must resist such testing. Faith in Gods' care for us is the great antidote lest we be devoured with, or swallowed up with undue worry.

The devil uses discouragement and depressive experiences to swallow up our Christian joy in Christ and hamper our influence and Godly effectiveness in practical living.

Is it God's revealed will for us as His children to be in a state of despondency, depression, and deception? Is it not the will and desire of Satan rather than our heavenly Father?

For us to be victorious here in the pilgrim journey through this evil world, we need to know our enemy.

A minister visited Mexico to see a bull fight. He said he was unimpressed, except with one thing. "The bull seemed never to have realized who his enemy was." The matador would have had little opportunity for success without the red flag of deception. When God's people "read through the innumerable deceptions of Satan, he, our arch-enemy, will have little success in leading us into a weak state of hopelessness and despair. (Scripture Notes, September 1984).

# AND END

# Waiting for A Sign

(Continued from page 1) &

something that is not normal, or unusual. The saying, "see it to believe it" is applicable to most men. And yet, all around us we are taking things for granted. Certain realities, that we assume, oftentimes based only on the fact that things have been this way before, and therefore will be this way again. For instance, the sun came up today (and many days before) so the sun will come up tomorrow. Or, the seasons changed last year (and so many years before) so the seasons will continue to change this year. Even in regard to the weather: the rain comes, the rain goes; the sun shines, the clouds return. Based on previous experiences we have firm expectations that things will continue as they have in the

And yet, when it comes to spiritual matters, or when it comes to intangible beliefs or faith in God, men will refuse to believe, will refuse to accept the truth, and will lapse into a never-ending cycle of "I will not believe it unless I see it with my own eyes." Without some sort of visual or first-hand experience of such indiscernible realities and truths, natural man will argue, deny, and even resist the allimportant fact that there is a God, and the inevitable accompanying certainty that men will answer to such a God.

I want to consider for a while the dangers of doubting God, questioning His Word, or seeking to devise a religion that functions or succeeds without submitting to God. We have examples in the Scriptures of such behaviors. The Lord gives us an example in our text passage. It would be good for us to consider such poor behavior, and the failures of men, even

(Continued on page 3)

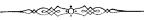
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# Waiting for A Sign

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religious men, when it comes to acknowledging God and His Word. It would be good for us to be reminded that God is Who He says He is, and God will do what He says He will do. We, as God's people, must be ready to believe, ready to serve, and ready to praise our God and Saviour. Indeed, the man who waits all his days for a sign that is sufficient to satisfy his mortal mind of God's existence, of man's need for a Saviour, and of Jesus Christ as that Saviour; will certainly die in his sins, and will never be saved: a purely natural and mortal man and mind cannot believe, no matter the signs that are granted.

#### THE JEWS DESIRED A SIGN

Something that the Bible makes very clear to us, is that the Jews were in the habit of desiring or requiring signs before that they would believe. This is something that would be considered typical of most men and is not unexpected when natural men and women are confronted with spiritual truths, or invisible proofs of God. The Jews had a very works oriented religion. They tended to trust in the real and solid results of the works of their own hands. And yet, is it not interesting that they made this mistake to imagine that mortal and physical deeds, when done with a degree of moral superiority, could somehow result in a salvation that would be effective in a spiritual and eternal fashion?

Sadly, the Jews were caught up in this works-type religion. They looked for physical evidences and counted on material or physically tangible proofs before they would believe or place their trust in a person or a concept. We read the words of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 1:22, "For the Jews

require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom." Let us also notice a couple of verses in the Gospel of John. We read in John 2:18, "Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" We read also in John 6:30, "They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?"

In reality, is it not true, that any religion which is based on human effort and human goodness and human worth and human works, will, necessarily, be based upon a literal and physical desire to touch and feel the proof of salvation? For this reason the heathen peoples have always had literal and real and physical idols. For this reason the confused and misled in Christianity have always desired visible and noticeable tasks or words that they could do or say so that they could base their salvation on

those real and tangible and physical evidences. "Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John 4:48). People do good deeds to save themselves, or to prove their own righteousness. People, even religious people, are caught up in signs and evidences to prove what is not visible.

Why else would people depend upon sacraments for their salvation? Why else would people condescend to the will of the priests and popes of this world? Why else would people make baptism to be a part of salvation? Truly, this is not different from the Jews. Truly, these folks are just like that wicked and adulterous generation that sought after a sign.

# THE LORD GAVE THEM MANY SIGNS

Though the Jews did not deserve it; and though Jesus did not have to comply with their demands; Jesus did give them many signs as to His identity and His purpose. Now, I know that Jesus did deny the Jews the sign that they desired. "And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation" (Mark 8:10-12). However, during the course of His ministry, He just naturally said and did things that proved to be signs of the Messiah and of His deity and of the salvation that He accomplished. His very words; His very behavior; His very works; taken as a whole, these provided the greatest and clearest of signs; tangible proof of the existence and the power of God.

In our text verses, when the Lord Jesus Christ refers to the sign of the prophet Jonas, he is referring to the events that took place in the time of Jonah. Earlier, in this same gospel, He mentioned the same prophet (Jonah), and the same sign (the whale): "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up



# Waiting for A Sign

(Continued from page 3) &

in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. 12:38-42). The Lord would do many signs before them. He had already done many in their presence. These proved His identity, gave authority to His ministry, and by all rights demanded an obedience and acceptance of the leaders of the Jewish religion. But, these signs would be ignored or refused. And yet, there was one sign which was yet coming which would be testified by many, that is the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Jonah was three days in the whale, so Jesus Christ would be three days in the earth, and then He would come forth. This sign would be believed by some, but would, again, be refused by most. Though, in the end, the wicked and adulterous generation of non-believers would be utterly condemned as a result of their refusal to believe in Jesus; believe in His death, burial, and resurrection as will all of those who reject Him today.

#### CHRISTIANS DO NOT WAIT FOR A SIGN

Those that are truly saved by the grace of God, must realize that our salvation is not of this world. Therefore, the evidences or signs of our Saviour and of our salvation, must not, necessarily, be of this physical world. Remember, the Lord Jesus Christ told Pilate, just before He was to be crucified, "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" (John 18:36). I personally think that Pilate was a man that had a sort of physical belief (or suspicion?) that Jesus was the Christ, or the King of the Jews. And, I believe that his interrogation of Jesus Christ was Pilate's attempt to garner some sort of sign or confession or announcement or proclamation from Jesus, as to His identity or purpose. However, in the end, all that Jesus gives him is the sublime truth that My kingdom is not of this world. Since the kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world, it is safe to assume that the signs and proofs of our citizenship and of our King, are not either of this world.

Let me give you the man, Thomas, as an example. Remember that the Lord Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, did appear to the disciples in person on the first day of the week, after He arose from the grave. However, Thomas was not there in attendance (See John 20:19-24). So, when the other disciples inform Thomas of the Lord's appearance unto them, Thomas replies this way: "... Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Thomas was still looking for a physical and tangible sign was he not? Well, let us read what the next few verses tell us: "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto

him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:26-29). In the end, Thomas understood that the physical proof was not necessary and all that was needed was the faith that comes from God.

I believe that this is what Paul is referring to when he says, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:14-17). Our need for physical proof of Christ is swallowed up in the faith to believe in Him, which is granted to us by God. Our mortal doubts that might be normally associated with spiritual happenings and eternal matters, is overcome by the hope and certainty that all that God has promised us is true, and that Jesus is the Christ, and that He is our Saviour. We do not need the proofs other men need. We do not need the signs the Jews sought after. We have been changed, we have been made new, and the born again spirit within us is eager and ready to believe in the spiritual realities that accompany the gift of salva-

#### CONCLUSION

Let us return to John chapter 20, and let us pick up where we left off in the account of the Lord's appearance unto Thomas and the other

disciples. We read in John 20:30-31, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." I have spent a little bit of time telling you that physical and tangible signs are not necessary for one to believe on Jesus Christ. And I have spent a little bit of time telling you that our salvation is not of this world, and therefore the physical nature of the religion of man will not save any man or woman.

And yet, here we read, at the conclusion of this chapter, that Jesus did many signs in the presence of His disciples. And, further, we read that these signs are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name. What does John mean? Well, I want you to know that the signs that are written here in this gospel of John and in the Bible as a whole, will not save anyone, on their own. In fact, these words have been recorded for centuries, and yet the entire world has not believed. Does not the world seek after signs? And does not John say that these signs are written so that we might be saved? The truth is this: folks will not see or believe the signs that are written in this Gospel and in this Book, unless these signs and these words and this Gospel is accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit and the faith that comes from God. The writer to the Hebrews says this: "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:2).

(Continued on page 6)

# Little Hills By Nathaniel Hille of Plant City, Florida "... and the little hills rejoice on every side" (Psalms 65:12).



#### SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON - BIBLE SURVEY #7 EXODUS

TEXT: Exodus 1:1-14

DEVOTIONAL READING: Exodus 3:1-22

SUGGESTED HYMN: Let My People Go; When I See the Blood

AIM: An Over-View of the Book of Exodus.

INTRODUCTION—The book gets its name from its contents. Israel is called out by God to EXIT Egypt and go to Canaan, the land God promised Abraham. Explain to the students how Israel came down into Egypt (Gen. 50) [might be good to locate Egypt on a map in relation to Israel]. Then show how generations have gone by until the beginning of Exodus (Ex. 1:7-14). The Egyptians grew fearful of them and made slaves out of the children of Israel. Israel began to cry out unto the Lord God. He heard their cries and came down to deliver them. This is all in type of how that in Christ Jesus, God has come down to deliver us from our sins when we cry to Him. "For whosoever shall call [cry] upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

I. THE AUTHOR: We believe that Moses is the human author. Many N.T. references point to Moses as the human writer of this book (Luke 24:44). Exodus is the 2<sup>nd</sup> book in the Bible, and belongs to the Pentateuch. The Book of Exodus contains 40 chapters.

II. MAIN THEME: God's Deliverance, God's Deliverer, Delivering the people of God from bondage. God's deliverer is Moses. He is a type of the Lord Jesus (II Cor.1:10). God's people are the nation of Israel. They are a type of those whom God saves from sin. The slavery of Egypt is a type of how we are enslaved in the bondage of sin.

III. KEY VERSE: Ex. 3:8—"And I [the Lord] am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites." Herein is the whole of the book of Exodus contained.

IV. DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK: There are many different ways to divide the Book of Exodus. But we shall observe three main divisions:

- 1. Israel in Egypt: Ex.1:1-15:27—The events are: we find Israel in bondage; the birth of Moses, the deliverer; the call of Moses; Moses appears before Pharoah; the 10 plagues; God delivers Israel, and the song of Moses.
- 2. From the Red Sea to Sinai: Ex.16:1-18:27—Here God leads the people of Israel by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He leads them this way for He has many things to teach them before they get to the land that they were promised. See Map.
- 3. Israel AT Sinai: Ex. 19:1-40:38—These chapters take place at Mt. Sinai. There Moses receives the 10 Commandments, the pattern for the ark, the tabernacle, the garments of the priest and high priest, the

contents of the tabernacle for the people to worship the LORD.

V. THE NAMES & TYPES OF GOD: The Book of Exodus is very symbolic. There are many types of the Lord revealed to us in this book. This list is not all inclusive. Observe—

- 1. Moses: Moses is a depiction of the One who would come to deliver God's people. Cp. Ex. 3:10 and Luke 19:10
- 2. I AM: Ex. 3:13-14—This is the name of God that teachers us His eternalness. He always is. It is the name that He promised Abraham and that which Christ Jesus was (John 8:58).
- 3. Paschal Lamb: The Lamb that was slain on the night of the Passover is a type of the Lamb of God whose blood was shed for the remission of our sins (John 1:29); The Lamb was slain and the blood was applied to the door posts and top post of the house. God said, "and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:13). Such is true of Christ. Jesus was sent by God to save His people from their sins by faith in Him. The blood of Christ, which was shed at Calvary for the remission of our sins, is applied to our account. And when God sees the blood He knows that the perfect, sinless, righteous blood of Christ has paid the penalty (death) for our sins (Heb. 10:10-14; I Cor. 5:6-7; I Peter 1:18-19).
- 4. Pillar of cloud/fire: Ex.13:21-22—God led the people. He also protected them. In desert sun, He was a cloud. In desert cold, He was a fire which also gave them light. He did not take this away, showing He led them faithfully.
- 5. Jehovah-Raffa: Ex. 15:26—"The LORD that healeth thee." Here God led the people to a place where the water was bitter. There God showed Moses a tree and had him cast it in the water. The water became sweet. The Lord is able to make that which is bitter in our lives become sweet, when viewed in light of the grace of God at Calvary
- 6. Manna: Ex. 16:14,15—Manna is that bread which came down from Heaven for God's people to eat daily. Manna is typical of the Lord Jesus who is the Bread from Heaven (John 6:32-35).
- 7. The Rock: Ex.17:5-7—The people of God were thirsty, but there was nowhere for them to get water. God told Moses I want you to go to a certain Rock (think of a giant cliff). God told Moses to strike the Rock and "there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink."

This is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ from Whom comes everlasting water (John 7:37-38; I Cor. 10:4).

(Nathaniel Hille is pastor of the Bible Baptist Church of Plant City, Florida.)



"Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them" (Luke 4:40).

# Waiting for A Sign Jesus Paid It All

(Continued from page 4) &

The signs of Jesus' deity and the proofs of His identity as the Christ have always been there; natural men have just been blind to them. When these signs and proofs have been presented to rebellious men, these men have deliberately denied their existence.

So, let us get back to the Gospel of Matthew. Remember, the Lord Jesus told the Jews that Jonah and the whale's belly was a sign unto the Ninevites and they repented and believed. And, the wisdom of Solomon was a sign unto the Queen of Sheba and she believed. In like manner, Jesus Christ and His life, death, burial, and resurrection, was a sign unto the Jews of His generation and they did not believe. In reality, the Gospels and the Word of God, full of signs as they are, will serve to condemn the world of men that reject Jesus Christ and the Father in Heaven. And, as Jesus said, the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba who believed the signs that were given unto them will rise up in judgment against all of the wicked and sinful race of mankind.

Praise be to God, that the Lord Jesus Christ has sent His Holy Spirit into the world. Praise be to God, that I have been led to Christ, and have been given faith in Him. How beautiful these signs are now that Jesus Christ has been revealed to me! How many times must I have missed and passed over the beautiful Scriptures, yet now they are real and beautiful unto me. I pray that God will deal with you in the same way, so that the signs that have before been hidden will be shown unto you also.

(Paul Stepp is pastor of the Indore Baptist Church of Indore, West Virginia.)



(Continued from page 1) >

paid to the justice of God a full equivalent for the sufferings the elect would have endured if they had suffered the penalty of the

The meaning of a price is clearly set forth in Leviticus 25:47-49. The idea in Scripture is to deliver a person by paying the price for which he is held in captivity. Sin is like a slave market where sinners are "sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). Christ by His death buys sinners out of the slave market. He sets the slave free by paying the price owed to the owner. This payment causes complete deliverance from the service of sin and demands complete obedience Liberator.

#### **MATTHEW 20:28**

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." William Tyndale renders the last part of the verse: "...to give his life for a redemption of many." Christ came into the world to give up His life to the justice of God. His life was at His own disposal (John 10:17-18). He had not forfeited it by some act of sin. He laid down a sinless life for the redemption price of His people.

"A ransom" is in the Greek lutron, and it denotes "a means of loosing." It is commonly employed in the papyri as the price paid for a slave who is then set free by the one who bought him. Jesus Christ gave His own life as the price of freedom for the slaves of sin. The preposition (anti) means "instead of," and it involves a substitution, or a vicarious death when used of the death of Christ. The ransom holds good for all those for whom Christ paid the redemption price. Christ's life actually redeemed

a people from the power of sin and spiritual death. Christ put Himself in our place; He laid Himself under obligation to pay our debts. Jesus paid it all!

Those He redeemed are said to be "many." "Many" may be a great multitude, but "many" is not all men without exception. Some die in their sins and suffer in Hell. These were not redeemed by the life of Christ. The "many" Jesus gave His life for are the "many" ordained to eternal life (Acts 13:48), the "many" the Father gave Him to save in the covenant of redemption (John 17:2). "Many" in Matthew 20:28 can mean no more than the "many" who are actually released from the captivity of sin and who do not suffer for their sins in Hell.

#### I CORINTHIANS 1:30

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Note that Christ Jesus is "made unto us. . .redemption." The word "redemption" is the Greek word (apolutrosis) which means "to ransom in full," or literally "a releasing on payment of a ransom." Christ was foreordaining to obtain eternal redemption for sin and Satan by paying the price of His precious blood.

Some able scholars believe that redemption in this verse refers to the day of the redemption of our bodies at the second coming of Christ. This may be the case. If this be the correct meaning, then it declares that the same ones Jesus ransomed from the law by His blood are also ransomed from the graves by glorification. This is a real redemption. There is no such thing as Jesus paying the price for one and that same one not being released from the prison of the grave. If Christ is made redemption for all men

without exception, then all men without exception will be saved and glorified.

#### **GALATIANS 3:13**

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." The word "redeem" in the Greek (exagorazo) means "to purchase, to buy back, to ransom." It directs the mind to the fact that Christ purchased us from the curse of the law. The death of Christ was the price paid for His people's redemption from the curse of the moral law of God (Gal. 4:4-5). This presupposes the idea that we were under the curse of the violated law, and that after Christ redeemed us we are no longer under that curse (Rom. 8:1). Here again is real redemption from the curse of the law. Jesus paid it all!

How did Christ achieve our redemption? He "became a curse for us." What a statement! Christ anathema! Christ was born under the law, but He did not incur its curse, because He was "the Righteous One" (Acts 3:14). He passed under its curse voluntarily for redemptive purposes. Being the Surety of His people, He stood in their law stead and place, and having our sins charged to Him, He was answerable for them. The Father spared Him not and sent the sword of justice against Him (Isa. 53:10; Zech. 13:7). The completeness of Christ's satisfaction is seen here. Those Christ bore the dreadful curse for shall never be cursed by the law of God. If Christ became a curse for all men without exception, then all men are freed from the curse of the law. We know this is not true. Hence it is better to limit the extent of the atonement than to limit its power.

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# Small Drops

By Joseph M. Sidders of Temperance, Michigan

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God" (Deuteronomy 32:2-3).



#### FOLLOW THE LEADER

I remember playing some pretty intense games of "follow the leader" when I was little. My little brother and I played often, and these games could go on for hours as long as the "leader" led well. Inevitably, when the leader decided he did not want to play the game anymore, or the followers decided they did not want to follow, the fun quickly came to an end.

In Luke 9:57-62, we see an illustration of a proper follower (or disciple). Jesus encounters three men who claim they will follow Him "whithersoever He goest." To the first man Jesus says "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" illustrating the disciples need to always be ready to go where the Leader calls him. We never hear of this man again.

The second man who seeks to follow Jesus said he first needed to go and tend to the burial of his father. Jesus says to him, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." While this may seem harsh, realize beloved, this follower was seeking to be Christ-like. In so doing, Jesus commissioned him to preach the kingdom of God; what good is tending to one who has already passed? To be like Christ means we are to preach to the living. We are to share the truth of everlasting life that can only be found in Jesus.

The third man said he would follow after Jesus, but first looked the other way to a celebration of his own. Would Jesus wait for this man to be ready to go? What cost would it be to the kingdom if more time were lost in sharing the good news? To him, Jesus said "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Playing "follow the leader" requires two participants: a tireless leader who always stays out front, and followers who go where he Revelation 7:15-17 says, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

In a society full of personal agendas and flippant assumptions, it is important now, more than ever, to consider what you follow with your time, attention, and money. Where do your feet step? Where do your eyes wander? Are you following paths of righteousness led by Jesus Christ? May you be ready to go when Jesus calls; may you follow what the Lord has for your life without looking longingly at what you think you are missing. Where He leads, do you follow?

(Joseph Sidders is pastor of the Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Temperance, Michagan.)



# Jesus Paid It All

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#### **EPHESIANS 1:7**

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." The antecedent of the pronoun "whom" is "the beloved," or Jesus Christ, in verse 6. In Ephesians 1:7 we are told what redemption is. It is "the forgiveness of sins." These phrases mutually explain each other. Redemption is a setting free of the guilt and penalty of sins. The guilt of sin is an unpaid debt. When we are forgiven the debt is canceled. The original sense of the word "forgiveness" is not some sort of imperfect forgiveness, but it is a sending away of our sins---treating them as they had never been---a remembering of them no

The word "redemption" there is the thought of deliverance effected by the payment of a ransom which results in the sending away of the sins of those for whom the ransom price was paid. In the Greek it reads "the redemption." "The article makes it emphatic---the great redemption, the real redemption, compared to which all other redemptions are but shadows" (W. G. Blaikie on Ephesians in *Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 20, p. 3).

Redemption implies payment. Paul tells us that this redemption is through Christ's blood. A blood redemption is a proper propitiation or expiation, for blood is always the emblem of expiation (Heb. 9:22). The guilt and stain of sin can only be removed by the blood of Jesus.

This blood redemption in Christ is "according to the riches of his grace." The forgiveness of sins is a free act of sovereign grace. Pure grace provided the necessary

price for our redemption. Christ our Ransom is given to us as the greatest gift from the treasury of Divine grace.

#### I TIMOTHY 2:6

"Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." The words for "a ransom **for all"** (antilutron huper panton) speaks of a price which was paid. The preposition "for" (huper) is the ordinary preposition for the notion of substitution. Anti has the idea of exchange, and antilutron huper combines both ideas. Lutron is the common word for ransom of a slave. Cremer says the words "a ransom for all" denotes two things: First the price paid for the liberation of those in bondage. Second, the means of expiation with reference to this results.

The Greek word antilutron means "an equivalent price" (See Vine on Galatians 3:13, p. 134). Fausset says: "The Greek implies not merely ransom, but a substitution or equivalent ransom" (Commentary, p. 1357). Charles Hodge says it means "a corresponding price." He goes on to say: "This means that the price paid by Christ corresponded to the debt we owed. In other words Christ suffered the exact equivalent of that which those for whom He died would have suffered in Hell. If the justice of God demanded that Christ die in order that God might justify sinners, the same justice demanded that He pay the full penalty owed by the sinners. Justice can forego all the penalty as easily as it can forego the least party of it" (Cited by T. P. Simmons in *Systematic Study of* Bible Doctrine, p. 250).

Francis Turrettin says of antilutron: "It denotes not merely a price, but such a price as is perfectly equal to the debt which it pays; this is the force of the

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# Jesus Paid It All

(Continued from page 7) \$

preposition *huper* which here expresses substitution. Aristotle uses the same word *antilutron*, in the 9th book of his Ethics, Second Chapter, to denote the redemption of a life, by substituting another in its room" (*The Atonement*, p. 35).

Some make much of the word **"all"** in I Timothy 2:6, and they say it teaches universal redemption. But if this be true, then every individual of mankind would be delivered from his sins. Any one knows that every individual of mankind is not delivered from the slavery of sin. If general atonement is true, then the death of Christ was mostly a failure. Christ paid the ransom price in vain for many. This would make God unjust, for He received a sufficient ransom price from Christ, and yet He does not free some of the captivities, but punishes them for the sins that Christ paid for on the cross. This would make God dishonest. He would in the case of the unsaved require double payment. This cannot be said of a holy God. The "all" in I Timothy 2:6 is all of the elect, the many Christ gave Himself a ransom for in Matthew 20:28.

Mark carefully the words: "Who gave himself." What Christ gave for the ransom of His people was Himself. His body and soul were both made an offering for sin. His whole human nature in union with His Divine person He offered to the Father (Heb. 9:14). This was the greatest gift ever given (Gal. 1:4; Eph. 5:25). The divinity of our Lord was necessary to our spiritual redemption. All outside of God is due Him and cannot therefore be paid to Him in satisfaction of a debt. In the atonement Christ paid to God the exact equivalent of the

unending sufferings remitted to the elect. The Divine nature of Christ is what made Him capable of enduring that infinite suffering during His few hours on the cross. The Divine nature gave value to the atonement. How some can speak of the death of Christ being of infinite worth, and then deny that infinity suffered on the cross amazes me.

#### **TITUS 2:14**

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Here again we see that Christ voluntarily gave Himself as the ransom price on behalf of His people. "Redeem" in the Greek (lutroo) is in the middle voice, and it means "to release by payment of a ransom." The redemptive work of Christ was of such an infinite nature as to redeem His people "from all iniquity." This is no partial redemption, but a complete and full redemption.

Again "for us" can mean no more than Paul and other believers like him. It can only refer to those redeemed for all iniquity and zealous of good works. This must be so, for not all mankind is redeemed from all iniquity. Many are already in the fires of hell for their sins, and many more are soon to be there. If Christ gave Himself for our benefit, then we must receive those benefits; otherwise, the design of Christ's death is frustrated. Benefits not received are to no purpose or profit. If those Christ died to redeem are not really redeemed from the bondage of sin and Satan, then Christ's death was a failure and His blood will be fuel for the flames of hell!

Do not try to water down the value of the atonement of Christ. The mighty God, the Lord of glory, gave Himself to redeem a people.

The life of that person who was God went for our ransom, and by it our debt is freely discharged, the bill canceled, and handwriting against us nailed to His cross. Look again at Titus 2:13 and 14. The antecedent of the pronoun "who" is our "great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" Note that once again the atonement is connected with the deity of the Savior, as if to show that the true Godhead of the Son gave infinite value to His sufferings.

The people Christ paid the ransom for are absolved of their guilt and punishment. This is justification. According to the text in Titus 2:14, the same ones redeemed are also purified unto Christ as a people for His own possession. Those thus purified are zealots of good works. This is sanctification. The design of redemption is to consecrate a people for holy service. Regeneration and sanctification are inseparable companions. No one is redeemed who is not purged and purified. Christ is both our redemption and sanctification (I Cor. 1:30).

Modern-day theologians would put asunder what God has joined together. They would separate regeneration from sanctification. They have some people regenerated who are not sanctified. They talk of people who know Christ as Savior but not as Lord. But no one is redeemed who does not find holiness daily prevailing against corruption. No unsanctified heart has the right to lay claim to any part of the death and merits of Christ.

#### **HEBREWS 9:12**

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." The high priest in Israel first sacrificed the

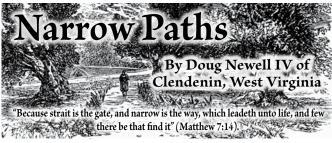
animal outside the tabernacle and then he passed through the holy place to the holy of holies to sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat (Lev. 16). Likewise Christ, having shed His blood on the cross, carried it in His veins into Heaven itself (Heb. 9:14,24; Isa. 57:15; Ps. 20:6). This Christ did not at His ascension as many say, but shortly after He said, "It is finished." On the cross He obtained eternal redemption for His people, but His expiatory work was not complete until He entered the heavenly tabernacle, carrying the blood of His sacrifice into God's holy presence.

The high priest in Israel entered the holy of holies on the day of atonement with the blood of an animal. Christ took with Him into Heaven "his own blood," the blood of God incarnate (Acts 20:28). The merit of this blood obtained eternal redemption for the covenant people. Some would diminish the value of the blood of Christ by saying He obtained a temporary deliverance, leaving the redeemed in danger of falling into sin and ruin. Any person who denies that he has eternal redemption at the same time declares that he does not have the redemption which Christ procured for His people.

#### I PETER 1:18-19

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Under the old covenant the firstborn of Israel was redeemed by shekels (Ex. 30:12-13; Num. 3:46-48). But neither gold nor silver can redeem a soul. A soul is worth more than 6 (Continued on page 9)





#### **MAYBE I AM WRONG**

Years ago, I had a theological debate with a man over a vital doctrine. He pleaded with me to open my mind up to his unorthodox teaching. I told him I would not open my mind, but it would, God willing, remain firmly and finally shut on the matter. He told me I was arrogant because I did not believe I could be wrong, and I should live with the idea that I could be wrong about everything. Granted, I could be wrong about a lot of things, but on this particular matter, I was not, and it would be the height of folly to walk around persuading myself not to believe. It is not humility to convince yourself not to believe any divine truth with all your heart and soul. False teachers always want their people to doubt and to question everything, except their allegiance to their mystic, mushy, pliable uncertainty.

Understanding and knowledge is a gift of God (Eph. 1:17). One of the purposes of the church and the role of the pastor is to teach and declare the Word with the goal of "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph. 4:13). Paul prayed the church in Colossae would be "filled with the knowledge of [God's] will" and increase in the "knowledge of God," (Col. 1:9-10). Paul wanted the people of God to be comforted and "knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ" (Col. 2:2). Not only is knowing the truth possible, the Bible stresses the importance of coming to the knowledge of the truth and provides the way for it to happen.

Yes, it is possible to become proud in what you know. I read an article where the author quoted from Jeremiah 9:23-24, "Thus said the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might..." Very powerful and on point. Do not be proud and lifted up with your "doctrine" warned the author. But what was left out of the verse after the ellipses? "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord..." This verse was not condemning theological knowledge, but condemning the pride of wisdom of men. Jeremiah tells us to know and understand the Lord.

It is certainly possible to be deceived. It is not only possible, but common for people to deceive themselves, and become proud and hard-hearted refusing to be corrected, insisting they are right when all the evidence points to the contrary. With the Spirit's help, we can know the truth and be settled in what God has given us in His Word. Pray that He would open your heart to the truth, examine your heart and motives for any wrong, any pride, and then cling to His inerrant Word (Psa. 139:23-24).

(Doug Newell IV is pastor of the Buffalo Valley Baptist Church of Clay, West Virginia.)



# Jesus Paid It All

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a world and requires a greater price. Corruptible things cannot redeem an incorruptible soul. The price of the redemption of a soul is the blood of Jesus Christ. This is the ransom price required by the justice of God. Christ's blood was not the same as ours, for it was not tainted with sin. His blood was the blood of an innocent person and the blood of one who is God as well as man.

#### **REVELATION 5:9**

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." The word translated "redeemed" is the Greek word agorazo which means "to purchase, to buy." It is employed here to denote redemption because redemption was accomplished by the payment of a price. Again this price is seen to be the blood of Jesus. This price was paid to God whose justice had been offended and whose law had been broken.

#### CONCLUSION

- 1. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not merely attempt to redeem a people unto God by His death on the cross. He actually did redeem a people. He paid the debt they owed to the justice and law of God. He did not just pay a part of the debt, but He paid the exact equivalent of that which those for whom He died would have suffered in Hell. Jesus paid it all!
- 2. Some deny that Jesus paid it all. They say He made the down payment, and that the sinner must pay the balance of the debt. Some do this by saying faith makes up what is lacking in the atonement, preaching a meritorious faith. Still

others would say the sinner must add to faith confession, baptism, praying through, signing a decision card, or a sinless life in the flesh. All such people deny that Jesus paid it all. They deny that Christ paid all the debt His people owed to the justice of God.

- 3. Christ redeemed His people from the curse of the law. He redeemed them from the power of sin and Satan. He will eventually redeem them from the presence of all sin. Christ is our Redeemer. He will complete the work which He started some 1900 years ago.
- 4. Some have what I would call a watered-down atonement. They say that Christ suffered a little in His human nature for a few hours on the cross. Adam in his unfallen condition might have done as much, according to this theory. But they cannot bring themselves to believe that He made a proper and true satisfaction, by paying the full price and obtaining the sinner's acquittal on the grounds of justice. They fail to see that it was His divine nature that added worth to His atonement. If Christ did not pay the full price, then why did Paul say: "Ye are bought with a price"?
- 5. Man by nature is a prisoner of sin, Satan, and death. He is condemned by God and cannot be released but by a satisfactory payment. Some person must pay his debt. Man owes God 10,000 dollars and does not have a dime to pay this debt. Thank God that Jesus paid the debt---all the debt His people owed to the justice of God. Christ as my Surety paid my sin debt in full, and I shall never be asked to pay it a second time.

Augustus Toplady so well put it: Payment God cannot twice demand First at my bleeding Surety's hand And then again at mine.



# Halting Between

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contest between Israel's God and the false god Baal, in which Israel's God proved Himself to be the true and living God when He consumed Elijah's sacrifice with fire from heaven. Baal, on the other hand, was unable to answer the prayers of his prophets to consume their sacrifice, because Baal was just a god of their imagination and of their own making.

1. What it means to halt between two opinions.

The word "halt" in our text is important. It means to be undecided as if to hop back and forth from one opinion to the other. It also means to be lame or crippled on one's feet. To be undecided about who the true God is, is to be spiritually lame or crippled. Such a spiritually lame condition, when added to man's natural depravity, leaves unregenerate man all the more helpless and hopeless of recovery.

On the other hand, many professing Christians today are also halting between two opinions. They pretend to worship the God of the Bible, but they also worship the gods of the heathen at the same time. Like Israel, they do not realize that God is displeased and angry with them. He does not accept the worship of those who practice idolatry and polytheism. Instead of pleasing God their worship is a sin to them. Instead of reaping God's blessings, they will reap His judgment and His curse.

2. What is meant by "opinions?"
The Hebrew word rendered "opinions" in our text is also rendered "thought" elsewhere in Scripture, which suggests that these Israelites' spiritual convictions were based on their

own thoughts or opinions about God, which they conceived in their own minds. People have a natural tendency to form opinions in their own imaginations about who or what God is, rather than learning about God from the Bible, which is His Holy Word.

My friends, you can not know God any better than you know Him in His Word. People who claim they know God and understand His will (and so on), yet they have never read or studied His Word, are only fooling themselves. The fact is all they really know about God is what they make up in their own depraved hearts and minds. Most people would be totally surprised if they would take the time to read the Bible. They would find God to be entirely different than what they imagined Him to be. And this includes many professing Christians, who never read or study their Bibles! Of the myriad of truths concerning the God of the Bible, we have provided just a small sample below as food for thought:

- 1. God is the living God (Jer. 10:10). In fact, He is life (John 1:4), and He is the Creator and Giver of all life (Acts 17:25).
- 2. God is a Holy God (Isa. 6:3, 57:15; I Pet. 1:16). There is no sin or imperfection in Him (Heb. 4:15; I Pet. 2:22; I John 3:5).
- 3. God is omnipotent, or all-powerful (Jer. 32:17, 27; Matt. 19:26; Rev. 1:8). There is nothing that He cannot do. He is limited only by His own Holy nature and perfect will.
- 4. God is omniscient, or all knowing (Isa. 40:28). He knows everything there is to know about everything and everyone. He knows every thought and every motive of the hearts of men.
- 5. God is omnipresent. He is everywhere present at the same

- time (Psa. 139:7-9) therefore He is infinite.
- 6. God is eternal (Psa. 90:2). He had no beginning and shall have no end, therefore He is unaffected by time.
- 7. God never changes (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8) therefore His promises and His judgments never fail.
- 8. God is sovereign over all (Psa. 115:3; Dan. 4:35). He works all things after the council of His own will (Eph. 1:11). None can prevent His work or thwart His will. He is sovereign over the salvation of sinners and the eternal destinies of the souls of all men (John 6:37-40, 44, 65).
- 9. God is able to save the souls of men (Heb. 7:25). He is able to give salvation and eternal life to as many as He shall call (Acts 2:39); to as many as repent and believe the gospel of His Son (Mark 1:15).
- 10. God will judge the souls of men (Heb. 9:27). All men will stand before Him in judgment on the appointed day. The lost will give an account of their sins and be sentenced to eternal punishment at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15), while the saved will give account of their works and receive or lose rewards accordingly at the judgment seat of Christ (II Cor. 5:10).

But what about the other "opinions" of Baal and all the other so-called gods? How can we know if they are worthy of our worship and our devotion to them? The same Bible that teaches about the true God of Heaven also teaches about the other gods of this world. All of these gods have several things in common, ten of which we have provided below:

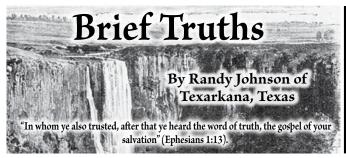
- 1. They are dead. That is, they were never alive (Hab. 2:18-19). They may be a rock or a tree, or perhaps a theory or philosophy of science.
  - 2. They cannot see, talk, hear,

- smell, or move (Psa. 115:4-8). They may have eyes, mouths, ears, hands and feet, but these do not work.
- 3. They are products of men's imaginations. They were created by men, which makes them inferior to men (Psa. 135:18).
- 4. They are like unto the people who made them. The nature and attributes ascribed to them are like those of the men who created them, therefore they are inherently sinful and unholy.
- 5. They are temporal. Unlike the true God of Heaven, their existence had a beginning and will have an end (Jer. 50:2).
- 6. They cannot hear or answer your prayers. It is vain and useless to pray to them (I Kings 18:26-29). Therefore they cannot help you in times of trouble. In times when you need God to help you, these idols are less than worthless.
- 7. They are powerless to save your soul. Being without life themselves they cannot give spiritual life to the souls of lost and dying men, much less forgive your sins.
- 8. They exist in opposition to the true God of Heaven. They were made by men who despise the true and living God, who would not worship and serve their Creator (Rom. 1:20-25).
- 9. They bring judgment from the true God of Heaven. All those who worship and serve them shall be punished by the living God, except they repent (Lev. 26:30; Rev. 21:8).

#### CONCLUSION

Are you halting between two opinions? How long will you continue to do so? If the true God of Heaven is God, then serve Him. If the idols of this world be god, then serve them. My friends, I implore you by the mercy of God to forsake your idols. They are less

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#### THE PAINS OF BEING A CHRISTIAN IN THIS EVIL WORLD

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

Not all people who call themselves Christians Christian, therefore every true believer in Jesus Christ needs to be careful in whom they listen to for their Biblical education. God said we need to "test the spirits" in order to find the true teachers of God's Word. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world...Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of **God**" (I John 4:1-2). The greatest test for trying the spirits in people is the truth about salvation in Jesus Christ. "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him" (II Cor. 11:4).

Learning about being a Christian is learning everything, and that includes the painful part of it. As Christians our blessing is not on this world, it is in Heaven that our blessings will be bestowed on us. While God does give us limited earthly blessings, He also sends us trials in life. These trials are two-fold, some are for chastisement and some

are to test our faith, but all are for our good. But let us understand this very fact, if you are a true Christian you will suffer trials and persecutions in this world without question. Anyone who tells you otherwise is ignorant to the truth about God, no matter who they are. The world's population will hate you just as they hated Jesus and they will persecute you just as they did Jesus. Once a believer in Jesus Christ understands this the quicker they can deal with the persecutions when they come. God said that just being a Christian and living godly is call for persecution "...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12).

Therefore, anyone who tells you different, they are ignorant to God's truth, even if they are nationally known people with large followers. God said of these people, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (II Cor. 11:3).

Satan has his angels in this world deceiving just as he deceived Eve in the garden, and they come as God's servants, but are liars like their father the devil. God said, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ...And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (II Cor. 11:13-14). This is why every believer must test the spirit that

is in those speaking, and ask, what are their thought's about Jesus.

A true Christian recognizes Jesus Christ as their Saviour and depends on nothing but His blood to cleanse their sins. Please remember, anyone who preaches any sort of works for salvation is not of God. This is real folks, if you are a true Christian you shall suffer worldly persecution. Christians cannot believe that they will ever be happy in this world, it is not our home. Not till it is melted and made new and the New Jerusalem come down from heaven. Jesus said, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14).

So when persecution falls on you consider it a blessing and understand that God will never leave nor forsake you. He is ever at your side always controlling everything that is happening in your life. Remember beloved, God never promised that being a Christian is being persecution free. Jesus also said, "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:39). Fear not this world, walk in the Lord, and no matter what happens it is

(Randy Johnson is pastor of the Sovereign Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Texarkanna, Texas.)



# Halting Between

(Continued from page 10) &

than useless. They are powerless. They cannot help you, much less save your soul from eternal death. And worst of all, they will bring the judgment of God upon all who worship and serve them.

The Bible tells us to "...come out from among them..." (II Cor. 6:16-18). Put them far away

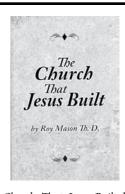
from you. Repent of your sin of idolatry and trust in the only true and living God. He can save you. The Bible tells us to "...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." Believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day for you. All who believe this gospel shall be eternally saved.

May the following verses be true of all of us:

"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (I Thess. 1:9-10).

(Christopher Burke, Sr. is pastor of the Sovereign Grace Landmark Baptist Church, Catlettsburg, KY.)





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# The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

#### 1. Could you comment on Matthew 5:37?

Matthew Stepp 286 Big Creek Road Wayne, WV 25570

Pastor Big Creek Baptist Church 286 Big Creek Road Wayne, WV 25570



"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt. 5:33-37).

Christian integrity is the bar that Christ is raising, in this Sermon on the Mount passage. The ban on swearing is an extension of the third commandment. "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Ex. 20:7). Selah! Think about it! If Jesus Christ disallows swearing by either Heaven or Earth, what then is left? Nothing!

In essence, there is no need of swearing, as both Jesus and James exhort us. Our Christian integrity will be sufficient. "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" ( James 5:12). Our yea/nay in our regular communication is not going to be a lie, is it? Not if we consider that "our Lord liveth." "But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused. ... But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him" (II Kings 5:16, 20).

Elisha uses this "oath" in normal conversation, knowing that the Lord does indeed live among us, and he rejected the gift, as he knew that God had already made every provision that he needed. Gehazi, unwittingly (or inherently) uses the exact same "oath" in the thoughts of his mind, and neglected to realize the significance of the Lord's witness to his lack of integrity. This is what happens when our lives become distracted from our service to God toward service unto our flesh and the world.

May the Lord help us to be truthful as servants of integrity. But an even more elementary level of that word, strikes at the heart of Christian integrity. That we would simply "be true"... trueblue!

But let us notice the latter half of our text verse: "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt. 5:37). Unnecessary and ostentatious oaths can lead to "evil," or as James equates "condemnation" and judgment. Pride and self-righteousness are many times the basis for these unnecessary oaths. Is it not enough that the humble servant has said "yes" or "no?" "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

Such an one was Jephthah, to his downfall and hurt: "And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (Judges 11:30-31). After the Lord's victory, comes an unexpected end to Jephthah's presumptuous vow, teaching us that none but omnipotent and prescient God can make pure and holy vows. "And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back. And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of

the children of Ammon" (Judg. 11:34-36).

If Christian integrity be enough, it is enough for every occasion. When a Christian witnesses before men and God, it is enough to "affirm" that the witness is true (True-Blue, right?!). Selah! Think about it!

#### MATTHEW STEPP

Tom Ross 6339 County Rd. 15 South Point, OH 45680

Pastor Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church 6939 County Rd. 15 Chesapeake, OH 45619



Matthew 5:37 states: "But let your communication be, Yea, yea: Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

This verse is part of Christ's Sermon on the Mount where the Lord Jesus is found expounding Old Testament passages by saying "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time..." (Matt. 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43) and then explaining and expanding upon the real meaning of the passages by way of spiritual application. This is all done by Jesus to prove that He did not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but rather to fulfill (Matt. 5:17). Each time Jesus says "But I say unto you" (5:18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39 44) He is revealing how broad and spiritual the requirements of the law and commands of God really are. In doing so He is magnifying the absolute righteousness of the law, while at the same time showing how far short all men fall from really fulfilling the breadth and the depth of the law's spiritual requirements. He also declares that unless his hearers exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (5:19-20) they

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# The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Is a man's conscience a shadow of his dead spirit convicting him of right and wrong?

Roger Reed
20 Ledgewood Dr.
Mansfield, Ohio 44905

Missionary of
West Jefferson
Missionary Baptist
Mission
90 E. Main St.
West Jefferson, Ohio
43162



"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Tim. 4:1-2).

Walt Disney's iconic cartoon character, Jiminy Cricket, made popular the saying, "Let your conscience be your guide!" In my opinion that is bad advice for the Christian.

The question that is being asked I believe has two parts, the first one being, "Is a man's conscience a shadow of his dead spirit?" Now the definition of shadow is this: a dark figure or image cast on the ground or some surface by a body intercepting light. Shade or comparative darkness, as in an area. So to this first part I would answer "yes." Sin would be what is intercepting the light to be able to enter in, therefore the conscience would be the depraved nature, "the conscience is not naturally good, but is defiled by sin" quoting John Gill here. I would have to agree. "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (I Tim. 1:19). John Gill goes on to say concerning

"a good conscience," "and that is only good, which is sprinkled by the blood of Christ, and thereby purged from dead works; the effect of which is an holy, upright, and becoming conversation; and which seems to be chiefly intended here, and particularly the upright conduct and behaviour of the ministers of the Gospel, in the faithful discharge of their work and office: see II Cor. 1:12" which says, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." Paul says here, "not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God."

Now the second part of the question is, "Convicting him of right and wrong." Which I would answer "no!" The lost man cannot know how to do right in the sight of a Holy and Sovereign God, in his depraved nature (conscience). Paul said, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. 7:7). The commandments (the Law) were for all mankind, but without that perfect sacrifice (Jesus Christ), man is not capable to keep the Law of God, I believe because of his depraved conscience.

So Christ came to be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the elect. He was crucified, shed His blood, died, was buried, and rose again the third day. And before

He left this earth He left us His Spirit. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:15-17).

Remember also, we (the saved, elect of God) have an Advocate with the Father who is Jesus Christ. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). The Advocate is the one who pleads for or in behalf of another, Christ is our Advocate and our "Who is he that Intercessor. condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34). "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

So when we sin and repent Christ turns to the Father and says, "I paid the price for that sin." It is the Spirit that brings us to conviction, not our conscience! And when we confess that sin, He forgives us. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

Going back to my opening text, I would like to quote John Gill once again concerning "having their conscience seared with a hot iron" Gill says this, "having their conscience seared with a hot iron; which exactly describes the above mentioned persons,

whose consciences are cauterized and hardened, and past feeling; and have no regard to what they say or do, make no conscience of anything, but under a cloak of sanctity committhe most shocking impieties; and are men of the most infamous characters, and of the most enormous and scandalous lives and conversations; so that the metaphor may be taken either from the searing of flesh with an iron, or cauterizing it, whereby it grows callous and hard; or from the stigmas or marks which used to be put on malefactors, or such who have been guilty of notorious crimes."

Therefore, I would say, never let your conscience be your guide because it is depraved in its nature and will lead to no good for you and especially for the glory of God. A Christian should only listen to the Holy Spirit that Jesus left as our guide and comforter. God Bless!

Tom Ross 6339 County Rd. 15 South Point, OH 45680

Pastor
Mt. Pleasant
Baptist Church
6939 County Rd. 15
Chesapeake, OH
45619



No, I do not believe that is an accurate statement and there is no support from Scripture for such a theory as far as I can tell. When something is dead it means it is lifeless and incapable of producing any activity. The natural man is dead in trespasses and in sins. He requires the Spirit of God to bring him to spiritual life in regeneration, thus enabling him to be convicted of sin, exercise the gift of repentance, and believe the Gospel. Absolutely nothing spiritual or good can be produced by the old carnal, fleshly, nature of

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## Forum Question #1

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would not enter into the kingdom of heaven. His listeners would have reasoned that there is no way they could attain to that level of outward righteousness. In the very last verse (5:48), Jesus sums up the requirement of perfection, declaring they were to be as perfect as God is perfect in order to have sufficient righteousness. I believe all this was intended to show the righteousness of God, the perfection of the law, and the inability by all men to keep and obey the law of God to attain the righteous state He demands, which is perfection. Only Jesus Christ fulfilled and magnified all the law, and suffered its penalty as the substitute for all the elect. Every time Jesus says "But I say unto you" He is revealing His absolute righteousness before the Father, as One who completely fulfilled all of the law's requirements outwardly and inwardly. Thus it is only by believing and trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ by way of saving faith that any sinner can be justified before God. Jesus is also showing that His followers are called upon to follow Him in the way of inward and outward purity of heart and life, demonstrating that His righteousness has been imputed to them in justification, and His righteous nature (new man) has been imparted to them in sanctification.

The interpretation of the verse under consideration is relatively simple. In every day life let your speech be free from oaths, from swearing, or of taking the name of the Lord in vain. As a believer in Christ and a consecrated follower of Jesus our speech should reflect our relationship with our Lord. A simple yes or no without swearing

to anything or embellishing anything is sufficient. "Speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15) should be the standard for every child of God. This truth speaking with no admixture of deceit or lying gives evidence that we have a new nature as Ephesians 4:24-25 reveals: "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another."

I agree with the comments of A.W. Pink on Matthew 5:37: "Christ was not here referring to judicial transactions at all, but to the ordinary intercourse of men with each other...As the followers of the Holy One, you must speak the truth in every utterance of your lips. Your character and conduct are to be such that all acquainted with you have the assurance that your word is your bond. If your communications are "yea" in the promise and "yea" in the performance, then there will be no need for you to appeal to God in witness of your veracity." (An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, page 102).

TOM ROSS



I believe that Matthew 5:37 has to do with oath taking and not cursing. We are to speak the truth in all things. Many would say that a little white lie is acceptable, but it is not. So when you speak a word let it be the truth. To be trusted as a Christian your speech

should be one of truth whether it be "yes, yes", or "no, no!" When you married your spouse, and when the preacher said, do you take this man/women to, etc....! Did you not say "yea" (yes)? Did you keep that oath?

~ The Berea Baptist Banner ~

If it's the truth then our answer should be "yes", that is the truth. If it is not the truth then our answer should be "no", that is not the truth. Many should have said "Nay" on their wedding day!

The same expression was used by Paul in II Corinthians 1:17-20. Paul just did not use "lightness" in his speech concerning Jesus Christ "yea, yea" and "nay, nay" but expressed that "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (verse 20). Jesus was not an iffy thing to Paul, Jesus was "YES" in everything that Paul said, and Paul was giving glory to God for it.

Paul was saying also that everything he told the people was the absolute truth; there were no variations in his story. So the same thing applies with what Jesus is saying in our text. When we communicate to the world the Word of God, our communication better be the truth, ("yea") and not some fabricated story of the truth, or some private interpretation of the truth. Paul said in Galatians 1:8-9, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

I am convinced that many today (Baptists), for whatever reason, have not given a "yea" answer in their communication to others. I just preached a sermon on "Christians and Their Character." Dear reader, how is your character as a follower of Jesus Christ, is your word pure and truthful, is your "yea, yea," and your "nay, nay?"

At one time a man's word was binding in the state of Ohio, not sure if that still is. But our word should be as good as was the Lord's, and if it is not, then the latter part of Matthew 5:37 would apply "for whatsoever is more than these **cometh of evil.**" In other words, if our word is tainted (none truth) it is evil and worthless! God Bless!

ROGER REED



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Man's conscience is one of the moral faculties that God has put into each person that makes them instinctively feel that something is right or wrong. Romans 2:13-15 states: "(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." This is why atheists and other heathen instinctively feel as though its wrong to lie, steal, kill, and commit adultery. It is one way in which God will hold all unsaved men accountable when they stand before the Great White Throne Judgment.

The conscience of man is more

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### Forum Question #2

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sensitive and responsive relative to how much he intellectually knows about God, the law, and what is contained in Scripture. A man who knows something about the Scriptures will probably have a greater sensitivity to what is right and wrong. His feelings of guilt over sinful conduct may be stronger than the man who has little or no knowledge of Man's conscience Scripture. may motivate him to do what is ethically right even though he can not do anything spiritually right until he is born again. A convicted conscience is not necessarily a precursor to the new birth or salvation as John 8:9 testifies: "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." Their is no indication from Scripture that any of these men with a convicted conscience were ever saved.

The conscience also can be defiled (Titus 1:15) and seared (I Tim. 4:2) depending on how much a man resists the feelings of guilt over sinful conduct and continues on in his course of wickedness. Over time a man will lose any sense of right and wrong, and will not feel guilty at all. I fear this is the condition of many in society today who have been given over to a reprobate mind, void of judgment (Rom. 1:18-32).

Believers are exhorted in Scripture to desire to have a conscience void of offense and that is pure (Acts 24:16; I Tim. 1:15, 19; 3:9; I Pet. 2:19; 3:16, 21). A clear conscience is maintained by following the leadership of the Holy Spirit combined with

obedience to the Word of God. This is really what genuine Christian liberty is all about, the freedom to do what God commands by way of cheerful obedience. Paul stated his desire to serve with a clean conscience in Acts 24:16: "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men."

TOM ROSS

Matthew Stepp 286 Big Creek Road Wayne, WV 25570

*Pastor* Big Creek Baptist Church 286 Big Creek Road Wayne, WV 25570



"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one **another**" (Rom. 2:14-15). A man's conscience, whether modern atheists want to acknowledge it, or not, is the mark of God upon each of His created workmanship masterpieces. Selah! Think about

It is an interesting premise, that a man's conscience is a shadow of his dead spirit (died in Adam), that would know the difference between right and wrong. As if it were the remnants of his previous righteousness, originally created by our thrice-holy God. But, as we think through the process of salvation, we know that saved men, with their restored, regenerated spirit of life, still has a conscience that must be cultivated and purified. So there is a difference between consciences

and "shadows of dead spirits." The Apostle Paul makes mention of this fostering of consciences to young Timothy. "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: ...This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (I Tim. 1:5, 18-19).

Defined: a shadow is a refraction of a real, solid substance. The tangible spirit of natural man is said to be dead, as a result of Adam and Eve's rebellion in the garden and as evidenced by Scripture. "And you hath he quickened (made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). It would be a misnomer to say that man's spirit was "annihilated," although it did completely die. We must realize that death defined is a "separation from God." Thereby, lost men and women still have a working "spirit" in a sense, that is completely separated from God. It is in this manner that the Devil and evil spirits have some connection to these imperiled souls. That some remnant of this broken, destroyed spirit might be used to convict the conscience of man, I do not know. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (I Cor. 2:11-12). Certainly, there is an impassable gulf between any

shadowy spirit remnant of man and any spiritual understanding of God (Luke 16:26).

"I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day" (II Tim. 1:3). Bro. Pete Chadwick, our Bible teacher at Big Creek Baptist is fond of saying that when the children of God sin, they do not need to ask him or the pastor if they have sinned, the Holy Spirit within will tell us that we have sinned. This is true! As God's people, we need to continually "... put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14).

I heard two sermons years ago, that made an impact on me. Both preachers brought out the truth, that our consciences are only as good and pure, as the information fed into our hearts and minds. Trash in, trash out? Scripture in, Scripture out. Our consciences are only as powerful as the input of sound doctrine and moral uprightness. Selah! Think about it!

If the lost man's conscience is, in part, a shadowy remnant of his dead spirit, it could be cultivated yet in a moral environment. Perhaps this is one of the ways that God restrains the total depravity of man to work out His sovereign will. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Ps. 76:10). Many lost children that grew up in a godly family have been protected from the full, depraved force of the world and as their parents pray for them, God may touch their conscience in His providence, until at the appointed time He touches their heart with sovereign grace. "And

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### Forum #2

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the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke May God's grace be magnified! Selah! Think about it!





#### **WORDS OF KINDNESS**

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-

"He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great" (Ps. 115:13).

Why do we speak them so grudgingly when they cost so little, and mean so much to the sad and sorrowing ones round about us?

Sitting at my desk this morning, glancing out of the window I saw an aged woman approaching. I judged her to be a beggar from her appearance, and my first feeling was to keep on writing in spite of her timid rap, but something seemed to say, "Open the door. You can at least give her a kind word."

I did so, and found that she was trying to make an honest living by selling a good quality of pins and needles. She did not make known

her errand in a professional whine, but offering them for sale, her face wore such a sweet patient expression that I was touched by it, and, not stopping to question my wants in her line, I bought of

"Grandma" smiled so sweetly and seemed so grateful for the little aid I had given her, that I was tempted to draw her out by saying, "Have you no one to care for you? You are too old and feeble to go about a city earning your living."

"Oh," she replied cheerfully, "I have two boys, good boys, too; they are in Kansas. They write to me every week, and say, 'Mother, keep up good courage, we are getting the land cleared up and are building a little house, and before long we will send for you.

"And they will," she said. "They are good, hard-working boys, but they have had lots of bad luck, and I feel sorry for 'em, I write 'em not to worry about me. I'm all right. I can take care of myself until they can save money to send for their old mother."

She spoke so cheerfully and hopefully of her prospects here, which at best seemed to me so very poor, that as she turned to go I was tempted into saying, "Well, grandma, I hope you have an interest in the Heavenly home."

The wrinkled old face was radiant as she replied, "Oh yes, madam, that is what keeps me up. It does not matter much about a home here any way. I have such a little while to stay, but I feel glad all the time thinking of the one God has prepared for me. He is my loving Father, and I know He will see me safe through some way, and I do not worry about how I am to get there."

Ah! the ray of sunshine that I had thought to give her had burst in blessings on myself. For the faith of that shabby old woman was so unlooked for and beautiful that I was rendered speechless by it; and she continued---

"Yes, He is so good to me! I thank Him so much for putting it into the hearts of His children to speak kindly to me. Oh, I can tell His real children every time, and it cheers me on my way to meet 'em," and off she started, promising to call again, "if the boys do not send

As I watched her out of sight, I thought, "Truly, one of His little ones," in spite of shabby clothes; and yet because of them I nearly robbed myself of the blessing she brought me. Oh, friends, let us not give grudgingly of the heart's best sentiments (Cottagen & Artisan, 1800).

#### THE REST-DAY

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Gen. 2: 1-3).

This is the first gift of God to the human race. Shall we take no pains to preserve our inheritance? If we inherit a house and land, or money, we are not likely to let our neighbors encroach upon it, or to give it over to them for less than its value. Yet this is what we do when we permit our Sunday rest here to be given over wholly to activity.

It makes little difference, so far as the actual loss to ourselves is concerned, whether we lost our Sunday rest by doing paid labor or whether we allow it to be encroached upon by social demands of whatever nature; the loss of all that might have been ours through rest is the same. Yet there is of course a difference in the character of the loss and in its effect upon ourselves.

There are many instances--to the shame of our Christian civilization be it spoken---where there seems hardly any choice. Some laboring men must labor on Sunday or else lose their work. Thirty years ago the chairman of an important railway, in answer to a petition from the pastors and people of a certain town that trains should not be sent out on Sunday, made the reply, "God made rivers to run on Sunday, and why not railroads?"

The senseless remark caused disgust among many who were not thrilled with the horror of its impiety. But thirty years have passed and all railroads "run" on Sunday, and Sunday work has become a matter so much of course that a very great number of people seem to be forced to perform it, however much against their will.

If these Sunday workers were to take account of all they lose by their Sunday work, they might be willing to run considerable risk of being out of work rather than continue in it. If they are ill-paid for their week-day services, and most of them think they are, how much less adequate is the pay for Sunday work, which not only takes their labor, but robs them of their privileges.

It is no small thing for a man to give up his weekly opportunity of becoming acquainted with his children and influencing them as a father should do; no small thing to lose the time from the rest which his body needs, and the refreshment through reading and pleasant conversation that his

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# **Light Contemplations**

By Luke Austin of Cadillac, Michigan

"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD" (Psalm 107:43).

#### THE GOSPEL OF INSTEAD

This is an illustration my pastor likes to use when describing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is only one scriptural gospel, but for the sake of illustration we will speak of two gospels that are preached today.

The one will tell the hearers to make Jesus an accessory to their life. No preaching about sin or repentance, just take Jesus and make Him a luggage rack on your car. Bring Him along for the ride. Do you like to drink and party and engage in sexual immorality? Do you hate the idea of giving up lying, stealing, cussing, and cheating? Well, do we have a deal for you! You can keep all those sins and have Jesus, too! No repentance, no salvation, but plenty of "warm fuzzy feelings." Sales pitch Jesus is the one for you!

The other gospel preached today is the gospel of instead. You can have Jesus or you can have your rotten life of sin, but you can not have both. The Bible describes those that have believed the gospel of instead. "That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you" (I Peter

4:2-4). "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our **God**" (I Cor. 6:9-11).

Both of these Scriptures referenced speak of those that were one way but now they have Jesus instead. Which gospel will you hear today? The one that can not be found in the Bible? The Jesus that goes my way? Or the Jesus of Scripture that gives mankind a new and living way? Repent (turn away from that old life of sin) and believe the Gospel.

(Luke Austin is a member of the Cadillac Baptist Church of Cadillac, Michigan.)



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mind requires.

But greatest of all is the loss of time for worship, for study of the Bible, for all that lifts a man above the treadmill of life and brings him into touch with the highest

When we lose our Sunday rest through mere idleness, lying late in bed, spending the time in

sauntering and social visiting, how great is the loss! And how senseless are we if we thus wantonly and for no return squander our precious heritage.

Let us guard zealously, both for ourselves and others, the Day of Rest, which gives us the time for communion with God (Cottager & Artisan, 1800).



# The Wondrous Works of God

By Tom Ross of South Point, Ohio

"Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God" (Job 37:14).



Elihu is found rebuking Job for his presumption and impiety. Job had offered up many complaints unto God during the time of his affliction. Elihu wants Job to see the absolute power and greatness of the God that Job was contending with. Our God is not to be trifled with. His power and greatness is beyond finite human comprehension. Job 37:23 declares: "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict." Elihu points Job specifically to the wonders of God's creation. When an individual takes an honest look at the vastness and variety of God's creative powers he must bow in wonder and humility before the sovereign throne of the Almighty. It would be good for

all of God's children to hearken to the exhortation of Elihu. We are all much like Job. We are oftentimes consumed with our own self interest and so caught up in the rat-race of life that we fail to meditate upon the wondrous works of our great God. We need to stand still and contemplate the greatness and glory of our God and the wondrous works that He has performed.

There are four wondrous works of God that I want to consider in this treatise: 1) Creation; 2) Revelation; 3) Salvation; and 4) The Institution known as the Lord's Church. God alone is responsible for beginning and sustaining all of His wondrous works. Man cannot duplicate the wondrous works of God, though he always attempts to imitate and pervert the works of God. Depraved mankind has always sought to rob God of His power and glory, in spite of the fact that God has declared He will not share His glory with another: "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isa. 42:8).

#### **CREATION**

The very first verse of the sacred Scriptures opens with an express declaration of God's creative power: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were the direct agents in the creation of the world. God alone existed and inhabited the realms of eternity. Men, angels, and principalities had no existence when God sat alone in the solitude of eternity. When God created He manifested the greatness of His power. He did not need the assistance of man in the creation of the world. He created

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by mere fiat. He merely spoke the world into existence by the breath of His mouth. Psalms 33:6; 8-9 declare: **"By the word of the** LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth...Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Men can make things from already existing materials, but God alone has the power to create something from nothing. Jeremiah 10:12 declares: "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by **his discretion.**" How we ought to bow in wonder and amazement as we consider the omnipotence of the Almighty in creation!

Not only did God create the world, He also sustains all of His creation by His mighty power. Hebrews 1:3 states: "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power. . ." II Peter 3:7 declares: "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in **store.** . ." The very fact that we have air to breathe, water to drink, and food to eat is because of the sustaining power of God. If the hydrogen and oxygen levels in our atmosphere were just slightly altered the air would be unfit for human and animal survival. If God did not send the gentle rains and the enriching snows our earth would not be fit to raise the crops that sustain us. If God did not sustain the health of men by His goodness all would quickly perish from off the earth. If the distance and orbital cycles of the planets from the sun were altered the existence of the entire universe would be in danger. But God holds all these things in place according to His own good pleasure and purpose. Psalms 145:9; 15-16 state: "The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. . The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

desire of every living thing." Because Godalone is responsible for the creation of the world, He alone is fit to rule and reign over all the world. God is the Majestic Monarch and Sovereign Owner of all the universe. All things that happen in our universe in time are according to the wise discretion and counsel of our Holy Lord. As Creator He alone has the right to determine how He wants His universe to be governed. Psalms 115:3 declares: "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." Daniel 4:34-35 declares: "...And I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: AND NONE CAN STAY HIS HAND, OR SAY UNTO HIM, WHAT **DOEST** THOU?" Because God is the Creator and Owner of the Universe, all men are accountable to Him for their thoughts, words, and actions.

If an individual acknowledges that God is the Creator of the universe, he must also acknowledge that He is the

Sovereign Governor to whom he is accountable. It is for this reason that the lie of evolution was hatched out of Hell. Men try and rob God of His glory by declaring that the heavens and the earth just came into being by themselves through some atmospheric catastrophe. They also contend that men and animals have evolved from lower life forms over billions of years. One of the most basic laws of science, the second law of thermodynamics, declares that all things are running down in the universe, not getting better. The law of entropy completely contradicts and refutes the lie of evolution and the principles of uniformitarianism upon which the system is built. Scientists (falsely so called) have forged the lie of evolution in an attempt to dethrone God and rob Him of His creatorial rights and glory. The truth of creation by God and the lie of evolution forged by infidels must both be accepted by faith. No one but God was around to observe the origin of the universe. Evolutionists must reject the greatest book in all the world and believe the lies and speculations of sinful men to establish their theory. Evolutionists must place their faith in the systems of men rather than in God: "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man." Jeremiah 8:9 describes the condition of all evolutionists: "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?" It is far wiser to accept by faith that the wondrous work of creation is attributed to God alone who is pleased to sustain and maintain our world. Hebrews 11:3 states: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things

#### which are seen were not made of things which do appear." REVELATION

Another wondrous work that is attributed to God alone is the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Bible is Godbreathed. The Sacred Scriptures are not the work of men, but rather the work of a Divine Author. It is true that God used men to write down His thoughts and words, but those men did not write according to their own will but according to the will of God. II Peter 1:21 declares: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." II Timothy 3:16 declares: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, correction, for instruction in righteousness." The writers of Scripture were merely penmen who were Divinely guided and inspired by the Almighty.

Because the Bible is an inspired Book it is infallible and inerrant. That is why the Scriptures are called "the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). If God is the Divine Author of the Holy Bible then there can be no errors or mistakes contained in the Holy Book. Proverbs 30:5-6 declares: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." The children of God ought to rejoice in knowing that they have a book that is inspired by God and without error! We have a Bible that reveals the nature and mind of God as well as His way of salvation. The Bible contains the answers to many of life's knotty questions. The Scriptures are a

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perfect Book of instruction. The Bible tells us who God is, what He requires, what His laws are, the way of salvation, how to live our lives, how to have a happy home, how to raise our children, what kind of church to go to, as well as many other things that pertain unto life and godliness.

The Bible is full to overflowing with truth and moral virtue. It is a wondrous Book of unity and conciseness. Men have written literally millions of volumes commenting upon certain aspects of the Bible, yet God's inspired Word is concise and accurate. All that God wants man to know about spiritual things is contained in one volume consisting of the sixty six books of the Old and New Testaments. There is a wonderful harmony found in the Scriptures in spite of the fact that God used many different types of men over a period of years to declare His infallible will. Basil Manly, the Baptist theologian, wrote the following in *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration:* "Here is a volume made up of sixty-six different books, written in separate sections, by scores of different persons, during a period of fifteen hundred years, a volume antedating in its earlier records all other books in the world, touching human life and knowledge at hundreds of different points. Yet it avoids any absolute, assignable error in dealing with these innumerable themes. Of what other ancient book can this be said? Of what book even one hundred years old can this be said?"

To deny the Divine inspiration, authority, and harmony of God's Holy Book is to be void of reason and common sense. To further illustrate the marvelous unity of the Holy Book I quote David James Burrell who wrote: "If forty odd persons of different tongues and degrees of musical education were to pass through the organ-loft of a church at long intervals and, without any possibility of collusion, strike sixty-six notes each, which, when combined, should yield the theme of an oratorio, it is respectfully submitted that the man who regarded that as 'fortuitous circumstance' would by universal consent be regarded-to put it mildly-sadly deficient in common sense." It is the height of folly to deny the Divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures! Without the Scriptures men wander in darkness and ignorance with nothing of value to guide and instruct them. How much wiser it is to submit to the Scriptures and agree with the Psalmist when he wrote: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105).

Not only has God inspired the Bible, He has preserved it down through the ages for our edification. Psalms 12:6-7 declares: "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psa. 119:89). All of God's truth has been miraculously and accurately maintained by the mighty hand of God. Just as God upholds and sustains His creation, He also has sustained and maintained the contents of His Holy Word without fail through the ages. Even though the Scriptures were written thousands of years ago we can be sure that they

are accurate, trustworthy, and our final authority for all faith and practice today because God is the preserver of the sacred documents of truth.

What is even more astounding

is the fact that God has been

pleased to raise up men of learning and piety to accurately translate the ancient Scriptures from the Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic texts into the common language of the people. God has been pleased to raise up men to translate the ancient Scriptures into literally thousands languages over the face of the whole earth for the benefit and edification of all peoples and races of men. As English speaking people we are most blessed to have the King James Authorized Version of the Bible. There was probably not a more august company of linguistic scholars assembled at any one time to produce this sterling translation out of the original languages. It was first published in 1611 and there is not another English translation that even compares to it for accuracy, flow, and beauty. It was translated when the English language was at its zenith in purity and beauty. It is the height of folly for English speaking people to use inferior translations rather than the King James Authorized Version. All modern translations of the Scriptures are taken from the faulty Vaticanus and Sinaticus which were Catholic manuscripts that had long since been discarded and unusable when Westcott and Hort (both Mariolators) began to promote them as the oldest manuscripts. The reason why they were the oldest manuscripts is not because of their superior accuracy and faithfulness to the originals. Rather they had been discarded and deemed unfit for use until Westcott and Hort

began promoting them. The King James Bible on the other hand was translated from the Majority Text or the Textus Receptus, otherwise known as the Received Text. Any translation that is taken from manuscripts other than the Received Text will have errors and omissions. That is why I can take you to all the modern translations and point out several places where entire passages have been omitted, or where the blood sacrifice of Christ and His essential Deity have been removed. If the ancient Christians discarded the Vaticanus and Sinaticus manuscripts as inferior, then God's people today should likewise reject any translation that has come from them.

Because man is depraved and ungodly he wanted to cast doubt upon the inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures. In the latter part of the 1800's college professors and self-proclaimed scholars began to cast doubt upon the authenticity of the Bible. It started with German rationalism, which led to higher criticism, which led to a flood of inaccurate translations. Because of the doubts raised by infidels and higher critics the Bible is no longer considered as the Word of God in many circles. Because of the flood of inferior translations people are confused and dismayed. Many preachers are so bent on trying to correct the King James and show off their limited knowledge of the original languages they cast doubt upon the veracity of the Bible in the minds of their hearers. Brothers and sisters, you do not have to be a Greek and Hebrew scholar to read God's Word! We do not need popes and priests to tell us what we are to believe or not to believe. We do not have to go to Greek and Hebrew scholars in order to get

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the proper interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. We can humbly go to the Word of God itself and plead with God the Holy Spirit to open our eyes so that we may behold wondrous things out of God's law. We have an accurate and trustworthy translation in the King James Authorized Version that is unsurpassed. It is the only Bible that God has used among English speaking people during times of great awakenings and revivals through the years. You can trace the current apostasy back to the time when men began to use other translations and cast doubt upon the authoritative Word of God.

How blessed we are to have free access to God's revelation of His mind and will as contained in the Holy Scriptures. The Bible is the Word of God. Since the Bible is Holy, infallible, trustworthy, instructive, and inerrant we ought to devote our lives to the study and application of its blessed contents. There is not a more important book in all the world than the Holy Bible. Why then do a majority of people rarely open the Sacred Book? Why are men and women engaged more in pleasure and worldly pursuits then the consistent perusal and application of the Holy Scriptures? May God stir both writer and reader alike to obey the admonition of II Timothy 2:15 which declares: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." May God be pleased to stir us up to diligently search and apply the blessed truths of Scriptures to our lives. May we be able to say with Job: "Neither have I gone back from

the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

#### **SALVATION**

Another one of God's works is that of wondrous salvation. Salvation, which is the deliverance from the penalty, power, and ultimately the presence of sin is all a work of God alone on behalf of sinful man. Like Jonah of old, I ascribe to the Scriptural sotieriology which says: "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). Every aspect of salvation from beginning to end is a sovereign work of God on behalf of a helpless sinner. God purposed, purchased, and appropriates salvation in the behalf of His elect. Thus salvation is not a work of God along with the work of man, it is solely a work of God's amazing and sovereign grace apart from the works of man. The earnest student of Scripture will search in vain for any passage in the Bible that attributes salvation in whole or in part to the works of men. Every head of sotieriology, whether it regeneration, justification, redemption, sanctification, or glorification, attributes salvation to the work of God. One of the most classic passages where this is abundantly clear is found in I Peter 1:2-5 which states: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and

undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Where are the works of man mentioned in this passage? I read of the work of the Father, Son and Spirit, but not the works of man in the grand and glorious plan of salvation. God is the designer, architect, buyer, builder, and worker of salvation in the hearts of His elect!

Before the world began God the Father entered into a Covenant of grace and redemption with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The terms of the agreement were as follows: God the Father unconditionally elected a specific number of individuals out of Adam's fallen race unto salvation, God the Son agreed to be Surety for all those whom the Father chose to save by paying their penalty for sin and redeeming them with His own precious blood, God the Spirit agreed to appropriate the purchased redemption to the elect in time through the work of regeneration. Ephesians 1:4-5 declares: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." According to this verse God chose a people in Christ before they ever existed and predestinated them to be saved and conformed to the image of Jesus Christ according to His own sovereign and wise counsel. Man was entirely passive in the decree of unconditional election. This election by the Father was according to God's own free will, not man's. Man is

merely the recipient of sovereign grace. God the Father did all the choosing in eternity. Everyone who was elected by the Father will be saved by Jesus Christ the Son without fail according to John 6:37-39 declares: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

Because of the total depravity and inability of the natural man to understand the things of God the Holy Spirit must quicken the elect in regeneration and grace him with the gifts of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The natural man is considered to be dead in sins (Eph. 2:1), incapable of comprehending spiritual things (I Cor. 2:14), unwilling to come to Christ (John 3:19-20), and unable to come to Christ on his own (John 6:44). The condition of the natural man is adequately stated in Romans 8:7-8 which states: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. SO THEN THEY THAT ARE IN THE FLESH **CANNOT PLEASE GOD."** The natural man's heart, mind, will, and affections are enslaved to a fleshly nature that hates God and is averse to all of His ways. The natural man cannot rise above his own nature and choose Jesus Christ. Jeremiah 13:23 states: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

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We may as well expect the river to cease to run into the sea, as expect the natural man to turn from the current of his sins. The enmity of His will must be slain by the effectual work of the Holy Spirit. When the total depravity and inability of the natural man is understood, then it becomes perfectly clear that salvation is a wondrous work of God alone through sovereign grace apart from the work of man.

The Holy Spirit begins the work of salvation in man when He regenerates the dead sinner by His sovereign power. The sinner is totally passive in the new birth, it is solely a wondrous work of God the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the truth of God's Word applied to the heart in conversion. This truth is in total contradiction of today's theology which attributes regeneration to man's will or his decision making process. Preachers today say that repentance and faith are the moving causes of the new birth. However, man is dead in sins, he cannot repent and believe. He must be made alive by the Spirit in the new birth in order to repent and believe. There is not one Scripture in all the Bible that attributes regeneration or salvation to man's free will, but there are several Scriptures which attribute it solely to God's will and power.

John 1:13 declares: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, NOR OF THE WILL OF MAN, BUT OF GOD."

Romans 9:15-16 declares: "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

James 1:17-18 states: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

I Peter 1:23 declares: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

In each of the foregoing Scriptures God is said to be the moving force behind the new birth, not man. In regeneration God creates a new man within the sinner in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24). Thus the new birth is to be viewed as a creative act in the heart, soul and spirit of the dead sinner. Salvation is solely a work of God as Ephesians 2:8-10 declares: "For by grace are ye saved through faith: AND NOT OF YOURSELVES: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are HIS WORKMANSHIP, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

When the Holy Spirit performs the new birth on the elect sinner, and enables him to turn from sin and embrace Christ by faith as Lord and Savior the sinner is justified from all things. It is faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ that saves, and keeps a sinner saved. When Christ shed His precious blood upon the cross of Calvary He cried: "It is finished", meaning that the

work of redemption on behalf of His elect was accomplished through His sacrifice. Absolutely nothing can be added to the work of Christ for salvation. The elect are declared to be "accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6), and "complete in him" (Col. 2:10). It is the wondrous work of Jesus Christ that saves sinners, not the vain works of men.

Just as God sustains and maintains His wondrous works of creation and revelation, He also preserves His elect in persevering grace. Philippians 1:6 declares: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." It is impossible for one of God's children, who have been born of the Spirit, and exercised saving faith to lose God's salvation and be ultimately lost. Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep, promised that He would not lose any of His people. John 10:27-28 declares: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Those who believe that God's children can lose their salvation are in essence calling Jesus Christ a liar and doubting His power and ability to keep His sheep. Jude 24 declares: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with **exceeding joy.**" The righteousness of Jesus Christ which is imputed to the sinner in justification can never be abolished or taken away according to Isaiah 51:6 which states: "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens

shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: **BUT MY SALVATION SHALL** BE FOR EVER, AND MY **RIGHTEOUSNESS** SHALL NOT BE ABOLISHED."

Just as in all the other wondrous works of God, man has always tried to duplicate the work of salvation. Baptismal regeneration, legalism, good works, freewillism, and church membership for salvation are all vain attempts of sinful man to duplicate and imitate the wondrous work of God in salvation. Those who preach works salvation and glorify the merits of men must be regarded as antichristian promulgators of heresy and error that seek to rob God of His glory and honor. God alone is the author and finisher of salvation. Man gets no glory or credit for the salvation of his soul, it belongs to God alone! As the eternal ages roll on the blood washed saints of God will be praising God for His wondrous work of salvation! Not one saint in Heaven will ever try to take any of the credit or glory that belongs solely to God. Rather the multitude of the redeemed will be found attributing all glory unto God as Revelation 5:12-13 makes abundantly clear: "Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." It is the height of folly to attribute

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the wondrous work of salvation to anyone or anything other than our Sovereign Lord and His matchless grace. Romans 11:6 should forever settle the issue: "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

#### THE INSTITUTION

Just as the wondrous works of creation, revelation, and salvation are solely attributed to God alone, the institution known as the Lord's New Testament church must also be regarded as a wondrous work of God that cannot be duplicated by man. Through the years men have attempted to start churches and denominations through their own ingenuity and instrumentality. However all denominations of human origin must be regarded as perverse imitations of the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is the builder and sustainer of His church. And I am not ashamed to say that the Lord's church throughout the centuries would today be identified as a Sovereign Grace, Landmark Baptist Church.

Jesus Christ started and organized the first church during His earthly ministry out of the materials prepared by John the Baptist. The first church had its beginning prior to the day of Pentecost. The church was not started by the Holy Spirit as many Protestants falsely believe, but rather by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Matthew 16:18 declares: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH; and the gates of hell

shall not prevail against it." The first mention of the word "church" in the Bible should forever settle all controversies concerning the origin of the church. By calling it "My church," Jesus distinguishes His kind of church from all previous assemblies before He came on the earthly scene, as well as all assemblies that claim to have originated after He left the planet earth. From a simple reading of the verse we may conclude that Jesus Christ is the foundation and founder of the church which implicitly dates the origin of the church's existence to the time of His earthly ministry. Jesus clearly stated that He Himself would build His church, not the Holy Spirit, or Paul, or Martin Luther. We must either take Christ at His word or call Him a liar. The verse also implies that the powers of darkness would never be able to prevail or overcome the church that Jesus started, meaning that it would have an uninterrupted existence. He either did or did not start His kind of church and promise it perpetuity during His earthly ministry. I choose to accept the plain words of Christ rather than the deluded notions and theories of Protestants and Scofieldites! Any date assigned to the origin of the church prior to or after the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ must be regarded as inaccurate and false in light of this verse. A church is a called out assembly of baptized believers. In John chapter one Jesus called out the disciples who had been baptized by John the Baptist to follow Him, thus the first church was started during the first year of Christ's earthly ministry.

Jesus not only founded His kind of church during His earthly ministry, He also emphatically stated that He would personally perpetuate His church through

the centuries until He comes again. Jesus Christ promised to preserve and sustain His church through the centuries without fail. After giving the responsibility to carry out the Great Commission to the church in Matthew 28:20 He declared: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I AM WITH YOU ALWAY, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD. AMEN." The force of this statement by Jesus Christ must not be underestimated. He promised that His kind of church would enjoy His presence and power until He returns. Since the times of Jesus Christ up until this present day there have been Baptist churches in existence that have been Scripturally organized, founded upon New Testament principles, carrying out the Great Commission, and earnestly contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints. John 15:16 contains another promise by Christ regarding the preservation and perpetuity of His kind of church: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen, you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, AND THAT YOUR FRUIT **SHOULD REMAIN...**" The fruit of the first church at Jerusalem was the church at Antioch that believed and practiced the truth. From the church at Antioch Paul, Barnabas, and later Silas were sent out with authority to establish and organize New Testament churches that would likewise bear the fruits of Scriptural doctrines and practice. The fruit of the first church is still remaining up until this present day through Baptist churches that are still standing for the same truths that the Jerusalem church did. Like begets like, and Baptist

churches have been begetting Baptist churches in succession through the centuries, bearing fruit, just as the Lord promised, without fail.

Ephesians 3:21 declares: "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus THROUGH ALL AGES, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN." It should be immediately apparent to even the most casual reader that this verse means that Christ will receive glory in His kind of church throughout all ages. This logically leads to the conclusion that the kind of church that Jesus started during His earthly ministry must be preserved and sustained by Him in order for Him to receive glory in all ages. Christ has been receiving glory in His churches in every century without fail, and will continue to do so as the eternal ages roll on as He dwells with His Bride in the New Jerusalem. The institution started by Christ will be forever maintained and preserved by Christ. Scriptural and historical evidence point to the truth of Baptist succession and perpetuity.

If the foregoing promises of Christ regarding the preservation, perpetuity, and succession of His kind of church be true (and they are) then every Catholic, Protestant, and Cult member must be regarded as being in unscriptural organizations that have no authority to exist from the Scriptures or from Christ. Christ did not start, nor did He promise to be with and perpetuate the Roman Catholic Church. She is described as the Mother of harlots in Revelation chapter 17. Those churches that emerged and evolved from the Protestant Reformation trace authority to exist, as well as their ordinances and ordinations back

(Continued on page 23)

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to the Roman Catholic Church, which is an impure source. Martin Luther is the head and founder of the Lutheran Church, not Jesus Christ. King Henry VIII is the founder and head of the Episcopalian Church, not Jesus Christ. John Calvin is the founder and head of the Presbyterian Church, not Jesus Christ. John Wesley is the founder and head of the Methodist Church, nor Jesus Christ. Alexander Campbell is the founder and head of the socalled Church of Christ, not Jesus Christ. The Nazarene, Church of God, Free-Will Baptist, and Hardshell churches were all likewise movements whose founders and heads were men, not Jesus Christ. All of the cults and Charismatic churches that have arisen through the years have been founded by men.

Every one of these false organizations have several things in common. They were not started or promised perpetuity by Jesus Christ. They all trace their authority to exist back to a human founder. They are all permeated with doctrinal heresy and some form of serious error. The errors of infant baptism, baptismal regeneration, church hierarchy in government, works salvation, continuing revelation, universal invisible church, and a variety of other heresies are found in these organizations that were not founded by Jesus Christ. They all have vainly attempted to duplicate and imitate the institution which Christ started during His earthly ministry. They all exist on the basic premise that Jesus Christ lied when He said that the gates of Hell would not prevail against His kind of Church, and that He would be with His Church until

He returns. All of these false organizations named above were started by men who rejected the authority of New Testament Baptist churches to administer the ordinances of Christ as they were once delivered.

Our Baptist forefathers were hated, hounded, persecuted, tortured, and put to death for defending the precious truths that we maintain today. They braved dungeon, fire, sword, and incomprehensible cruelties for the cause of Christ. In every century our Baptist forefathers have shone as beacons in the night, preaching the truth and exposing error. They have not bowed to the dictates or threats of men, but rather chose to suffer affliction and worship Christ in Spirit and in truth. May God enable us to maintain and defend the precious truths of the Lord's church by obeying the admonition of Jude 3 which states: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that YE SHOULD EARNESTLY **CONTEND** FOR THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE THE **DELIVERED UNTO** SAINTS."

#### CONCLUSION

1. As we consider the wondrous works of God in creation, revelation, salvation, and the institution known as the Lord's church our hearts should be filled with praise for our God who alone has the power to begin and maintain these wondrous works. God's purpose regarding His wondrous works can never be thwarted by men or devils. We must agree with the writer of Ecclesiastes 3:14: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from

# it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him."

2. As we consider the wondrous works of God the depravity and sinfulness of man becomes painfully apparent. Sinful men have always tried to corrupt and pervert the wondrous works of God. Men have always tried to rob God of the glory and honor due to His holy name concerning the wondrous works of creation, revelation, salvation, and the institution of the church. The heart of sinful man has always been set upon evil in an attempt to dethrone God and reject His sovereignty and authority. We must conclude with the writer of Ecclesiastes 7:29: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."

3. Lastly, if God has been pleased to reveal the truth of His wondrous works to your mind and heart respond with a life filled with thankfulness, service, and worship. If God has opened your eyes to the truth of creation, if He has blessed you with comprehension of His revelation, if He has graced you with the gift of salvation, and if He has placed you in His institution, the church, lift up your voice in praise and adoration to the Most High. Hearken to and obey the admonition of the author of all these wondrous works in Ecclesiastes 12:13 which states: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

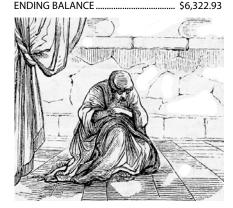
(All emph. in Scripture by TWR)

(Tom Ross is pastor of the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church of Chesapeake, Ohio.)



#### BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 9-1-2019 to 9-30-2019

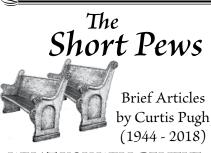
Beginning Balance	\$7,407.73
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	200.00
Carol Willett, Cottonwood Shores, TX	
Citrus M. B. C. Inverness, FL	25.00
Emmanuel B. C., Oldtown, KY	100.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR	12.50
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Gladwin, MI	50.00
Grace B. C., Rural Hall, NC	50.00
Grace Missionary B. C. Tulsa, OK	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
MIchael Sherman, Ashland, KY	
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	
New Testament B C., Goshen, IN	
Parkway Landmark B. C., Springfield,	
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR	
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	
Sovereign Grace B. C., Indianapolis, IN	110.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	
Subscriptions	362.00
Anonymous	
Dividing checks	
Sub Total	
TOTAL	\$9,882.23
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	
Postage	
Wages	
FICA	175.96
Supplies	50.05



Total Expenditures ...

#### BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 9-1-2019 to 9-30-2019

9-1-2019 to 9-30-2019				
Beginning Balance\$2,494.63				
RECEIPTS:				
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS 225.00				
Calvary Ind. B. C., Sumas, WA 100.00				
Grace B. C. , Corbin, KY 100.00				
TOTAL2,919.63				
EXPENDITURES:				
Radio Time 363.98				
Program production 0.00				
TOTAL EXPENDITURES 363.98				
2,555.65				
Interest 0.02				
ENDING BALANCE\$2,555.67				



#### WHAT YOU WILL BELIEVE IN HEAVEN

Here on earth people believe a great many different things about God. Some think He created the world and sort of wound it up and set it aside to run without His interference. Others think God would like to do certain things such as save everyone – but He cannot because men will not let Him. A comparative few believe that God is sovereign: that is, that He has a plan and the ability to carry out that plan. In other words they believe that God is doing exactly what He planned to do, including saving those whom He wants to save.

Let us look at what is believed in Heaven and what they are going to say up there about God. Consider these words which are prophesied to be spoken in Heaven: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). What? God is worthy to be glorified and receive praise because of what? Because He is the Creator of all things and He created them for His pleasure! God made all things for His pleasure and allows them continued existence for His pleasure - because He is pleased to do so. These are the words of those who believe in the absolute sovereignty of God in all things.

Even wicked men and women were made by God for Himself. Consider Proverbs 16:4 where this truth is written: "The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea,

even the wicked for the day of evil."

When the wicked shall be judged the justice and fairness of God will be displayed before men, angels and demons. God is sovereign now and was when He made His plan for this world and its population.

sovereignty over all God's creation is taught throughout the Bible. In Isaiah 46:9-10 it is clearly taught. There it is written: "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

God never took any created being into His planning session before He created all things and He does not consult with any man or woman today about what He is doing. Being absolutely sovereign means that God is not controlled, or influenced, by anyone or anything outside Himself. It means that He needs no "plan B" in case His "plan A" fails. Adam's sin was no surprise to Him, nor was yours and mine nor those of anyone, including the sins of His elect people.

You and I may be confused and in error about God while we live down here, but if you go to Heaven you shall believe in and speak of His glorious sovereignty and rulership over all things.



# **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Cortland, Ohio, is in need of a pastor. The Church believes and teaches the doctrines of grace and local church truth. If any man is interested please contact Brother Bill Davis at 330-770-1610 or Wayne Waddell at 330-979-8828 or Sean Fellows at 330 638-0269 for additional information. Please remember this church in your prayers.

The Grace Bible Baptist Church of Denham Springs is in search of a pastor.

For a statement of faith you can visit the church website at http:// GraceBibleBaptist.webhop.org http://gracebbc.dyndns.org:81/.

You may contact any of the following for more information: Keith Laurence (225) 664-3557, Lucien LeSage (225) 803-9710, or Charlie Andrews (225) 200-1171.

The Grace Landmark Baptist Church of Buckhannon, WV, is seeking a pastor. The church is Sovereign Grace and Landmark in doctrine and practice. Any interested called pastor of like faith may contact Brother Brad Butcher at (304) 669-4738 or (304) 745-6226.

The Stephens Branch Baptist Church of Martin, Kentucky is in need of a pastor. They are an Independent, Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Missionary Baptist church holding to the doctrines of grace and the King James Bible. If you are interested in being considered or would like more information on the church you can call Brother Lonnie

41649.

Edwards at (859) 629-1413 or write

the church at: Stephens Branch

Baptist Church, 1025 Stephens

Branch Road, Martin, Kentucky

The Berea Baptist Church of Mantachie, Mississippi is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact (662) 282-7794 or Email:request@ bereabaptistchurch.org.

The Lord's Baptist Church in Tacoma Washington is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact Gaylen Russell at 360-879-5565 (home) or 253-495-4567 (cell) or by Email: gaylenr@ rainierconnect.com.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Caldwell, KS is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact the church in writing at SGBC, 400 N. Main St., Caldwell, KS 67022, or by phone Brother Darin Wiley 620-863-2431.

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

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