

A Wicked World Full of Opportunities

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia



"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Peter 3:3-8).

Our time is often spent lamenting the situation of the world in which we live, and the sad decline of morality in our nation. Let me remind you, that the Apostles and

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An Anchor of the Soul

By Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 6:19-20).

The Israelites were not a seafaring people, but they learned much about ships from their Gentile contemporaries. New Testament Christians seemed to have ample knowledge of ships and their anchors as can be seen from my text. The anchor became a symbol of hope to Christians. It was found engraved on rings and depicted on monuments, and on the walls of the catacombs. The anchor was associated with the fish, the symbol of the Savior. It is clear that the union of the two symbols expressed "hope in Jesus Christ."

In the text the anchor is a seafaring figure employed to set forth the particular characteristic of the Christian hope. The writer of Hebrews styles hope as "the anchor of the soul" to distinguish it from the iron anchors used by ships.

WE ARE IN THE WORLD AS A SHIP AT SEA

In the mind of the writer of Hebrews our

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Born to Overcome

By Rosco Brong
(1908 - 1985)



*All True Believers in Christ
Are Born of God and
Overcome the World*
"Whosoever believeth
that Jesus is the Christ is
born of God. . . Whatsoever

is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:1-4).

That every true believer in Jesus Christ is a born-again child of God and that every born-again child of God overcomes the world---this is what our text affirms, though it be denied by some 90 per cent of professed Christianity today. In more literal translation we read: "Everyone believing that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God. . . Everything that has been born from God overcomes the world. . ."

GOD'S WORD IS TRUTH

Now, either we believe this simple declaration of God's Word or we do not. And whether we believe it or not, His Word is still truth (John 17:17). Shall our unbelief nullify the faith of God? May it not be---but "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:3-4).

Let no hypocrite vainly claim to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, while in the next breath he denies the truth of this plain

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If Christ and thy heart are one,
sin and thy heart are two.

We cannot hold to our Lord, and yet love that which He hates.

"Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart" (Psalms 26:2).

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalms 66:18).

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The purpose of the Berea Baptist Banner is as follows:

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

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others have warned us that the end times would be evil, and that men would grow more and more wicked as the generations would pass. Remember, the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back, but the wickedness of men must be increased before that time. If nothing else, I encourage you to take solace in the fact that the wickedness of our place and time seems to be an indication that Jesus Christ is coming back very soon.

During the course of my sermon I want to give you some encouragement and some hope to help you deal with the wicked and evil times in which we live. The title of my sermon is "A Wicked World Full of Opportunities." I do not want to speak concerning the "wicked" opportunities that exist for the "wicked" world to indulge in. Rather, I want to remind us of the good and godly opportunities that we have to serve God in the midst of this wicked world – a world which seems to only increase in wickedness. I want to remind you that in a wicked world, we will find many opportunities to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not want to condone the wickedness in any way; nor do I want to seem to encourage an increase in wickedness so that our service might be more evident or more necessary or more potent or influential in some way. I only want you to know that there is a use for us, as God's people, in such a place and time in which we live. And, in this world of wickedness, God, and His Son Jesus Christ, will still be exalted, and His Word and His purpose will still be accomplished.

GRACE IS MAGNIFIED

Though this is a difficult

proposition to properly understand, it is true, at least from a human perspective, that the glories of the grace of God are magnified, when cast against the backdrop of the sins of man. In reality, there is no grace in salvation when there is no sin. For, the person who has not sinned (if such a person other than Jesus Christ could be found) would not need grace – would not need salvation – since he had not sinned or transgressed against God. But, we know that sin in an inherited characteristic that we receive from our earthly fathers. And, we know that the tendency to sin is also inherent in each of us. So, in order for there to be peace with God, there must be salvation for our souls. And, in order for there to be salvation for our souls, the grace of God – the free favor of God – must be bestowed upon us, and God must intervene on our behalf. His grace is necessary, because we cannot save ourselves.

Of course, this is true in the case of every man, for every man is a sinner. **"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one"** (Ps. 14:2-3). The wicked world is full of only sinners, naturally speaking. It is also true that every man – no matter how small or great his sin – stands in need of God's grace and the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ.

And yet, when the backdrop of sin increases in darkness – as it seems to have done; when the backdrop of sin is so dark that there seems to be no day and no place so dark as ours; isn't the grace of God somewhat more

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noticeable? When God will save one in such a place and time, doesn't it seem, at least from our human perspective, to be so beautiful and magnificent? On a personal level, look at how glorious the salvation of such a sinner as Saul of Tarsus will appear in our eyes. **"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting"** (I Tim. 1:12-16). In some ways, Saul of Tarsus was set before us, so that we could see that the grace of God was capable of intervening and bringing salvation unto any man – no matter the wickedness, and no matter the degree of opposition he may have formerly demonstrated against the Word and ways of God.

It must also be true, that God's grace is still yet capable of bringing salvation and succor to the Lord's elect, no matter how great the sin that does surround His chosen, and no matter how great might be the disdain and disregard His people – and those around them – might demonstrate. It seems to me, at least from a human perspective, that the glorious grace

of God appears more evident – and perhaps more glorious? – when cast against the backdrop of such a sinful generation and such a sinful society as is ours.

Consider the case of the wicked city of Nineveh in the time of the prophet Jonah. That wicked city was full of sin, had no regard for God and His Word, and yet they repented when the prophet preached to them. **"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not"** (Jonah 3:5-10). What glorious grace was displayed here! How marvelous and magnificent does this grace appear, and perhaps, more glorious still, because of the former wickedness of such a people! Even Jonah was astonished – though his astonishment was accompanied with childish jealousy and foolish regret that God would perform such a miracle of grace.

I suppose, that if God will reach

Little Hills

By Nathaniel Hille of
Plant City, Florida



The HOW of the New Birth?—Part 2 #6

"How can a man be born when he is old" (John 3:4). Jesus replied, **"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"** (John 3:5). Last time we noted that **"water"** was symbolic of the Word of God; NOT baptism. This time we take note of born **"of the Spirit."** It is the work of God the Holy Spirit to give spiritual life or beget spiritual life. He is the Begetter, **"... because he is born of God"** (I John 3:9); **"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"** (John 1:13); **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which**

is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). Only He who is the Spirit of God can bring about spiritual life, **"It is the Spirit that quickeneth (makes alive)"** (John 6:63). Today, pulpits are filled with preachers telling folks to "make decisions for Christ" and "open your heart's door to Jesus and let Him in." **A DEAD PERSON CANNOT DO EITHER.** The spiritual dead cannot "decide" or "open" anything anymore than a baby can choose to be conceived. Sinners must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God, or else they cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Have you opened your heart's door to Christ, or made a decision for Jesus OR have you been born by the Spirit?

down and save a soul amongst our leaders – just as the King of Nineveh repented of his sins – then we would be astonished and marvel anew, that God's grace would prosper and even flourish unto salvation, in the midst of such a wicked and perverse generation as ours.

THE LIGHT SHINES BRIGHTER

Humanly speaking, the term "light" is relative. Probably, the light of the witness and testimony of every saint of God since the time of Adam has been relative, in at least a small way. In other words, the amount or the brightness of the light must be gauged, on some level, by the darkness with which the light is surrounded. The light would not be as visible

when the darkness is not so dark! Conversely, the light would be even more evident in times and places where the darkness seems to be complete.

This would be true in the case of every person who bore a witness of God, with the exception of Jesus Christ. (His light and His testimony was direct from Heaven, and was only shielded to the extent that He permitted it to be. His "light" was unviewable, in its entirety, by mere mortal men.) Consider this world: sometimes, in this life, the night is not so dark as the night before. Perhaps there are fewer clouds in the sky allowing more of the moonlight to diminish the darkness. Or, perhaps there is a

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full moon as opposed to no moon on a particular night. Then again, consider the (seemingly) utter darkness that one experiences in an underground cave, with no artificial light to throw back the darkness. Imagine this darkness, so extreme that a person cannot even see a hint of his own hand when held before his face! Do you see what I mean? Some darkness is not so dark as other darkness. When we apply this principle to humanity, and the sinfulness of man, I do not mean to diminish the sin or the guilt of men; still, God will sometimes use the Holy Spirit and the circumstances of men to restrain, to some degree, the wickedness of men and women of certain places and times. In these particular places and times, perhaps there is in evidence a fear of God that might be absent in other generations or other places and times.

However, here we are at the (apparent) end of the world. You and I have an opportunity now – when the world seems darkest – to brightly shine before the world of men. Here we are, at the point in time, and the place in the world of men, when sin seems to be reaching a new and most terrible level. Perhaps we can dare to say that sin and man's wickedness has reached a crescendo – and the judgment of God is about to burst forth! Is there any other age so wicked and so dark as ours?

It is certainly true that the land of Palestine, in the time of Jesus Christ was a wicked place and time. I believe that Satan was working feverishly to prevent the birth of the Messiah, the perfection and holiness of the necessary Saviour, and seeking to prevent the completion of the

work of salvation necessary for the redemption of the people of God. In this wicked place and time, John the Baptist came first, preparing the people of the Lord. Speaking of John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ had this to say: **“He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light”** (John 5:35). In the midst of the worldliness and the secular religion of the Jews; in the midst of the devils, the demons, and the depravity of men; John the Baptist shone forth as a light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Then, the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples would take up that **“light,”** and they would shine brightly forth, in the darkness of the land of Palestine. Later, the Apostles and the churches of Jesus Christ would carry that **“light”** into the most distant lands.

There is hardly a place on the face of this earth, where the light of the Gospel and the testimony of Jesus Christ is not greatly needed. **“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain”** (Phil. 2:15-16). The world is dark. The Word of God, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a bright light. Maybe, when the sin and wickedness is greater – when the darkness of men is deeper – the contrast allows that the holy lives, and the righteous words and deeds of the people of God is a still greater light than might have been noticed before.

THE WORD OF GOD IS PRECIOUS

In a day when God is hardly noticed, it comes as no surprise

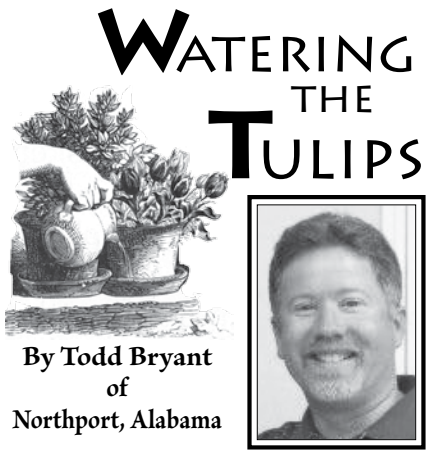
to find that the Word of God is mostly ignored, if not utterly reviled and cast aside. In such a day as ours, the value of the Word of God seems to be increased in the lives of those who have been made to know Jesus Christ as their only Saviour and the only hope of mankind. In such a place and time as we live, the Word of God – and belief and trust in that Word – has become a rare commodity indeed. **“And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision”** (I Sam. 3:1). In the time of young Samuel, the Word of God was precious, or rare. Very often, that which is hard to find, or that which is rarely seen, or that which is possessed by only the few, becomes something that is considered to be of great value. I suppose that the same could be said of the Word of God in our day and age.

Of course, the Word of God has always been precious. How can we set a price on something given from Heaven, handed down through angels, and delivered by men inspired by the very breath of God? Such is the Word of God! Job spoke about the value of wisdom. **“But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made**

of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding” (Job 28:12-20)? Where can wisdom be found in our time, except in the Word of God, and in the leadership of the Holy Spirit? What value can be placed upon something that exceeds any human or mortal value? And yet, many times, the world of men does not have any esteem for God's Word.

Dare we say, that now, in the hearts and minds of the people of God, the Word of God is more important and more precious than it was, perhaps, before? **“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”** (Ps. 119:103-105). I know that the Word is indispensable in the life of a Christian. And, I know that every child of God must have a love for, and a need for, the blessed Word of God. But, let us consider the contrast again: today, men and women of the world do not have the tolerance for the Word of God that past generations have had in our once great nation. Before – even though men might not have highly esteemed the Word of God, they at least tolerated it, respected it enough to engrave the Word of God on public buildings and monuments, and allowed it to be read and spoken in public events. However, now we live in a place where the Word of God is openly ridiculed, and where even a toleration of that Word is not acceptable. Today, as a nation and as the people of God, we stand

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By Todd Bryant
of
Northport, Alabama

Our Message Matters

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (I Cor. 2:1-2).

Corinth was located only 45 miles from Athens where some of the greatest orators in human history studied and lived. Men like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle had greatly influenced the philosophers of Athens in the 1st century. This love of philosophy had bled just down the road to Corinth. These people expected any man who spoke publicly to use the styles of the speech connected with the orators of their day. They much preferred worldly explanations to questions like “Where did we come from?” or “What is our purpose in life?” or “What happens after death?”. Paul had no interest in such tactics.

One must wonder how well Paul’s preaching would be received in contemporary Christianity. Though Paul was well schooled and certainly understood Greco-Roman culture, he chose to speak plain, intelligible words to his audience when he preached. He was not interested in being viewed as a great orator. Paul was

not trying to become the greatest preacher of all-time. His goal was simple – to urge sinners to repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

Paul was a preacher of the Word of God. He reasoned with people from the Old Testament Scriptures to prove that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 9:22). Paul was the type of evangelist that opened the Word of God at the beginning of the sermon and expounded it until the end of the sermon – oftentimes for hours. His preaching was not based on sad stories and allegories. His preaching had the Gospel at the center as He taught God’s Word to men.

Paul’s type of preaching was “folly to those who are perishing” (I Cor. 1:18). Having a clear understanding of the depravity of man (I Cor. 2:14), there was no reason to polish up his speech with the style of an Athenian orator. Paul spoke the Word of God plainly to common people. Whatever point he started from, he quickly made his way to the cross of Christ. The 19th century English pastor Charles Spurgeon once said, “I take my text and make a beeline to the cross.” This was the method of the Apostle Paul and it ought to be our method today. It may be foolishness to the lost, **“but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God”** (I Cor. 1:24).

In no way am I suggesting that we ought not use proper English or that our sermons ought not be well prepared and outlined. That is not the point of Paul’s message here. As pastors, preachers, missionaries, teachers and even lay people who share the Gospel with friends and family, we must realize the power to save is not in

us – it has nothing to do with our oratorical skill. The Gospel must be shared in truth, of course. But, it does not have to be shared in some high form of communication. We must learn to share the Gospel in a simple, clear, accurate way. And whatever we do, we must make sure that **“Jesus Christ, and him crucified”** is the focal point. We cannot trick people into trusting Jesus. This is the work of God alone through the Gospel. We are merely the messengers (I Cor. 3:5-6).



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in desperate need of the wisdom and the light which comes from God’s Holy Word! **“Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way. Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments”** (Ps. 119:127-131). The inherent value of the Word of God may not be increased in our day and time – It has always been necessary and indispensable in the salvation of souls – and yet, perhaps, in our estimation, the value of the Word of God is increased since there is a dearth of It in our society.

Perhaps, when the Word of God was more widely accepted in our society (though most did not trust in the salvation proclaimed in that Word; many were, nevertheless, outwardly obedient to the precepts, and showed an outward respect for the Word

of God), His Word might have been more “common” and might have lost some of its luster, even in the hearts and minds of those who should have loved It most. Now, due to the wickedness and open rebellion and sin prevalent in our society, the Word of God is more highly valued by the people of God – we thirst and long for It more than we might have, if It were readily available or highly esteemed in our society.

THE SALVATION OF THE DESPERATELY LOST

Finally, I want you to consider that, in this, one of the most desperate hours of mankind’s existence on the face of the earth, there is still hope in Jesus Christ. Does not the time and place in which we live, seem to bear an eerie resemblance to the days of Noah, which directly preceded the coming of the great flood of destruction? Does not the time and place in which we live, seem to bear a striking resemblance to those days in Sodom and Gomorrah, just before fire and brimstone rained down from Heaven? And yet, wonder of wonders, God has still granted us a time in which we can share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit will quicken and bring to spiritual life desperate sinners who did not know how close they were to slipping into eternity and everlasting hell-fire and destruction! **“And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him”** (Isa. 30:18). This is the prelude to the time of destruction. This is the calm before the storm. This is the wait before calamity. Now is the opportunity to serve.

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Now is the opportunity to be useful in the plan and purposes of God. Now is the opportunity to preach and proclaim the Gospel to those who may be the last souls saved before the judgment comes.

I have often wanted to write a book about the history of man and his relationship with God, from the perspective that God is totally successful in His dealings with mankind. Adam and the sins of man, the devil and the fallen angels, have not thwarted God's will, nor has His purposes ever changed. I want you, and everyone else to know that the story of man is not a tragedy – though many are lost and undone, and many will fall into Hell and the Lake of Fire. Rather, the story of man and God is one of success and redemption. The story of man and God is an account and a record of salvation and praise and glory unto God. The Lord has dealt with a ruined mankind in such a way, that souls are saved, that men and women are brought to Jesus Christ, that humanity will be preserved in a glorious fashion, and that – for all eternity – the sons and daughters of Adam will be mixed with the glorious creatures of Heaven in full and wonderful worship of a thrice holy and merciful and gracious God, Who has created us all for His own pleasure.

Just because our place and time seems more wicked than most, this does not mean that God's plan has changed, or that the course of redemption which was set before the world was ever created, has been altered or upset in any way. If we return to our text passage, we read these words: **“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire**

against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:7-9). God is still in control. Yes, the world is wicked. Yes, judgment and destruction is coming. But, if the Lord does not destroy all, does that not mean that He will save some? And, really, is not the judgment and the destruction only the counter to the life and salvation which will be granted unto those who are ordained unto salvation?

The Lord still intends to save some. I firmly believe this. As long as the judgment of God is restrained, I believe that there is still more for us to do. Ours is a Heavenly commission to bring salvation to the people of God. Those chosen ones of God who are not yet called, are, even now, lost and desperate – mingling with the sins and depravations of one of the most wicked generations that has ever walked the face of the earth. And yet, they need Jesus Christ. We will bring them the Gospel, the Holy Spirit will grant them the faith, their spirits will be quickened, and they will be saved – changed, made a new creature in Christ Jesus. What more glorious task could we ask for? What higher honor has ever been granted to any generation of God's people then what has been granted unto us? Our eyes have witnessed terrible sins, and the fall of our society. But, perhaps, our eyes will also witness the salvation of the Lord's people, for whom the coming of Jesus Christ has been

kept. Maybe our eyes and our generation will be the ones that see the Lord coming in the clouds. In the end, would that sight not be worth all that we endure in this life? Though we witness the demise of our society from a moral perspective, we might also witness the coming of the Lord. This is a wicked world, but it is full of opportunities to serve, to praise, and to glorify God – if we will only seek them out.



An Anchor of the

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souls are seen as ships. We sail upon the sea of time. Christ is our Captain and angels are the sailors of our ship. We have set sail to the distant port of Heaven. The Bible is our chart and compass. The comforts, expectations, graces, and happiness of our souls are the precious cargo with which our ships are loaded.

Any voyage across the sea is dangerous and difficult. Even so the voyage of life is marked by many troublesome and dangerous storms. The Prince of the power of the air sends great gusts of the winds of false doctrine upon our ships (Eph. 4:14). These things threaten to cast our ship upon rocks and sands. There is the lightening of the failure of some who go back and walk no more (John 6:66). There is also the thunders of bodily afflictions, temporal anxieties and losses, family trials, and social breavements. Then, last of all, there is the last great storm of the death of the body.

The dangers in navigating the sea of life are numerous. The dark storms which come upon us try and imperil our souls. How we must watch out for the hidden rocks of sin. How we need to

beware of being driven by the fierce, wild winds of passion against the stony cliffs. Sometimes the winds hurry us helplessly onward by the storm of sorrow and suffering. Many a noble soul has reached the desired haven sorely damaged in the storms of life. False professors never reach Heaven, for they suffer shipwreck along the way (I Tim. 1:19).

The songwriter has so well expressed it in these words---

*When the storms of life are raging,
Stand by me;
When the world is tossing me
Like a ship upon the sea;
Thou who rulest wind and water,
Stand by me.*

*In the midst of tribulations,
Stand by me.
When the hosts of Hell assail,
And my strength begins to fail,
Thou who never lost a battle,
Stand by me.*

*In the midst of faults and failure,
Stand by me.
When I do the best I can,
And my friends misunderstand,
Thou who knowest all about me,
Stand by me.*

*In the midst of persecution,
Stand by me.
When my foes in battle array
Undertake to stop my way,
Thou who saved Paul and Silas,
Stand by me.*

*When I'm growing old and feeble,
Stand by me;
When my life becomes a burden,
And I'm nearing chilly Jordan,
O Thou "Lily of the Valley,"
Stand by me.*

HEAVEN IS THE HARBOR TO WHICH WE SAIL

As Christians we have set sail to

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our home beyond the sea of time. Our country is beyond the blue sky where our citizenship is: **“For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ”** (Phil. 3:20). Heaven is the place of our inheritance (I Pet. 1:4). When we arrive there we shall have **“a better and an enduring substance”** (Heb. 10:34). Our departed friends and family are there. Our treasures are there. Our Lord commanded: **“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”** (Matt. 6:20).

Onward still, from day to day, from week to week, from year to year, we continue our voyage toward the Celestial City. It will not be long until we shall safely enter the harbor and gaze on the wonders of this beautiful land. What pearly gates we shall see! What jasper walls we shall behold! What golden streets we shall walk upon! There will be the tree of life and the water of life in Heaven's clear breeze. There we will meet with those who have gone before. Best of all, there we shall meet our great Admiral Christ. Then we shall forget the storms and tempests, for this is Heaven, the land of pure delight!

AN ANCHOR IS NEEDED

What an anchor is to a ship at sea, hope is to our souls. Christian hope will enable us to outride the storm of life. In my text hope means the object of hope. This hope is spelled out in the next chapter of the Book of Hebrews, where we read of **“the bringing in of a better hope”** by **“which we draw nigh unto God”** (Heb. 7:19). This better hope is access to

our High Priest in Heaven, Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul speaks of the **“Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope”** (I Tim. 1:1). Christ prevents our drifting away with the current.

The writer of Hebrews tells us our anchor is **“sure”** and **“steadfast.”** The word **“sure”** means **“certain”** and **“safe,”** so as to not suffer our ship to be carried away. **“Steadfast”** means **“stable”** or **“firm.”** It means **“the thing is established by God”** (Gen. 41:32).

There is very little in this world that we can be sure of. Life is full of uncertainties. We know not what a day may bring forth. But if our hope is in Christ, we have a sure and safe hope, a hope that will not disappoint us. Christian hope rests upon **“a sure foundation”** (Isa. 28:16), and **“the foundation of God standeth sure”** (II Tim. 2:19). Our hope is based upon the promises of God in the Scriptures, and **“the testimony of the LORD is sure”** (Ps. 19:7). Thus our **“waters shall be sure”** (Isa. 33:16), and we can make our **“calling and election sure”** (II Pet. 1:10).

The Christian anchor is sure because it is in Christ Who cannot fail. He has been tried by God, man, and Satan and was able to bear the strain they put upon Him. Since all the promises of God are in Christ they are **“sure to all the seed”** (Rom. 4:16). Our anchor is sure because the blood of Christ cannot lose its saving efficacy. It is sure because His intercession is always availing for us. The Father always hears Him (John 11:42). Hebrews 7:25 declares: **“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.”**

Our anchor of hope is steadfast

because Jesus as our representative is rooted in God by an **“everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure”** (II Sam. 23:5). Our anchor holds steadfastly to the finished work of Christ---on His having sprinkled the mercy seat in Heaven with His own precious blood---on His ever appearing in the presence of God for us. The anchor of our hopes is steadfast because nothing can injure the life of the Great High Priest of our profession. Therefore, we hope in Him, think of Him, and look for Him---that is our hope!

According to Hebrews 6:18, it is **“a hope set before us.”** This implies a setting before us as for direction---to show us how to attain it. The Christian hope is set before us by God Himself in His Word. It is devised and provided by Him that we may flee to it for refuge.

Our anchor will hold in the day of adversity when all around us gives way. It will hold in the day of death when the cold billows sweep over our souls. **“Thou art my hope in the day of evil”** (Jer. 17:17). It will hold in the day of judgment when the elements melt with fervent heat. A God that cannot lie has said we are safely anchored in Christ. **“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God”** (Ps. 42:11).

AN ANCHOR TAKES HOLD OF THE UNSEEN

An anchor on a ship takes hold of something out of sight. So hope takes hold of an unseen Christ Who has gone beyond the blue sky to the heavenly tabernacle. Christ as our great High Priest has now gone within the veil. This means that our hope has entered Heaven and takes hold of the throne of God. Christ has entered there as our Forerunner (John



Quotes
from
**Brother
Ritechus
N.
Dignation**
by Joseph Harris

BAPTIST FAITHFULNESS

I heard tell of a man's wife who told him she still loved him and would remain his wife, but took her wedding ring off and stopped wearing it. Sounds like she has plans to eventually not be his wife. Kinda reminds me of these churches that take the name Baptist off their sign. Most usually stop being Baptist.

For all you folks who say labels are not important, remember, the label tells what's inside the can. If you buy an unlabeled can at the grocery store, you might end up eatin' catfood casserole.

12:26). The Forerunner awaits the arrival of all His followers. When He entered Heaven He left the gate open. Saint Peter does not need to open the gate for us; Jesus has already opened it for all His people.

As an anchor holds a ship even so our hope is Christ Himself in His perpetual priesthood in Heaven above. His merits and mediation are the grounds of our hope. His priesthood shall never fail until He has accomplished the full and final salvation of all who have believed upon Him. Thank God for this Christian hope! By it we enter the Heaven of heavens where Christ holds fast our souls, notwithstanding all the waves and tempests of Satan, sin, and self which beat daily and constantly against us!

There is no safe anchorage for

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the soul in this lower universe. Gold is no safe anchorage for the soul (Job 31:24). Good works and religious rituals are no true source of hope for the soul. These are rusty chains and poor anchors which will lead only to shipwreck. But the hope which finds its object in Heaven is beyond the frontiers of change and out of the reach of the touch of death. If Christ within the veil in Heaven is not your hope, then you have no hope.

Vain is the anchor without the anchorage; vain is the anchorage without the anchor. The anchor must be rightly cast within the veil where the Forerunner is, or it will not profit in the storms of life. But one's soul is calm as long as his hope is fixed in Christ in the heavenly tabernacle. Pity the man whose hope is not higher than the earth or himself!

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE DOES NOT LEAD TO FEAR

In our earthly experience we often find that hope means an anticipation which is less than sure. Hopes and fears are often not far apart. The Christian hope differs from all worldly hopes. It is no more deduction from probabilities, nor a mere desire for a hypothetical and questionable future. The Christian hope is an expectation grounded on what is certain to take place. It rests upon the God of Heaven to Whom all the future is certain.

The sad case of the unsaved is that they have **"no hope"** (Eph. 2:12). I do not mean they do not have hopes of some sort, but I mean they are without any solid ground of hope. They have no hope in Christ and salvation by Him. Their hopes are not based

on the Divine promises. A grim, hard, unbelief tells them there is no hereafter. On the other hand, the Christian has **"full assurance of hope unto the end"** (Heb. 6:11). The unsaved knows nothing of such sure and certain hope. The hope of the lost is meager, shallow, and uncertain.

A well-taught and a well-disciplined Christian has a good hope. He has a hope which secures him against going on the shoals of doubt, or the hard rock of despair. When life is troubled, conscience agitated, and the heart tossed with tempests, his hope is still in Christ in the heavenly tabernacle. The shipwreck of faith is prevented by the strong anchor of hope in Christ. **"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is"** (Jer. 17:7). **"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God"** (Ps. 146:5).

THE WORTH OF HOPE

The Christian hope is called in the Bible a **"good hope"** (II Thess. 2:16). This is to distinguish it from the bad hope which is never realized. It is a good hope because it has God's grace and promises for its objects, Christ and His righteousness for its foundation, and the Spirit of grace for its Author. It is a part of a good work started in the soul, and it gives hope of good things to come.

I Peter 1:3 tells us the Christian hope is **"a lively hope."** Those who have this hope have been made alive from the dead and begotten unto a lively hope. It has as its object eternal life in the everliving Christ. Those who possess it are lively in working for Christ while they live on earth. The way some professed Christians live they must have a dead hope, for they have a name to live when they are

in truth dead.

FAITH IS THE CABLE WHICH HOLDS THE ANCHOR

Faith and hope cooperate and work together for the help and succor of the believer. Hebrews 11:1 says: **" . . . Faith is the substance of things hoped for. . . "** In the Bible the same word is rendered sometimes "trust" and sometimes "hope," showing how near akin these graces are. Ephesians 1:12 in our version reads: **"Who first trusted in Christ,"** but in the Greek and the margin it is: **"Who first hoped in Christ."** Hope is simply faith directed toward the future, and no sharp distinction between faith and hope is attainable. Faith believes the revelation of God; hope expects His promises to be fulfilled.

As faith may be weak and strong, so hope is sometimes lively and at other times depressed. Hope depends for its vigor on a sound and strong faith. An anchor is of no use without a cable. Even so, hope without faith is of no use and cannot avail the soul anything in the time of need. The more confident the faith we have, the more assured we are of the hopes of the future.

CONCLUSION

1. It is folly to go to sea in a ship without an anchor, yet in a spiritual sense many do just this. Men have impulse and energy, but no hold on the promises of God, no good hope through grace, no hope of Jesus in the heavenly tabernacle. The sinner's only safety is to cast anchor in Christ. Life apart from Him is filled with uncertainties. There is ample ground of hope to all who believe the record God has given of His Son.

2. Some are equally foolish to set sail on the sea of time with a

poor anchor and a rusty chain. Unsound anchors and rusty chains are worse than having none. Some trust in their own righteousness. They glory in what they have accomplished by their own strength and might. A little profession and a faint hope are unsound anchors. They cannot endure the storm of God's wrath. The shipwreck of such people is certain.

3. The fisherman had inscribed on his grave: **"Tho' stormy winds and Neptune's waves have tossed me to and fro. . . Yet now at last, by God's decree, I harbor here below. . . Where I must still at anchor lie, with many of our fleet. . . Till once again we all set sail, our Admiral Christ to meet."**

4. Heaven be praised for the Christian hope that is sure and steadfast. Let us increase in hope until its enrapturing anticipations terminate in a glorious reality. Like John Bunyan, let us **"feel the ground"** and **"see the Gate and Him standing by it to receive us."** Let us lift up our voice like a mighty trumpet and sing:

*Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?*

*It is safely moored, 'twill the storm withstand,
For 'tis well secured by the Savior's hand:
Though the tempest rage and the wild winds blow,
Not an angry wave shall our bark o'er flow.*

*When our eyes behold through the gathering night
The city of gold, our harbor bright,
We shall anchor fast by the heavenly shore,
With the storms all past for ever more.*

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.*



Selah! Think about it!

by Matthew Stepp
of Wayne, West Virginia

“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap... 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. ...The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Ps. 33:6-11).

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). What is so remarkable about the beginning of the universe is that God created it out of NOTHING. The physical (physics) act of creation is really beyond anything we can fathom with our finite minds. Everything we do has a starting point and a beginning that is rooted in something before it. We build sand castles out of sand, skyscrapers out of concrete, steel and glass; we build automobiles out of chariots that came from wagons, that started with a wheel. Even to stretch our imagination over “creative artistry,” we draw pictures of God’s mountains, deserts, oceans and forests! Our most inventive minds still yet use the physics of gravity, molecular bonds, refraction of light and laws of thermodynamics. It all starts with SOMETHING, yet God created something from nothing. Selah! Think about it!

I am reminded of the cartoon, where the modern white-coated scientist challenged God with the premise that “We can make life,

too.” God agrees to the challenge to create, but as the scientist leans over to get a handful of clay, God interrupts with, “Huh uh! That is MY dirt, use your own.” Selah! Think about it!

Job is the oldest book in the Bible, and being that much closer to the six original creative days, he gives us a glimpse of that inspired power, **“Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof” (Job 26:6-7, 11).** The power of God to create by voice alone, is called “fiat.” Defined by the dictionary as “an arbitrary order or authoritative decree,” in the Latin it simply means “Let it be done.” It is echoed in our word “amen- so be it.” **“Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created” (Ps. 148:5).** That makes God’s power unique and perhaps is the clearest definition of deity. As earthly scholars such as Charnock, Pink or Cockrell define this elemental function of deity- “His power is essential and inseparable to His being.” Okay, I need a picture to understand this. As we examine the highest powers of this world, we look to man and ultimately to kings. Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Napoleon and Henry VIII all find their power (practically speaking) within the rule of their people. A king may rule via love or fear, but ultimately his power is in the bidding of his servants, generals, cooks, ministers, spies and a multitude of loyal minions. But what happens when a military coup occurs and the loyalty of his supporters vanishes away?

So, too, does his vaunted “power” and he is as helpless as any peon in his (former) kingdom.

God’s power is not dependant upon ANY, except Himself. He needs no means by which to act; no hands to carry out His bidding; no legs to run His errands. That He uses means in our lives to reveal His presence transcends our presumption upon His grace and by no means limits the omnipotent decrees of the Almighty. He allows us to use His circumstances, elements, weather, minerals, etc to pioneer, craft, farm and be entrepreneurs; but at any time He can create, destroy, dispose and decree by fiat power alone to work out His foreordained, predestinated will. The inherent power that Job describes in His voice, spirit and understanding is unstoppable, immutable and transcendent. **“He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand” (Job 26:12-14)?**

Even demonic power is a cheap imitation of God’s power by word command. Watch the witches gather their frog tails, talismans, potions and spells. The concordant demons have no power, but that given unto them for a short, vaporous portion of time by our Heavenly Father. Satan had no power against Job at all, except it was “granted” for God’s ultimate purposes to be revealed and fulfilled. Selah! Think about it!

Born to Overcome

(Continued from page 1) ♦

Scripture. “Everyone believing that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.”

Speak not of other Scripture which you may twist to your own destruction (II Peter 3:16), by your false interpretations creating conflicts and contradictions. If you believe that the Word of God is inconsistent and contradictory to itself, then you certainly cannot believe that Jesus is the Christ revealed in the Word.

“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words,” said Jesus, **“hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).**

You will finally be judged, not by the word of any preacher, church, or creed (written or oral), but by the Word of God, which Jesus said is truth.

SAVING FAITH

Our text obviously speaks of believing in more than a superficial sense. Of course, a mere claim to believe, or a superficial believing that does not affect conduct, can be found among lost sinners.

So James asks, **“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him” (James 2:14)?** No, of course not. Faith without works is dead, and a dead faith cannot save. But if there is anything “deader” than a dead faith, it is dead works without faith: the Bible does not mention repentance from dead faith, but it does mention repentance from dead works (Heb. 6:1).

“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition;

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Born to Overcome

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but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:38-39).

Therefore the Scripture clearly distinguishes between people **"who draw back unto perdition"** and people **"that believe to the saving of the soul."** They are not the same people.

Our text (I John 5:1) refers only to those people that believe to the saving of the soul, as they are the only people that believe in a true spiritual sense.

CHRIST---SON OF GOD

Note carefully exactly what it is that children of God believe: **"that Jesus is the Christ."** Or, in verse 5, the overcomer "believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

It is easy to read or recite these words without meaning, or with a false meaning. Many men in generations past and present have been named Jesus, but only one man named Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And His character is to be found in the Scriptures (John 5:39), not in the imaginations or traditions of men.

Jesus of Nazareth, born of the virgin, Who was crucified, buried, and arose from the dead, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Who saves His people from their sins---this Jesus of the Bible we believe to be the Christ of the Bible, the Son of God revealed in the Bible, Who was in the beginning with God, and is "over all, God, blessed forever."

BORN OF GOD

"Everyone believing that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God."

He may or may not be baptized, he may or may not join a church, he may or may not "live a good life," he may or may not "hold out faithful" ---but if in a true

spiritual sense he believes with his heart (Rom. 10:10) that Jesus is the Christ, he has been born from God.

If he lives long enough in this world after he is saved, and is properly instructed, his faith, working through love (Gal. 5:6), will produce good works. But even though he die in the very moment of believing, he shall never die (John 11:26), for he has been born from God.

"He has been born from God." The scriptural statement is not that the believer will be born again, but that, if he is a genuine believer, he already has been born from God. His faith already exercised gives assurance of a new birth already experienced.

Of course, there can be no new birth without faith, any more than there can be any (saving) faith without the new birth.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

OVERCOMING THE WORLD

"Everything that has been born from God overcomes the world" (I John 5:4). The neuter pronoun is used here probably because the Greek word for "children" in verse 2 is neuter. So we may read, "Every child born of God overcomes the world."

God has not promised victory to all church members, or to all that are baptized, or to all the religious people trying to "live a good life." On the contrary, most of these people are headed for sure defeat and disaster.

The one thing in human experience that infallibly guarantees victory over the world is the new birth. No real or lasting defeat can come to the child of God. He "always causes us to

triumph in Christ" (II Cor. 2:14).

We cannot understand this assurance of victory if we think of it in worldly terms. Almost in the shadow of the cross, Jesus assured His disciples. **"I have overcome the world"** (John 16:33). Even His death on the cross became the occasion of His exaltation to receive a name above every name (Phil. 2:5-11).

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

As I write these lines the shadow of the Third World War is more threatening than ever before, possibly marking the end of this world as we have known it.

Even if our country survives, the lives of millions could be lost, along with the liberty we have too long misused and taken for granted. Our own generation, or what may be left of it, may pass through tribulations such as this nation has thus far been spared.

Mountains may be leveled off, islands removed from their places, cities consumed in atomic holocausts, rivers and oceans filled with blood---but there is still no defeat for the children of God.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:35-38).

THE VICTORY---FAITH

"And this is the victory that overcomes the world---our faith." The victory in view does not belong to unbelievers.

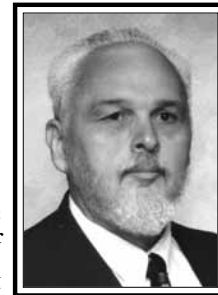
Yet, if you are still lost, this faith, this victory, can still be yours if you will now follow the divine directive: **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"** (Acts 16:31).

"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" (I John 5:5)?



Safe on the Shoulders of Christ

By Curtis Pugh of Poteau, Oklahoma



Consider the following brief parable taught by the Lord Jesus: **"And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and**

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nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:3-7). We learn from the Lord Himself the two-fold purpose of Jesus in His use of parables in Luke 8:10 where He said, **"..Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand."** If you and I are included in the "you" in that verse we can understand the Lord's parables. Those who are the "others" can understand the words and their meanings, but cannot understand the truths taught in a spiritually profitable way. Intellectual comprehension is not that which alone profits. Hebrews 4:2 tells us about ancient Israel: **"..the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."** Even the Gospel, which some mistakenly say is the power of God unto salvation, is only **"the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"** (Rom. 1:16). The glorious Gospel of Christ is the power of God only to believers! And it is God who gives the gift of faith through Holy Spirit regeneration. Spiritual life and all the things that result from it such as repentance, faith, spiritual understanding and a changed life, etc. are all bestowed upon Christ's sheep apart from any merit or action upon their part. Paul put it this way: **"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it"** (I Cor. 4:7)?

Notice these things in our text. First of all, this shepherd had a flock of one-hundred sheep.

One of his sheep, however, was lost. It was a sheep: it had always been a sheep, but it was a lost sheep. Secondly, notice that this parable has nothing to do with goats. Goats are not mentioned. For the purpose of the Lord's illustration, this parable has only to do with those sheep that were the shepherd's. We are reminded immediately of the Lord's words about Himself in John 10:14-16. There He said, **"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."** We may say without fear of successful contradiction that Christ stood in a unique relation to His sheep. We may safely say that He knows them, having known them from eternity. We may also say that all His sheep come to know Him. It is also clear that Christ, the Good Shepherd, voluntarily laid down His life on behalf of – in the place of – His sheep. He also stated that He had other sheep not of the Jewish fold – Gentile sheep. He was emphatic in saying that He **"must"** bring them. He would do all necessary to "bring" them. He did not mean that He would bring them to a geographic place, but rather to Himself for He said **"and they shall hear my voice."** Here He foretold of the breaking down of the wall of partition that once divided Jews and Gentiles as clearly taught in Ephesians 2:14-16. Christ's concern and work of redemption was for His sheep. As quoted above, His parables were understood only by His sheep and only His sheep believed upon Him. He made this clear

by saying, **"But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you"** (John 10:26).

In the third place, we see that the shepherd went **"after that which is lost, until he find it."** This shepherd was capable, caring, persistent and successful. He searched for his lost sheep until he found it. Note that the sheep was lost in a desert place: a place unsuitable for a sheep: a place of enemies and dangers to that defenseless creature. Human shepherds, knowing the habits of sheep even down to the habits of individual sheep, may have an inkling of where a lost sheep might be found, but the Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, being the Son of God as well as the Son of man, knows exactly where to find His lost sheep. Human shepherds might struggle through rough terrain in all kinds of adverse weather, but as one song says concerning our Good Shepherd, "But none of the ransomed ever knew How deep were the waters crossed; Nor how dark was the night the Lord passed through, Ere He found His sheep that was lost." The Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd entered this world – this waste howling wilderness. Spiritually-speaking that is the nature of this world. We have recorded for us the agony the Lord Jesus suffered by taking the sins of His people upon Himself. God viewed His own Son as sin and treated Him as sin. We say this on the authority of II Corinthians 5:21 where we read: **"For he [God] hath made him [Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, [Jesus] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,"** [brackets added]. This Shepherd of ours bore all the sins of all the elect "without the camp" - where the garbage was burned – an outcast. But

He was, if we may say it this way, an outcast from God also for He cried out, **"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"** (Mark 15:34)? Christ suffered alone for His sheep! The success of Christ is obvious. By His death and resurrection, He secured the eternal deliverance from sin of all His sheep – His people. His shed blood really atoned for the sins of those for whom He died. If we may paraphrase C. H. Spurgeon, Christ did not by His atonement build a bridge half way across a chasm leaving the other half to be constructed by human effort. He bridged the entire distance between God and man! Christ was made a **"..faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people"** (Heb. 2:17). Now He either made reconciliation for the people or He did not! The Bible says He did! All the arguments of men to the contrary, Christ died for all the sins of His sheep! Because of His work on behalf of His sheep He could say, **"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"** (John 6:37).

In the fourth place we see the rejoicing of the shepherd as he puts the once-lost sheep upon his shoulders and carries it safely home. Our Shepherd is the One spoken of in Isaiah 9:6 in these words, **"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."** His shoulder is mighty enough to bear the government of this world. He shall do that when He comes to

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. In Revelation chapters 1-3, Jesus tells John to write letters to seven local churches. There are indications that many of them stand in jeopardy of having their candlestick removed unless they repent of certain attitudes and/or actions. Is it possible for a member of a local church to know if his church has had her candlestick removed? If it has been removed, can it ever be replaced? -Tennessee

Matthew Stepp
286 Big Creek Road
Wayne, WV 25570

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



“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev. 2:4-5). The candlestick is representative of the authority of the First Baptist church at Ephesus. If the Lord, the authoritative Head of this assembly, removes “thy” candlestick, they would then cease to be a “church of Jesus Christ.” They might continue meeting, but it would be without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus would not be there. **“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”** (Matt. 18:20). The authority to meet “in the Name of Christ” must be GIVEN by Christ, Himself! **“When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the**

calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.” (Isa. 1:12-14). Selah! Think about it!

The churches at Thyatira and Sardis are good (?) examples of churches that are dying and about to lose their candlesticks if repentance does not come soon. But, in both of these churches there is a “core membership” that the Lord exhorts to remain faithful and that He considers worthy to remain. **“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy”** (Rev. 3:4). I think in these extreme cases of infidelity, heresy, or rampant immorality, that the faithful church members will be aware of the imminent danger of losing their candlestick authority. Typically, it is the church’s responsibility to discipline, or purge the heretical or immoral members, to keep the church pure. In the case of the dying Sardis church, it seems that they have delayed too long and there is an insufficient majority to democratically remedy the situation with a vote. Their only option left, might be to separate themselves from the ungodly majority and take their candlestick elsewhere, leaving the majority of those goats and hard-hearted

sheep still moving merrily ahead into “unchurched” status, as the Lord fulfills His threat to remove His/their candlestick through the fleeing action of the minority.

In the church at Thyatira, it is a slightly different story, from the Apathetic Sardis assembly. Thyatira, led by Jezebel, is flaunting their **“space to repent of her (spiritual) fornication”** and it looks like God is about to take preemptive action against these liberal, ecumenical Baptists. Again, the eternal premise holds, that the last person to know that they are backslidden, are the backsliders themselves, so that these Thyatira members will think that they are bringing glory to the Lord with their Catholic/Protestant actions, but God promises to “kill” the great whore and her harlot daughters. Here again, the minority must evacuate to maintain their candlestick, but if they do NOT separate themselves, then they will suffer the “killing” and “unchurching” actions of their Holy God along with the perpetrators. **“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities”** (Rev. 18:4-5). Selah! Think about it!

Actually, the church at Ephesus is probably in the most danger of losing their candlestick without knowing it. Leaving their first love of the gospel of Jesus Christ’s sovereign grace, it seems that they are, even in this First Century A.D., drifting off into Arminianism (works for salvation). So many churches have died this way, losing their

candlestick; never knowing that the name Baptist over their doorways was insufficient for maintaining their status as one of the Lord’s churches. Ichabod is what the Lord sees, instead. **“And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken”** (I Sam. 4:21).

If the candlestick is once removed, it can NEVER be restored. The chain-link of authority succession from assembly to assembly must be maintained. If any of the seven churches ended up losing their candlestick via non repentance, then for a church to be restored to that community or city, it must come from the authority of an existing candlestick. God will ALWAYS have a faithful church to go get authority from. Our God will provide a way and deliver us from darkness. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP

Roger Reed
20 Ledgewood Dr.
Mansfield, Ohio 44905

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



We have before us two questions and an understanding that unless one member, or the church as a whole, does not repent of the things the Lord has pointed out to these seven churches in Asia, He will remove their candlestick (should be lampstand), **“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent”** (Rev. 2:5).

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Numbers chapter 6 (as well as in some other Old Testament passages) tells us that one mark of a man who has taken a Nazarite vow is not to shave his head's hair as long as he is under this vow. In I Corinthians 11, Paul tells men to have short hair. What is the difference between what Moses told men in Numbers 6 and what Paul told men in I Corinthians 11? -Tennessee

Roger Reed
20 Ledgewood Dr.
Mansfield, Ohio 44905

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



The vow in the Old Testament under the Mosaic Law, first of all, was just for a short time, **"All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow"** (Num. 6:5). We know it was for a short time because of verses 2-4 and it included women as well, **"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD: He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk"** (Num. 6:2-4). Along with not cutting their hair they were to separate themselves unto the Lord, and they were not to eat or drink certain things as you

can see by the above verses in chapter 6.

The New Testament was not under the Mosaic Law, but under Grace. Now many try to say that Christ took the Nazarite vow to prove the reason for portraits of Him (so-called) having long hair. Christ was from Nazareth, thus being called a Nazarene, not a Nazarite! **"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene"** (Matt. 2:23). Jesus never took the Nazarite vow.

I point out to people if Jesus had taken that vow, do you not think it would have been an important time in His life and would have been recorded? I have never read in Holy Writ where Jesus ever took such a vow unto the Lord because He was the Man God, Jesus Christ. If people would only read their Bibles!

So the difference in what Moses (God told Moses) told men in Numbers 6 what to do and what Paul told men in I Corinthians 11 is, one was under the Law and the other was under Grace. Take time to read and study Acts 21:17-40 and Acts chapter 22. This may help clear things up a bit.

But also along with 1 Corinthians 11:14 look at Acts 18:18, **"And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into**

Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow." Paul had (made) a vow, but he shaved his head instead of not letting a razor touch it as in Numbers 6:5. Thus Paul was under Grace not the Mosaic Law. Also notice he was sailing with Priscilla and Aquila; where was his separation unto the Lord? So Paul is consistent with I Corinthians 11:14, **"if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him."** God Bless!

ROGER REED

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

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



The Nazarite vow appears to be limited to those who were called upon to follow certain and specific civil laws of the nation of Israel. Numbers chapter 6 involves requirements that pertain to the worship of the tabernacle, the offering of a sin and burnt offering, and the involvement of a Levitical priest. The general principles of separation and devotion to God by keeping vows is certainly applicable in every age. However the details of the Nazarite vow are not binding upon God's people today. Herein is the difference, the principle set forth in I Corinthians 11 pertains to all men in general who are to maintain short hair to distinguish themselves from women. Whereas, the Nazarite vow was to be observed specifically by some, not all, Israelite men as it related to the keeping of a precise vow relating to the civil laws of Israel.

TOM ROSS

Matthew Stepp
286 Big Creek Road
Wayne, WV 25570

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



The Nazarite vow found in the Old Testament (Numbers 6) was an extraordinary circumstance of an extraordinary consecration to the Lord for a particular season/event. The Nazarite vow constituted of three extraordinary actions:

Firstly, they could not consume any grapes or any derivative of the grapevine plant. This would be a very unusual lifestyle, that was outside the norm. In fact, most of the time, it would be very difficult to even keep one's body hydrated without wine, with the difficulty of obtaining fresh water in many arid areas. A Nazarite vow, then would cause this person to live as an extraordinary exception to the rules. No wine, **"He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk"** (Num. 6:3-4). But also, no grape wine, liquor, vinegar, strong drink, not even raisins, skins or grape seed extract. Selah! Think about it!

Secondly, someone under a Nazarite vow could not cut their hair. This was ALSO going to be an unusual lifestyle, outside the norm! The law and order of God that the Apostle Paul brings out is an eternal law, to separate the sexes and make distinctive differences

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Forum #1

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That is a correct understanding by the questioner! If certain attitudes and/or actions do not change (if there is no repentance) then yes, the candlestick (lampstand) will be removed.

Before I answer the two basic questions that are asked here let me explain that these seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea are no longer there, they no longer exist in Asia. So yes, I believe it is safe to say they did not heed the warning of the Lord and their candlestick (lampstand) was removed. Apparently there was not even one member that listened to these warnings, **“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”** (Rev. 3:20). Let me stop for a moment and point out that many modern Christians use this verse of Scripture to justify that this is how a person is saved, by opening up ones heart and letting Jesus in. If you have ever seen the portrait of the so-called Jesus standing outside this wooden door knocking...and have noticed that there is no doorknob, thus showing that Jesus needs help getting into a person's heart, this is pure foolishness. These seven churches of Asia are saved individuals, baptized believers, assembling themselves together to worship the Lord. Again they that are in these churches are saved by the Grace of God, not needing to be saved.

What will these people do with these verses? **“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples**

were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you” (John 20:19). **“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”** (John 20:26). Jesus does not need a doorknob to enter any room, nor does He need a lost sinner who is incapable, unable, and totally dead spiritually to open up his or her heart to let Jesus in. Again, pure foolishness! Jesus seeks the sinner not the other way around. Did the Samaritan woman seek Jesus? Did Paul seek Jesus? Or did Jesus go to them? Jesus came to me by night and when I awoke in the morning a new creature emerged, I surely was not seeking Him, but He knew right where I was, praise His Name!

These seven churches represent the different religious groups today including our own local Baptist churches. And I believe that many churches have had their candlestick (lampstand) removed. If we continue to ignore our Lord's warnings ours will be removed as well.

So then, is it possible for a member of a local church to know if his church has her candlestick (lampstand) removed? Only the Lord knows how many of His churches He has removed the candlestick (lampstand) from.

But if a man has **“anointed his eyes with eyesalve, that he may see”** and **“repented”** and sees that his/her church has become worldly and indifferent and the Name of Jesus is no longer exalted, then that man/woman better find a church that is serving Christ, and run as fast as they can to leave that empty hull of a church, and I am not talking about the building.

If a church is in that poor of a condition then I believe, in due time, Ichabod will be written across that door and Christ will no longer enter in.

So the last question is; if the candlestick (lampstand) has been removed, can it ever be replaced? If not one member listened to these warnings in Revelation 3:20, **“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me,”** and Revelation 3:22, **“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches,”** and did not do anything (repent) then no, it can not be replaced. However, if two or three do see the errors of their ways and repent, then I would believe they could join with a local church that still exalts Christ and either be sent out as a Mission or be organized as another local church in that area. But I surely would not want the members of the church that possibly had their candlestick (lampstand) removed to come back into the newly organized church with their worldly ways.

Dear reader and questioner, each case is unique with each situation different, but if you are attending a local church that has the signs of the seven Asian churches then do something now before it is too late. And if you believe it is too late and you have done all you can do scripturally then get out like I said, and disconnect yourself with such a group.

I have three guidelines to follow in leaving a church. Others may disagree, and they are entitled to their opinion. I want to serve Christ in His church and I want to have everything done decently and in order and be happy serving the Lord exalting His holy name.

The first thing you can do (after

praying) is leave if you no longer are able to serve the Lord where you are a member. The second thing you can do is prayerfully stay and try to get things back on track and point out the errors that you feel are hindering the service to the Lord. Then thirdly, if the cause is because the pastor is not doing what he should, then each church should have guidelines how to proceed in removing him, and those guidelines should be followed. If you can not do the latter two then go to the first thing I suggested and find a local church you can serve the Lord in and be happy. Oh, one last thought, make sure YOU ARE not the problem; some people today have a problem with self-righteousness. God Bless!

ROGER REED

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

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



The letters of Christ to the seven churches of Asia Minor are found in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. There is actually only one direct threat of the candlestick being removed from the church of Ephesus: **“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent”** (Rev. 2:4-5). I have read and heard many theories as to the precise reasons why and when the candlestick is removed from the Lord's church.

♦ (Continued on page 15)

Forum #1

(Continued from page 14) ♦

Many are very dogmatic and absolutely sure they have cracked the code as to why a church would lose its candlestick. I have no doubt that the men who set forth their theories are sincere and well meaning. I will not presume to be dogmatic in my answer because ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who decides when the candlestick should be removed.

First, I liken the candlestick as a church's authority to exist and to function as a light in a sin darkened world. Every New Testament Baptist Church has the responsibility to actively carry out the Great Commission as outlined by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; and Luke 24:45-53. A church proves its love for Christ by obeying His commands to preach the Gospel to every creature, baptize the converts, and then teach them the truths of the faith once delivered unto the saints. If a church is deficient in any of these core responsibilities it is a sure sign that they have either left their first love or are in the process of declining in their devotion to Christ and His commands. I realize this is a broad statement but consider how the early churches responded to Christ's command and commission. In spite of persecution, imprisonment, and martyrdom they filled Jerusalem with their doctrine and later it was said of them that they had turned the world upside down in their zealous efforts to carry out the commission. What is the church's first love and its first work that Christ is calling them back to? I believe it is devotion to Christ evidenced by obedience

to His commands, especially as it relates to the broad terms outlined in the Great Commission. Plain and simple, if your church is not actively carrying out the Great Commission as commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ you could be in danger of losing your candlestick. If you have no concern for souls, never take the message of the Gospel outside the four walls of your church building, do not follow the directions for scriptural baptism, and fail to teach the saints the truth and the personal responsibility to perpetuate it you are on your way to losing your candlestick.

I am hesitant to answer the second question as to whether or not a member can know if a church has lost its candlestick because I can not possibly know all the scenarios existing in local churches. I do know that, for me personally, I would not remain in a church that does not actively share the Gospel with sinners. Nor would I stay in a church that does not practice and defend the requirements of Baptist baptism as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

If a church loses its candlestick can it ever be replaced? This is a good question. I tend to say yes, if the church repents and corrects the things the Lord has against them. Remember, that the Lord Jesus threatened to remove the candlestick from Ephesus, a church He said had identified error, practiced discipline, and faithfully labored. Yet they had left their first love and were being called upon to repent. What a high standard our Lord set for maintaining the authority to exist and function as one of His churches!

TOM ROSS



Forum #2

(Continued from page 13) ♦

between the genders. Long-haired hippies is what the Nazarites are going to be FORCED to become via their consecration vow. Folks will be able to look at them and KNOW THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG. The BIBLE is clear on this matter in. **“Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him”** (I Cor. 11:14)? Christ endured many shames upon this earth to work out the goal of salvation to lost sinners, **“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds”** (Heb. 12:2-3). **“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”** (Gal. 3:13). It sometimes calls for extraordinary measures to accomplish God's will for us, and that is indeed what those called to take a Nazarite vow, would be doing.

Thirdly, is the consecration from dead bodies for a Nazarite. Death is all around us, and it is a part of an ordinary life to come into contact with dead family members, especially in the olden days before funeral homes and undertakers. It would be an unusual restriction to not be able to say good-bye to a loved one. An extraordinary requirement, that normal folk's lifestyles would be expected to allow them to participate in. In fact, in Israel, avoiding dead bodies was

paramount to putting them on the same consecration level as the priests of God!

Certainly one can understand that the vow of the Nazarite was causing them to live extra ordinary lives. Nothing about the experience would be duplicated in their lives after the vow was ended. Afterwards, they would be allowed (and expected) to eat grapes and drink wine. Afterwards, they would be allowed (and EXPECTED) to cut their hair modestly and to not look effeminate, as an abomination to God. Afterwards, they would be allowed (and expected) to interact with death in their lives. To mourn, grieve, and celebrate as loved ones left this life and went on to be with their Lord and Saviour. Things would go back to normal, would they not.

For someone to say that it is okay to have long hair (now), is missing the point of both the Nazarite vow and the purpose of God's eternal order. It is not necessary to live your whole life as a Nazarite to glorify God. Some might be called to that (Samson and perhaps Samuel and John the Baptist), but most of us are called to glorify God by keeping His commandments. **“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God”** (Micah 6:8)? **“And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul”** (Deut. 10:12). Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

TEN MORE STATES CHALLENGE TRANSGENDER DIRECTIVE

(WNS)--Ten more states signed on to sue the Obama administration over its transgender directive that forces schools to allow students to use the restrooms and locker rooms that correspond to their gender identity, not their biological sex. "It is putting school districts in a terrible position," said Doug Peterson, Nebraska's attorney general, who took the lead on the new round of lawsuits. "It is trying to push a certain agenda through our school systems, and we need to simply stand up and say this does not make sense." Nebraska, along with nine other states, filed an injunction in federal court in Nebraska on July 8 against the joint mandate from the Department of Education and the Department of Justice. The complaint says the new instruction came without an observance of procedure required by law and disregards efforts from school districts to develop individualized plans that best serve their students.

HOUSE PANEL: FETAL TISSUE BUYERS ARE TRYING TO EVADE SCRUTINY

(WNS)--Midway through a year-long investigation into the fetal tissue industry, the Select Investigative Panel on Infant Lives said abortion providers and fetal procurement companies are still stonewalling. "Instead of helping us shine light, they are trying to pull the curtain and hide what is actually happening," said Rep. Sean Duffy, R-Wis., a panel member. "The industry, I would argue, has been less than cooperative, and I think we have to ask ourselves, why?"

On July 14, the congressional panel

released an 88-page report summarizing what it has found thus far but said much remains unknown. The panel has issued dozens of requests to access financial records of fetal procurement companies, but many have not complied. Panel Chairwoman Rep. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., said the investigation has the full support of House leaders and will work to overturn as many stones as possible before submitting its final report to Congress on Dec. 31. According to the report, 34 different entities have not fully complied with the panel's requests for documents, including fetal tissue retailers StemExpress and Advanced Bioscience Resources, several Planned Parenthood affiliates, and university research centers.

HOUSE APPROVES PROTECTIONS FOR PRO-LIFERS

(WNS)--The U.S. House of Representatives advanced legislation July 13 promoting freedom of conscience, protecting pro-life employers and healthcare workers from being complicit in the practice of abortion. "If we do not have the right to abide by our own consciences—particularly on a matter as deeply affecting as abortion—we do not have much left, do we?" asked Rep. Diane Black, R-Tenn., the primary sponsor of the bill. The Conscience Protection Act prohibits government discrimination against healthcare providers and sponsors for refusing to perform or provide coverage for abortions. And it gives healthcare workers a legal recourse if penalized for refusing to perform a procedure they deem morally wrong. After passing 244 to 182 in the House, the bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.

CALIFORNIA HOSPITALS REJECT ASSISTED SUICIDE PRESCRIPTION

(WNS)--Some California hospitals are opting out of the state's new assisted suicide law, which allows qualifying adults diagnosed with a terminal illness to request a lethal drug from their doctor. The End of Life Option Act, signed in October and effective since June 9, made California the fourth state—along with Oregon (1997), Vermont (2013), and Washington (2008)—to legalize some form of assisted suicide. Euthanasia advocates applauded the bill, while critics warned it might encourage physicians and family members to pressure patients to end their own lives. Hospitals are caught in the middle, but those with moral qualms about assisted suicide, or that do not have the resources to cater to it, are opting out of the lethal network.

UNITED METHODISTS ELECT FIRST OPENLY GAY BISHOP

(WNS)--The United Methodist Church's (UMC) Western Jurisdiction unanimously elected the denomination's first openly lesbian bishop on July 15, going against the UMC's official stance on homosexuality. The Rev. Karen Oliveto's election follows long-term disputes within the 12.7 million-member UMC about homosexuality, furthering concerns of an impending church division. "This election raises significant concerns and questions of church polity and unity," Bishop Bruce Ough, president of the UMC Council of Bishops, said after the vote.

LGBT HISTORY LESSONS PLANNED FOR CALIFORNIA STUDENTS

(WNS)--California revamped its social-science education guidelines in July to incorporate lessons on historic LGBT individuals and social movements in the approved curriculum. The decision garnered almost unanimous support at a public meeting and across the state, but some Californians are concerned about its long-term impact on their children. Approved lesson guidelines—including

half of the material from proposed plans—educate second-graders on "LGBT families in the context of understanding family diversity as a contemporary and historical reality" and fourth-graders on pioneer gender relations and crossdressers in the Old West, said supporter Judy Appel, the executive director of the advocacy group Our Family Coalition. LGBT movement politician Harvey Milk will also make an appearance in fourth grade lesson plans, while upper-level courses will be steeped in recent LGBT events like last year's Supreme Court decision to legalize gay marriage or this year's transgender bathroom debate.

LEGAL EXPERT: CALIFORNIA RELIGIOUS LIBERTY THREAT 'MOST SIGNIFICANT' EVER

(WNS)--A bill rushing through California's state legislature could deliver a fatal blow to Christian education, legal experts warn. "I have been practicing religious freedom law for about 20 years now and I believe this bill is one of the most significant threats that there has ever been to religious freedom," Greg Baylor, senior counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom, said July 19 at the Heritage Foundation. Hours before adjourning for July recess, a California State Senate committee advanced a bill that seeks to punish faith-based colleges and universities for holding Biblical beliefs about marriage and sexuality. If signed into law, SB 1146 could expose schools to punitive litigation and the loss of millions in student aid. Schools wanting to avoid any penalty would have to dissolve student codes of conduct based on Biblical teachings about sex and would not be able to base hiring decisions on religious convictions about sexuality, gender identity, and marriage.

ALASKA QUASHES PARENTAL NOTICE REQUIREMENT FOR ABORTION

(WNS)--The Alaska Supreme Court on July 22 struck down a state law requiring abortionists to give two days' notice to parents before providing

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abortion to minors. In a 2010 ballot initiative, 56 percent of voters approved what became the law requiring parental notification, but not consent, for a minor's abortion. Now the court says the law is unconstitutional and violates Alaska's equal-protection guarantee. The decision "elevated the demands of abortionists over the rights of parents," said Steven H. Aden, a lawyer for Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) who is seeking to uphold the law.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

EIGHT NEPALESE CHRISTIANS ARRESTED FOR ILLEGAL PROSELYTIZING

(WNS)--Eight Nepali Christians arrested in June, including one pastor and two teachers, could soon be tried for trying to proselytize children. The Christians were working in Dolahka District, in northern Nepal, a part of the nation hard hit by the 2015 earthquakes. Authorities arrested them June 8 for distributing religious literature to children in an attempt to convert, a violation of the anti-conversion statute in the 2015 constitution, according to Asia News. Officials tortured the Christians while they were in custody, according to Asia News' sources. Prakash Pradhan, principal

of Mount Valley Academy, a local private school, denied the group tried to convert anyone. The group only handed out materials to Christian students who requested them, Pradhan said.

MOROCCAN CHRISTIANS RISK PERSECUTION WITH YOUTUBE TESTIMONIES

(WNS)--In a new series of YouTube podcasts, Moroccan Christians are stepping out of the shadows, showing their faces, and telling their stories. Speaking to their countrymen, they proclaim themselves "Moroccan and Christian." The public testimonies counter the common view that to be Moroccan is to be Muslim and that all Christians living in Morocco are foreigners, not natives. The small religious minority faces community and government persecution. In one video, a woman named Iman says her husband's relatives assumed she was foreign-born because they knew she was a Christian, according to Moroccan World News (MWN). "We do not know what might happen, some people want to keep it hidden, and we respect that," one 24-year-old man told US News. "But at the same time we encourage people to do what God commands us to do, that is preaching and telling people."



and Christian scholars consider Genesis 49:10 to be a reference to the Messiah. Christian scholars see it pointing to Jesus Christ, "**the Lion of the tribe of Judah**" (Rev. 5:5). There is great disagreement on the exact translation and the meaning of these words.

THE SCEPTER OF JUDAH

The first words in my text are: "**The sceptre shall not depart from Judah. . .**" The word translated "scepter" is the Hebrew word (shebet) which is translated "tribe" in verses 16 and 28 of this same chapter. It signifies the tribal rod or the ruler's staff. It points to an office which belonged to any tribe and was the ensign of authority. The word as used in Genesis 49:10 is an emblem of dominion, power, and sovereignty as it is in other places (Num. 24:17; Zech. 10:11). Most of the old translators rendered it "ruler" or "dominion."

Jacob's prophecy indicated that Judah would become the leading tribe. This came about slowly. Judah was appointed to lead the march through the wilderness (Num. 10:14). Judah was the first tribe to receive its allotted possessions west of the Jordan (Josh. 15:1-63). During the time of the judges Judah maintained an independent spirit toward the other tribes, and it was the first to begin the work of completing the conquest of Canaan (Judg. 1:1). The scepter was held by Moses, a Levite, in the wilderness, and by Joshua, an Ephraimite, at the conquest of Canaan. It was only after that Judah made David king (II Sam. 2:4,10) that they became the dominant tribe (I Chron. 28:4; Ps. 78:60-72). This happened some 640 years after the prophecy of Jacob.

The prophecy indicated that the tribal rod should not depart from Judah as a tribe until an

important person had come. Judah would retain both their tribal distinctness and be the kingly tribe until the Messiah came. From David's time till the Babylonian Captivity the scepter was with the tribe of Judah. When the ten tribes went into revolt, and later into captivity, Judah remained, and those in it were called "Jews," a word derived from "Judah." When Judah went into Babylonian Captivity it was restored under the Persians by Zerubbabel of the line of David, and a hierarchy under Joshua, the high priest. Ezra and Nehemiah, aided by the prophets Haggai and Malachi, had much to do with this. Even when under the rule of the Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks, Judah had governors of their own. Judah was still in the land when the Messiah was born.

THE LAWGIVER

The verse continues: "**. . . nor a lawgiver from between his feet. . .**" The word "lawgiver" (Hebrew chaqaq) is used here for the first time in the Old Testament. Its meaning is a bit uncertain, but it probably means "legislator" or "one who decrees," or "one who has the staff of command." It often means "lawgiver" in the King James Version, and it is so translated six times (Gen. 49:10; Num. 21:18; Deut. 33:21; Ps. 60:7; 108:8; Isa. 33:22). It is sometimes rendered "governor" (Judg. 5:9,14). This expression points to the days of Judah's overlordship by Gentile powers when she was ruled by governors. The governors of this time were all from Judah.

Under the Greek rule, Antiochus Epiphanes sought to destroy the whole Jewish polity and religion. He was defeated by the Maccabees, who became governors or kings. Under Roman rule, Judea, although a conquered

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From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



The Coming of Shiloh

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10).

The words of the text are a part of the last words of the dying patriarch. Jacob blessed his sons as representatives of the tribes of

Israel in this chapter. He first blessed Reuben, and then Simeon, and Levi. The fourth to receive the fatherly blessing was Judah (Gen. 49:8-12). My text shows that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. The majority of both Jewish

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province (Luke 2:1) retained its religious polity and its power of self-government. Herod the Great, who married the last of the Maccabees, became king just before Christ was born. As Herod was an Idumean, the scepter had departed from Judah. The Jews lost the power of life and death under the Romans. This is why they told Pilate: **"It is not lawful for us to put any man to death"** (John 18:31), and **"We have no king but Caesar"** (John 19:15). Shiloh had come and legal authority formerly vested in the tribe disappeared.

The expression, **"from beneath his feet,"** probably refers to an Oriental custom. The long ruler's staff would be placed between the feet as the ruler sat on his throne and held it in his hand or rested it on his shoulder. When important persons appeared he would stretch it out.

THE MEANING OF SHILOH

The key word to understanding this text is the word **"Shiloh."** This is an old word, and scholars debate its meaning. A few would make it the name of a place (Josh. 18:1, 8-10; 19:51; Judg. 18:31; I Sam. 1:3,9,24; 2:14). To some it means that the scepter would not depart from Judah even if many flocked to Shiloh and joined the crown of Joseph (I Kings 11:36-39). Others say that it means the leadership role of Judah over the other tribes should not cease until Judah came to Shiloh. These views are untenable.

First, it cannot be demonstrated that the city of Shiloh ever was of any importance for the tribe of Judah. Second, Shiloh had not yet been named as a known locality in the land of promise. Third, Judah's coming to the city of Shiloh had

no bearing on his supremacy over the other tribes. Fourth, Judah did not come to Shiloh as the seat of his government or any part of his territory. Fifth, the real sovereignty of Judah took place after this convention at Shiloh and not before it.

A few others view Shiloh as an abstract noun from the Hebrew word "to be safe." This would escape the Messianic teaching in the verse and make it mean the scepter would not depart from Judah until he be safe from his enemies. This is a strained meaning and need not concern us any further.

Most scholars take "Shiloh" to be the name of a person, and that person is Jesus Christ, **"the Lion of the tribe of Judah."** Most agree it is a foreannouncement of the advent of the Messiah. They disagree as to the exact significance of the word itself. The many meanings assigned to the word tend to tell us more and more about the Messiah.

Some say the word is from Chaldee and Arabic analogies which means "offspring" or "descendant." If this be true, it fits with what the Bible says of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 7:14 says: **"For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah. . ."** Micah the prophet wrote: **"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel. . ."** (Micah 5:2).

Others contend the word signifies "sent." They think "Siloam" in the New Testament is another spelling of Shiloh. They point to John 9:7: **"And he said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.)"** If this be true, it would mean that Jesus Christ is the Sent

One. He came commissioned by God the Father so that what He did was in the name of the eternal Father. The Scriptures bear this out. **"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved"** (John 3:17). **"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God. . ."** (John 3:34).

Still others maintain the word is from a root which signifies "the Son." If this be true, then this name is strictly appropriate to our Lord. He is the Son of God; He is the Son of man. He is the Son of God by an eternal generation. He is also the Son of Judah and the Son of David. The Prophet Isaiah said: **"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. . ."** (Isa. 9:6). John 3:16 declares: **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."**

Finally, some interpreters think "Shiloh" is derived from the same root as the word "Salem." This would make it mean "peace" or "rest." The form of the word is related to the Hebrew word for "peace" (shalom). They say "Shiloh" means "the Peace-Bearer" or "the Peace-Giver." A number of good men take this position. This is also true of Christ, Who is called **"the Prince of Peace"** (Isa. 9:6). Christ came to make peace between God and man. **"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us"** (Eph. 2:14). **"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven"** (Col. 1:20).

THE GATHERING UNTO

HIM

Now consider the words: **" . . unto him shall the gathering of the people be."** Literally the Hebrew has it: "the gathering of the peoples." The Hebrew word used for "gathering" (yiqqahah) means the people will gather to show willing, filial obedience and homage. Some render it: "the obedience of the people" from the use of the word in Proverbs 30:17, and others "the expectation of the people," meaning Christ is the desire of all nations (Hag. 2:6). The people cannot refer to the other tribes of Israel, for Judah already holds the tribal scepter over them prior to the coming of Shiloh. It means that the Gentiles shall come to the Messiah and find peace and rest in Him.

It is certainly true that when Christ was upon earth during His personal ministry that multitudes gathered to hear Him preach and to see His miracles. Matthew 13:2 tells us: **"And great multitudes were gathered together unto him. . ."** Mark 2:2 says: **"And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them. . ."** Mark 4:1 discloses: **"And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude. . ."** So many gathered to hear Him that His enemies lamented: **"Behold, the world is gone after him"** (John 12:19).

Taking the material prepared by John the Baptist, Christ gathered the New Testament church unto Himself. This first church multiplied into other churches of like faith and order. These churches became known as groups of baptized people who gathered around the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 18:20; I Cor. 5:4). Today, churches around the world gather

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to worship and serve Jesus Christ in their respective assemblies. By preaching the gospel to all nations these churches are gathering out a people for His name.

There is a sense in which all the people of God were gathered to Christ when He died as their Covenant Head and Representative. Caiaphas was moved by God to utter this prophecy prior to Calvary: **“Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad”** (John 11:49-52).

ANOTHER POSSIBLE MEANING

The meaning which I have just given is the general meaning according to most scholars. The things which I have spoken are true. If they are not taught in Genesis 49:10, then they are taught in other Scripture. But some very good men see another meaning in Genesis 49:10. This is done by a translation a bit different from what is found in our King James Version and most other versions. This translation departs from the masoretic notes and gives the signification “forever” to the word usually translated “until.” They apply the verse to Christ’s second advent, not His first. While I doubt the Hebrew text can stand this meaning, I want to give it in fairness to them and others.

They say the scepter departed

from Judah long before Christ came into the world. They say that when Christ was born the Jews were under Roman dominion. They say that Psalm 89:39 makes it plain the crown of the kingdom of the Jews was cast to the ground and that the scepter removed and the law-giving authority suspended. This cannot be successfully denied, but they seem to ignore that any kind of lawgiver could exist and the prophecy still not be hurt. While Judea may not have always had a king they had governors from Judah or lawgivers.

They offer the following translation of the verse: “The scepter shall not be removed from Judah nor the lawgiver from between his feet forever; for Shiloh will come, and to Him shall the gatherings of the nations be.” This makes the coming of Shiloh to be the second advent of Christ. Isaac Leeser, in his translation of the Old Testament, gives the following rendering: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor the lawgiver from his descendants forever; because Shiloh shall come, and to Him shall be the gathering of the nations.”

These men say that the gathering implies a previous scattering (Hos. 3:4-5). They contend that when Christ comes back to earth to set up His kingdom, He will gather scattered Israel by the sound of the jubilee trumpet back to their land (Deut. 30:1-3; Isa. 11:11-12; 27:13; Matt. 24:30-31). The scepter did depart from Judah, but not forever. It will return with the second coming of Christ. Then the King of Judah will be the king of the world, for the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdoms of the Son of Judah (Rev. 11:15). All families of the earth will be blessed in Christ (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4;

28:14).

Some would paraphrase the word “Shiloh” and make it read: “Until He comes to whom it belongs, for whom it is reserved.” This makes it a concise fact which Ezekiel 21:26-27 has amplified: **“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.”** They say the tribe of Judah proved itself unworthy to rule, and regal power was taken away from it, and remains thus until Christ comes to restore it. This expectation of a ruler to come was alive in the day of Nathanael who said of Christ: **“Thou art the King of Israel”** (John 1:49).

The thought of a ruler coming from Israel to smite all his foes is declared in Numbers 24:17-19. There Balaam prophesied: **“I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city”** (Num. 24:17-19). Many feel that the essence of this is taken from Genesis 49:10. This argument is weighty and worthy of serious consideration.

CONCLUSION

1. Jacob’s prophecy must be ascribed to the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Judah did not become the dominant tribe for over 640 years under David, and



Quotes
from
**Brother
Ritechus
N.
Dignation**
by Joseph Harris

PASTOR LED CHURCHES

The pastor is supposed to be the human leader in every church, under Christ. Yet there is always that church member who will say, “But what if he’s not following Christ?” That’s always possible, but it’s usually just a lame excuse to buck the authority of the pastor because that particular member wants to run the church. Pastor led churches are the strongest because that’s God’s plan, therefore it’s the best. When a Godly man follows Christ and people follow his leadership, things run smoother and most of the folks are as happy as a possum that just dodged an 18 wheeler.

the person called “Shiloh” was not born for 1,689 years. That Judah alone would be the repository of royalty in Israel until Shiloh should come and assume the crown at His coming could not have been guessed by human wisdom. Such information must have come from Him Who declared **“the end from the beginning”** (Isa. 46:10).

2. The scepter never departed from Judah until Christ came. The kingdom was divided and the ten tribes went into Assyrian Captivity. After Judah went into Babylonian Captivity some returned from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, along with many Levites, and some from the other ten tribes, and restored the kingdom of the Jews (a name

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derived from Judah). Though Judea had become a conquered province of the Roman Empire prior to Christ's coming, yet Judea retained its religious polity and its power of self-government until A.D. 70, the time when the Jewish temple and polity were destroyed. This did not happen until Shiloh came as Jacob predicted. This confirms that the Messiah did come, and that He must have come before A.D. 70--the time the scepter completely departed from Judah. If the Messiah has not already come, He can never come.

3. Christ is the center and unity of His people: **"Unto him shall the gathering of the people be"** (Gen. 49:10). Scattered in professed Christendom, but distinct from it, there is a secret, sacred brotherhood of true believers who have been quickened by the Holy Spirit. These are from every nation under Heaven. They have all been effectually drawn to Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the gospel. This great gathering unto Christ must continue until God the Father finally gathers **"together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him"** (Eph. 1:10).

4. We must lift up Christ, if we want to see a great gathering of souls to Him. Let Christ be preached and He will draw His elect. The great magnet is not the cross, nor the gospel story, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself on the cross and in the gospel. Oh, Christian brother and sister, ever lift up the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. You demagnetize the gospel if you omit His atoning death!

5. You will either be gathered to Christ to be saved, or you will be gathered to the great white throne to be for ever banished from His presence. Oh, sinner, bow down to the great Peace-Giver. I beseech you to cling to the atoning sacrifice of Christ by faith that you may be gathered unto Him at His rapture coming (II Thess. 2:1).



Safe on the

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rule. But each of His lost sheep is placed upon His mighty shoulders and carried safely home in our parable. Here is seen the great truth of God's preservation of His people. The Lord Jesus did not die for folk and then allow even one of them to struggle to be kept safe on their homeward journey. His sheep certainly have their struggles against the indwelling sin nature and the difficulties of life, but they do not need to struggle to keep themselves saved and safe: they are on the shoulders of the Great Shepherd. He is mighty to save - **"to the uttermost"** as Hebrews 7:25 says. We might say that a part of His carrying us home is stated in these words, **"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). From the farthest distant point that a lost sheep may wander all the way to the home of the Shepherd, the now-found-once-lost-sheep need not concern himself with his safety. He is safe! Thus our Good Shepherd, is also **"our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep"** (Heb. 13:20). So it was that our Good and Great Shepherd said, **"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. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:27-29). In our parable the now-found-once-lost sheep rides upon the shoulders of the shepherd. That is one picture. In the last quoted portion, the Lord's sheep are in both His and His Father's hand and cannot be removed from that safe place. To those who would argue that the sheep has power to remove himself from these sovereign hands and thus be lost forever, we point out that such a concept does not enter into the Lord's Word here or elsewhere. So why introduce such a thought? Grace does not include the giving of a gift that can be lost. The proper understanding of Scripture lies in believing what it says, not in introducing concepts that are foreign to the context and intent of its Author. Another part of the Lord's carrying His sheep home is His working by the Spirit in the born again one. Paul wrote, **"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"** (Phil. 2:12-13). Earlier in this article God's preservation was mentioned. Here we have the other side of that spiritual coin: that other side being the perseverance of Christ's sheep. Being borne upon the shoulders of the Great Shepherd, the sheep is safe. Being internally worked upon by the indwelling Spirit, the sheep is caused **"both to will [to do] and to do of his good pleasure."** [brackets added]. After all, God's

Word does say, **"The righteous also shall hold on his way..."** (Job 17:9). Someone says, "But even sheep sometimes fall in the mud hole of sin." Sadly, we agree. But it is not the nature of a sheep to either eat nor wallow with the pigs in the filth of this world. So it is with Christ's spiritual sheep: fall they may, but afterward they sorrow greatly and return to the Shepherd of their souls. They walk a different path and pursue a different goal for they hunger and thirst after righteousness.

The fifth thing of note in this parable is the rejoicing of the shepherd who calls to his fellows to come and rejoice with him upon arriving home with his sheep. Some have thought this to picture the rejoicing of angels at the salvation of each sinner saved. It may be that the angels rejoice as no doubt they do in all the works of God. It is true that there is rejoicing in the presence of angels according to Luke 15:10, but that verse does not say that the angels rejoice. The New Testament makes it clear that angels do not understand God's salvation of His people. In speaking of the preaching of the Gospel, Peter says, **"...which things the angels desire to look into"** (I Peter 1:12). Salvation is not within the experience of angels for no salvation has been provided for those among that class who sinned. Those angels who dwell in the presence of God know nothing of sin by experience and so cannot know in a personal way the joy of salvation. In the parable it is the shepherd and his friends and neighbors who are called to rejoice with him. Is it not more in keeping with the parable to say that it is our Good and Great and Glorious Shepherd who along with the Father and the Spirit

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– and perhaps those saints with them – the ones whom Christ “...is not ashamed to call... brethren” (Heb. 2:11) that rejoice most at the repentance of even one sinner?

And that brings us to the sixth thing – and the final thing – to note in this little study. In this parable Christ brings home to His hearers this great truth: it is the repentance of a sinner which brings joy to those in Heaven. We know from the Bible that repentance and faith are both twin gifts and at the same time twin requirements. By twins we mean they are always found together. True repentance and true faith do not exist separately. Imitations of both abound and are the product of humanistic preaching and confidence in the flesh. Whenever the genuine two are mentioned together they are always listed in your Bible in this order: repentance and faith – never faith and repentance. To put faith ahead of repentance changes the nature of faith, making it merely intellectual assent whereas genuine faith is a falling upon the Rock Christ Jesus and being broken in doing so (see Luke 20:18). We know from God’s Word how repentance comes. Paul wrote, “**For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death**” (II Cor. 7:10). Beware, then of the sorrow of the world! It is godly sorrow that works repentance. Repentance is a turning from sin to God while faith is complete trust in Jesus Christ and His finished work. It is dependence upon Him alone! Paul stated that he preached to everyone both repentance and

faith. To the Ephesian elders gathered at the port city of Miletus he said, “**Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ**” (Acts 20:21).

And so in keeping with Paul’s example, we testify to the need for both repentance and faith. The question for each reader is this: have you repented – turned from sin to God and believed in Christ? Are you like those in Thessalonica who “...turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (I Thess. 1:9)? Can you say with the writer of Hebrews, “**But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul**” (Heb. 10:39)? In speaking to unbelieving religious Jewish hypocrites, the Lord Jesus said, “**I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins**” (John 8:24). God “...now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31). Those who do not repent (experience a broken heart which works a turning from sin to God) and experience faith in Christ and His finished work, face a guaranteed judgment. It is guaranteed - “**he hath given assurance**” - first of all by the resurrection of Christ as stated in the last verse and also in the following words: “**He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the**

only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). Unbelievers have a guaranteed future! Those who have not repented and believed are already condemned! They by their unbelief display their enmity against God. If we may borrow from the words written by Paul, “**Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God**” (II Cor. 5:20). We do beseech you! Hear the Word of God. Repent! Believe! Accept no substitutes! Those who experience true repentance and true faith shall be carried safely upon the shoulders of the Good, Great, and Glorious Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, all the way from earth to Heaven!



The Short Pews



Brief
Articles
by Curtis
Pugh

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SHUT UP?

Those familiar with the care of domestic animals understand the term “shut up.” Chickens are usually shut up for the night. Cattle and horses are often shut up in pens or stalls. The Psalmist used that term in speaking of his miserable condition. He wrote: “**..I am shut up, and I cannot come forth**” (Psalm 88:8). Just prior to that he wrote in verse seven: “**Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah.**” Selah is a musical term meaning pause and think about it. Are you aware of God’s impending wrath

lying hard upon you? Are you thinking about it?

Have you ever had a similar experience to that of the Psalmist? Have you ever been imprisoned, as it were: imprisoned without hope? Has God ever made you aware of your sinful condition? Has terror seized upon your soul? Job went through such a time. He wrote: “**For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure**” (Job 31:23). Do the words of Isaiah fit your case? “**Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word...**” (Isa. 66:5). Or are you still trying to sort things out on your own? Worse yet, are you still filled with self-confidence thinking you can somehow please God and earn enough favor with God to result in your salvation? Are you still caught up in the false hope that your good deeds, your obedience, your baptism, your sincerity, etc. will somehow placate God?

There is a work that only God does. It is called circumcision of the heart. Paul wrote: “**For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God**” (Rom. 2:28-29). Want praise of God? Then you must have a spiritual, inward heart circumcision. You cannot operate upon your own heart. You cannot do this work “**in the spirit**” or inner man. You are “**shut up**” and can do nothing about your condition. If God does not come to you and change your heart – if He does not birth you into His family you shall remain an unbeliever and shall die in

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The Short Pews

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your sins. The Lord Jesus taught that very thing, saying: **“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”** (John 8:24).

There are a great many things the circumcised heart produces. It first of all produces godly sorrow over your sin. Paul wrote: **“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death”** (II Cor. 7:10). This kind of sorrow does not produce a mere outward show of weeping as a result of some emotional manipulation at the hands of a clever preacher. Godly sorrow produces or **“worketh”** repentance – a penitent turning to God and its twin which is faith in Christ, as Paul said, **“...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Acts 20:21). This along with a continuing change of life are the products of heart-circumcision.

A profession of faith in Christ apart from the circumcision of the heart is just man made religion and is worthless. Paul wrote about this kind of religion saying, **“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh”** (Col. 2:20-23). Paul questioned why those who have experienced heart-circumcision

would put themselves back under the Old Testament Law for righteousness. He includes the worthless commandments and doctrines of men as having no place in the lives of those with circumcised hearts. All laws, rules, commandments of men, etc. can ever accomplish is a show of wisdom. All they can produce he calls **“will worship.”** By that last term he means worthless religion produced by the will of men – never acceptable to God. Oh these will produce a false humility and a neglecting of the body as it seeks comfort and pleasure, but no false religion will accomplish anything worthwhile in combating the flesh (sin nature) with which all of us are born.

You cannot circumcise your heart. Your church cannot circumcise your heart. Your baptism cannot circumcise your heart. Your prayers cannot circumcise your heart. Your fear of hell cannot circumcise your heart. Your will cannot circumcise your heart. Your religious rituals cannot circumcise your heart. Your outward attempts at obedience cannot circumcise your heart. You are shut up – if you only knew it – to this fact: if God does not come to you and do a work in your heart you will remain an unbeliever and **“shall die in your sins.”** May the Words of God sink deep down in your heart so that you cannot escape them! May you be like Lydia, **“...whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul”** (Acts 16:14). May you see that you are **“shut up”** and that you **“cannot come forth.”** May you be miserable in this imprisonment as you see that you are between a rock and a hard place! May you tremble at God’s Word! May God come to you and circumcise your heart!

Illustrative Anecdotes

CONVERSATION WITH AN HONEST MAN

At our local Indian clinic, a small waiting room serves both the lab and the radiology departments. Recently while awaiting lab results along with three other folk, a fortyish-something-looking man came in and sat down. After a few pleasantries he said, “I saw that I was not getting anywhere with my life, so I told the Lord that if He would help me with alcohol and cigarettes, I would serve Him the rest of my life. I decided that I wanted to be an evangelist.” As I cast about in my mind as to how best to reply to this man, he continued: “I took my cigarettes and put them on the altar and now I am an evangelist.” Trying to get him to think, I asked, “What is this altar? Is that something in the Bible?” He just looked at me, so I continued: “I am a Baptist preacher and I never read anything about an altar-thing like you are talking about.” “No,” he said, “It is not in the Bible.” “Oh, I said, “so it is just something some man thought up.” “Yes, was his answer to that.” I said, “You are an honest man.” I wanted to speak more with him, but he was called by the radiologist and I had to leave. Do I dare hope that God might use those few words to show this man that much if not all of his “religion” is man-made wicked foolishness? **“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart**

from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:21-23).

Illustrative Anecdotes

GOD CAN BUT HE DOES NOT

I was told about two Pentecostal/Charismatic types conversing before one of their services started. “Did you ever see a tooth that God filled?” asked the first. Not wanting to be outdone, the other replied, “God does not fill teeth. He gives you new ones.” While personally tending toward the view of the second fellow, I refuse to get involved in such a “deep theological argument.” Of course God CAN do either, but He does neither. That is why many Pentecostals and Charismatics make use of either partial or full dentures! Paul’s exhortation to Timothy was this, **“But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes”** (II Tim. 2:23).

Illustrative Anecdotes

THE ABSENCE OF SOMETHING’S A TESTIMONY

Probably you do not remember or perhaps had no occasion to frequent such places, but some will no doubt know about this. Prior to gaining respectability and popularity with the masses, in many old Pentecostal and even some johnny-come-lately Charismatic meeting places, the walls were festooned with trusses, supports of various kinds, neck braces, walking canes, crutches and such things. (Today this crowd is a little too upscale to “decorate” their buildings in the old style.) But these things were fastened to the wall as “testimonies” to God’s healing power, according to their own words. Now, we do not doubt God’s ability to heal. But the folk that preached in and

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The Short Pews

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attended such places claimed to believe in “divine healing.” In reality, they believed in “divine healers” - a concept which Baptists and most sensible people rejected. But, noticeably, some things were absent from these walls and their very absence was a testimony against “divine healers.” Nobody ever saw any dentures or artificial limbs fastened to the walls in these places. Why is that? Well, it is easy enough to fake a “healing” from an injured neck or a hernia or “one leg being shorter than the other,” etc. But it is impossible to fake the restoration of absent teeth or an arm or leg lost for whatever reason. Of course, God can do anything - and we rejoice in that. But He does not work through “divine healers.” Evidence of this is that none of them ever put artificial devices that replaced either missing teeth or missing limbs on their walls. None of those fake preachers ever raise the dead and none of them ever restore a missing part to the human body. The Bible says, “... **all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death**” (Rev. 21:8).

Illustrative Anecdotes

LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Bible believers agree that prior to the completion of the New Testament, there were genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit operating in the Lord's congregations. Two of these were communicative: tongues (languages) and the interpretation of these languages. We know that these were actual spoken languages because the visitors in Jerusalem who heard them speaking said, “...**Behold, are not all these which speak**

Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born” (Acts 2:7-8)? It is well known that both Pentecostals and Charismatics claim to speak in “tongues” by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit today. Their credibility is destroyed, however, by their actions. It is a fact that both Pentecostals and Charismatics who go as missionaries to countries where English is not spoken must struggle to learn the language of that country. They often go to language schools just as Baptists do! They are forced into untenable doctrinal teachings on the subject of tongues in order to escape their dilemma. But think how much more they could get done in their religious cause if they could miraculously speak the language like a native immediately upon their arrival on foreign soil! **“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction”** (II Peter 2:1).

THE WASHING OF REGENERATION

Paul penned a very interesting statement about salvation. He wrote: **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life”** (Titus 3:5-7). In this text we notice several things. Salvation is not of works. Salvation comes by the mercy

of God. Salvation comes by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit - that is, the birth from above or being “born again.” Part of this salvation is justification - being viewed as righteous in God's eyes by grace. And finally Paul concludes that we shall inherit eternal life in fulfillment of our hope - our faith towards the future.

In addition to these things, Paul mentioned **“the washing of regeneration.”** More literally he said the “bath of regeneration.” Some folk, every time they see a word related to water in the Bible jump to the conclusion that it refers to baptism. Folks, it just ain't so! A little reminder of high school English will settle the matter as to what the phrase **“the washing of regeneration”** means. Remember gerunds? A gerund can be spotted by the ending “ing.” A gerund is a verb that acts as a noun. In our text, **“washing”** is a gerund - a noun. Remember prepositional phrases? Prepositional phrases modify nouns. In our text **“of regeneration”** is a prepositional phrase. Prepositional phrases are made up of a preposition followed by a noun and perhaps some modifiers like “a” or “the.” In our text **“of regeneration”** is a prepositional phrase that modifies the noun **“washing.”** What does the prepositional phrase tell us about the noun **“washing?”** It tells us that it is regeneration that washes. It is regeneration that bathes. The phrase **“the washing of regeneration”** does not mean, cannot mean, that baptism regenerates.

The very nature of baptism will not allow for the idea that baptism regenerates or has anything to do with the new birth. It is a righteous act (see Matthew 3:15). Therefore baptism is a work.

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BEREA BAPTIST BANNER

Financial Report

7-1-2016 to 7-31-2016

Beginning Balance	\$1,728.49
RECEIPTS:	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX	50.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	313.45
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	150.00
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Elizabeth Shields, Leavenworth, KS	15.00
Emmanuel B. C., Oldtown, KY	100.00
Eve Knowles, Scarborough, ME	100.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR	12.50
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Grace M B. C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	35.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Parkway L. B. C., Springfield, OR	100.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR	50.00
Reedy's Chapel B. C., Calhoun City, MS	50.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	26.00
Anonymous	5,255.00
Dividing checks	150.00
Sub Total	\$7,526.95
TOTAL	\$9,255.44
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	657.79
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.90
Dividing checks	150.00
Supplies	248.40
Total Expenditures	\$4,022.09
ENDING BALANCE	\$5,233.35



BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST

Financial Report

7-1-2016 to 7-31-2016

Beginning Balance	\$6,815.40
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
Calvary B. C., Everson, WA	200.00
.....	525.00
TOTAL	7,340.40
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	400.00
Program production	195.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	595.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$6,745.40

The Short Pews

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Paul, in our text wrote: **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done...”** Salvation is either by works or by the mercy/grace of God. You cannot have it both ways. That principle is set forth by Paul in Romans 11:6: **“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”** Grace and works, like oil and water, will not mix. Grace means unmerited favor – God’s favor as a gift. Works demands payment and a payment is not a gift. And so both English grammar and the context of the phrase “the washing of regeneration” will not allow any idea of baptism having anything to do with regeneration or salvation. **“Ye must be born again.”**

RELIGION OR REVELATION

Religion is outward observance or devotion to a deity, idea, or set of religious beliefs. Religion is man reaching upward to God. Job’s friend Zophar asked: **“Canst thou by searching find out God?”** (Job 11:7)? He answered his question in the negative. God is limitless while man is finite. God cannot be put under a microscope or in a test tube and subjected to experimentation. Man cannot “find out God.”

Much “Christianity” is mere man-made religion. Hidden away there are genuine followers of the Lamb of God, but not many. God’s people are always a minority commanded to be separate from religion. Man made religions are always works-oriented. They all teach that by doing something human beings can gain God’s favor. Religion

teaches that sinners are saved by works, or that they are kept saved by works. The idea of God saving individuals as a gift – by grace – is foreign to human reasoning. But the Bible says, **“...David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin”** (Rom. 4:6-8). God saves people “without works.” He credits righteousness to sinners by grace because of the finished work of Christ. He forgives the sins of those for whom Christ died. He goes further than that: He does not credit them with sin at all. That is grace! Grace is foreign to human thinking! Grace is contrary to man made religion!

The Bible is the complete revelation of God to man intellectually. But head knowledge is not salvation. The Scriptures are able to make one wise to salvation (II Tim. 3:15), being God’s revelation, but they are not salvation. However there is another revelation other than the Bible: a personal one. In Matthew 11:27 the Lord Jesus said: **“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son,**

and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” This is a personal revelation made by the Son of God, Jesus Christ, to individuals. Without it, no one has a living relationship with Christ or the Father. This is the Sovereign Son of God exercising His power in revealing Himself and God to lost sinners. Has Christ revealed the Father to you? If Christ has not revealed the Father to you, then your religion is only a man made one! It accounts for nothing in God’s sight. You are yet in your sins. It is written: **“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life”** (I John 5:20). Do not be content with mere religion. **“...Ye must be born again”** (John 3:7).



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Grace Baptist Church of Rural Hall, NC and Pastor Andy Proctor would like to announce their 37th Annual Labor Day Weekend Bible Conference.

The conference will be held at the Caraway Conference Center at 4756 Caraway Mountain Road, Sophia, NC 27350, Friday,

September 2nd until about 4:00 pm Sunday, September 4th.

Breakfast, lunch and supper will be provided for all who attend the conference. The conference theme is “Looking Up to the Future” taken from Luke 21:28.

Conference speakers scheduled are Elders Jeff Short, Jonathan Bailess, Gene Kiger, Jerry Dodson, Justin Meier, Doug Newell IV, Pete Horn, Paul Jackson, Peter Halliman, Troy Sheppard, Paul Stepp, David Green, Rick Perdue, Stephen West, Sam Wilson, and Joseph Prater.

All are invited to attend, and pray for the meeting if you can’t attend.

If you have any questions, please call the host pastor, Brother Andy Proctor at (352) 895-1437.

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

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

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

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