

The Berea Baptist Banner

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

God's Goodness Towards the Wicked

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his



sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?

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Living the Life Amidst An Oppressive Government

By Andy Proctor
of Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Romans 13:1-7

This message is not designed to talk about what the government should do, though that has its place, but rather it is what we ought to do as God's people, and in particular His true churches as it relates to our interactions with human, albeit God-ordained, government. Which, by the way, includes all governments,



oppressive or not.

The Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Oxford English Dictionary, and Webster's 1828 Dictionary basically say, oppression is associated with tyranny, oppressors, taskmasters, slave drivers, heavy unjust burdens, even tax exactors.

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Commitment Versus Lukewarmness

By Tom Ross
of South Point, Ohio

"My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:11-12).

We are presently living in a



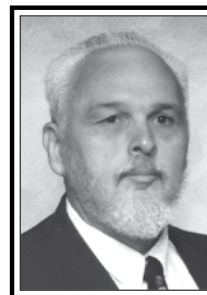
generation that has little if any commitment to the preservation of moral good within our society. Sad to say, many people are not committed to anything or anyone. Ours is an age of

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Leaning Upon the Lord

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma

Great and grave problems existed in the Lord's congregation in Corinth. Because of the extent of the wickedness within the assembly, the Holy Spirit moved Paul to write these words: "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (I Cor. 3:3). Sadly, Pentecostal and



Charismatic groups pattern their pop-up meetings after the disorderly circuses typical of the Corinthian assembly. But

that is not our subject. What we wish to point out is this: while we deny the existence of "carnal Christians" who never are

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I much commend to make a foe a friend.

This is the Christian way of conquering enemies. May we understand the divine art of which our Lord Jesus was the great example!

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45).

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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.

God's Goodness

(Continued from page 1) ◊

do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:43-48).

Our God is a "good God." The entirety of Christianity, and even much of the world at large, might allow this simple fact, that "God is good." And, it is true – evidenced both by Scripture and by God's dealings with mankind – that God is good to men, and that He does bless and bestow much goodness upon the sons and daughters of Adam. Though this may seem to be a paradox, it is true, and God's goodness is evident in the lives of both the wicked and the righteous. It is also true that there are promises conditioned upon man's obedience and even outward or apparent morality or submission to God's will. In other words, additional material blessings may be enjoyed by the unsaved, as they outwardly obey the precepts of God's Word and will in accordance with the rules of society, in those places where God's name and Word are known, or in those places where some goodness in the consciences of men will still prevail in the rules and standards of society. But still, no matter how you describe God's relationship with mankind, it must be admitted that God is good, on some level, to all who partake of the breath of life – which is just one of His many gifts of goodness to mankind.

I suppose that it goes without saying, that the Scriptures teach us that God is not good to the wicked in the next life – He will not give them good, but He will subject each and every one of the unrepentant, wicked members of the race of mankind, to the unremitting and everlasting fires

and tortures of Hell and the Lake of Fire! However, in this life, it is obvious that men and women who have no knowledge of God – who certainly have no love for God, or even any fear of Him – will be granted good things in this life, and maybe even long and successful lives. It is even true that many times the mortal and physical benefits that natural and unrepentant men will enjoy, will far exceed the mortal and physical benefits which God's own faithful saints might experience in this mortal life.

Again, these facts seem contradictory and seem to conflict with God's own desires and intentions to perpetuate righteousness. And yet, we know that God is in control. In fact, we know that it cannot be a mistake on God's part, that wicked men enjoy God's goodness in this life. Therefore, we know that there must be a purpose in these things, and we know that God must have a meaning and a reason for the way that His goodness and His bounties might be enjoyed on this earth. Now I want us to explore in a little further detail the goodness that God displays towards the wicked. In other words, I want us to examine what it means when we observe that God is sometimes good to the wicked. Let us look at some particulars concerning "God's goodness towards the wicked."

IS UNIVERSAL, AND SOMETIME PARTICULAR

First, I want us to consider the fact that God's goodness is, in many cases, enjoyed by all of mankind. In other words, what goodness is enjoyed by men in one part of the world is also enjoyed by men in another part of the world. And, what mortal benefits are experienced by men of one

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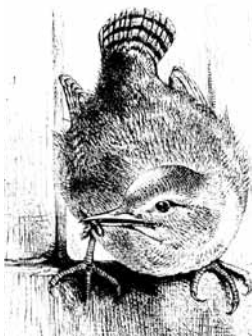
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God's Goodness

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generation, have been enjoyed by men of every generation. **“He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. 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: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. 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”** (Ps. 33:5-9). Righteous and unrighteous; saved and unsaved; we all enjoy certain benefits and certain blessings essential to life – until our lives come to an end. The saved will honor God for His goodness – the wicked sinner will not.

Sometimes we attempt to apply God's sovereignty as it concerns election and salvation, to the goodness of God. But, this is a mistake. God's goodness in the natural and material realm is felt by all on some level. This goodness is universal in contrast with His saving grace, which is particular. The Psalmist said, **“Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness”** (Ps. 107:8-9). Amongst men, God will satisfy longings and will fill the hungry. This can be seen on a physical and on an emotional level.

This simple truth is plain: the sun shines, as it has been ordained, in every place and every generation, as the Lord sees fit. The rain falls, as it has been ordained, in every place and every generation, as

the Lord sees fit. Men draw the breath of life, enjoy the food, wear the clothing, live in the homes and shelters, as God has ordained, in every place and every generation. The wicked of every generation and every place are the recipients of God's goodness, longsuffering, and you might even say – mercy. If you are alive and you are unsaved, you are, at the very least, separated from Hell by the breath that you just took. Is God not longsuffering? Is God not good to you? The next breath may be your last. But, at least, for the space of the current breath, you are kept from Hell, and you are blessed with mortal life. Up till now, you have had the breath of life, and have not been plunged into Hell. Whatever your plight in this life, whether you are rich or poor, young or old, sick or healthy – this is, at least, a reprieve from the Hell that awaits you, unless you would repent of your sins, and believe on Jesus Christ as your Saviour and only hope of salvation. And yet, wonder of wonders, none of the wicked will willingly acknowledge God's goodness, unless God would intervene on their behalf, and save their unworthy souls.

So, in many ways, the goodness of God is universal, and the basic blessings of life are generally shared across the realm of humanity. However, it is also true, that sometimes the Lord will allow particular men or women to be blessed in a particular way. These men or women are not saved, nor are they destined for salvation. And yet, the Lord will allow them certain benefits, which may be used to further His Will and His Purpose. In I Kings 21:1-16, we have the account of King Ahab and Naboth the Jezreelite. King Ahab was blessed tremendously in physical and mortal matters. And yet, he never

properly gave God the glory and praise for the benefits and goodness of God. Instead, he and Jezebel always wanted more. In the passage that I just referred to, we find that Jezebel conspires to slay Naboth, so that the greedy Ahab could have the vineyard that Naboth refused to sell to him. It seems somehow wrong (to our finite minds), that a man who was so wicked, should have so much good in this life. And yet, this must have been the will and purpose of God. In the end, the benefits that Ahab enjoyed in this life, would serve to condemn him as an unthankful and unholy wretch, when his life was called into account.

In the New Testament, we have the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Again, it seems somehow unjust (to our finite minds), that the rich man – who was unthankful and a miserable sinner – should have so much to enjoy in this life, while Lazarus – a man who must have known and feared God – would die as a beggar. And yet, God's will and purpose was accomplished. Lazarus would receive his reward in the next life; the rich man had his reward in the mortal life, and his eternity would be spent in the pits of Hell.

So, we see that God can be good to the wicked in a general and universal way. He can also be good to the wicked in a more specific and particular manner. In either case, He is sure to perform His will. All of this goodness that is poured out upon wicked men, will serve to honor and glorify God, either in this life, or in the life to come. No matter what, unless God would intervene, His goodness – of which all men are the recipients on some level – is received with unthankful hearts, ignorant minds, and a human

desire to consume these benefits in a pursuit of our own lusts.

IS NOT NORMALLY COMPARABLE TO HIS GRACE

I want you to know, though, that the goodness and the benefits of God – as they are poured out upon the world at large – are not comparable to the personal and the distinguishing and the tender grace of God, as we see that grace displayed in the lives of God's chosen and elect children. It may seem, sometimes, that the world of the wicked has the better of it in this life. It may seem, sometimes, that too many of the wicked live long, healthy lives, full of riches and pleasures. However, the blessings that we enjoy as the children of God are better and higher blessings. We will enjoy the Heavenly and eternal benefits of God's grace and love, while the wicked may, in this life, be the beneficiaries of God's goodness, and may enjoy material blessings, which we, perhaps, may be denied. **“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak”** (Heb. 6:9). I want and desire the blessings that accompany salvation, far more than I want the earthly blessings and pleasures that accompany the mortal life, which are the focus of the wicked!

To be chosen and blessed of God in a spiritual way, is far better than to be the recipient of the fleeting and diminishing blessings that the wicked may enjoy in this life! **“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you,**

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God's Goodness

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that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full... If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me" (John 15:9-11, 18-21). I pray that the Lord will bless each of you, with such a relationship with the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, so that your desires would not be for mere earthly and mortal things. Our relationship with the world and with the things of this life, has been superseded by our relationship with the Father and His Son, our Saviour. The "good things" of this life are not our goal, nor are these ever promised to us in the fullest measure. However, the grace of God has secured for us better blessings in the spirit, which we enjoy now; and better blessings in the life to come, which we look forward to with great longing and anticipation.

Though we usually think of God's goodness towards the wicked as being something that is wasted or at least useless as far as the eternal lives of those wicked souls who are the recipients of these blessings – which spiritual lives will be spent in horrific punishments in the Lake of Fire; we could make use of this teaching of God's goodness to the wicked,

and apply this thought to those who were formerly wicked – but whom God would convert and save by His grace. In other words, though it may seem unjust and unfair (to us) that Ahab and the rich man were abundantly blessed in this life; what about those who were wicked, lost, and undone; who were blessed abundantly and ignorant and oblivious to God's goodness; who were then saved by the grace of God, and who now give God glory and praise for His goodness unto them? Consider the Demoniac of Gadara. We read about him in Luke 8:27-35. It is very apparent that he was a wicked man, possessed of demons, and an unworthy recipient of any goodness of God. And yet, God preserved his (apparently) worthless and condemned life, until such time as Jesus Christ would come to him, and grant unto him repentance and forgiveness of sins. This man, in the end, was the recipient of far more than God's goodness – he was the recipient of the saving grace of God! This last blessing was far greater, and far better than any material goodness of God which he might have hitherto enjoyed!

So, the Scriptures teach us that God can be good to the wicked, show them their terrible condition, and then convert them to His use, and apply His saving grace unto them. These "formerly" wicked souls have been blessed with God's goodness, were formerly unthankful and devoid of praise unto God, but they now glorify Him for His goodness and grace! This is true in your life (if you are saved) and in mine as well. **"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That**

at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:11-13).

WILL REDOUND TO THE CONDEMNATION OF THE WICKED

In the end, the goodness that God has bestowed upon the reprobate – those who will not be converted from their sins – will only abound to the condemnation and the destruction of men. Those who have enjoyed His blessings in the mortal realm – but have entirely ignored the Giver of those blessings – will give an account of themselves, and will be judged for their failures to fear, love, and obey the God that both made them and blessed them in this life.

There is no doubt that God is good to millions and billions! **"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful"** (Luke 6:35-36). But, men will not acknowledge Him, or His goodness, or His mercy! In an ungrateful, oblivious, and even rebellious fashion, the wicked men and women of Adam's race will receive of the stores of God's goodness, and will consume these blessings and favors of God in the pursuit of their own pleasures. In doing so, they will only heap further damnation upon their own souls.

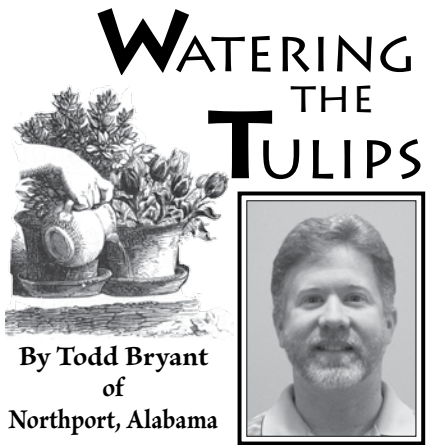
In a further example of the wickedness of men, some will receive of God's goodness, but

they will give the credit to some man-made god, or some deity or force of nature which is beneath the glory of God. In Acts 17:22-31, the Apostle Paul preached to the men of the city of Athens. He condemned them for their idol worship, and for their vain superstitions, in which they had devised their own gods, and had given praise and glory to those who were not God. The Apostle Paul told the men of Athens about the Lord Jesus Christ, about the true God, about the salvation accomplished on behalf of wicked men. It is true that some would repent of their sins; but, most would go on with their lives, hardly bothered by these teachings, and they would continue to persist in their wicked superstitions, wherein God was ignored, and the imaginations of men were exalted.

In the end, the rich man referred to in the account of the rich man and Lazarus will give an account of this. He will answer – and is currently answering – for his deliberate refusal to give God the glory for the riches that he had in this life. He had his reward – but his reward expired with his last breath. He got what he wanted in this life, but he fell far short of the glory and blessings that Lazarus would enjoy (and is now, currently enjoying)! King Ahab, too, would answer for his sins. He had much of the world's pleasures in this life; but he had a bloody death, and an eternal judgment at the Hands of God which awaited him at the end of his days.

The world at large will give an account for their behavior, after having experienced the goodness and the longsuffering of God. **"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest**

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By Todd Bryant
of
Northport, Alabama

I'm Not Gay!

"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:9-11 NKJV).

I am not gay. That probably comes as no surprise since I am the pastor of a Baptist church. But it's an important point. My charge (as a child of God – not only as a pastor) is to attempt to make a disciple of every person indiscriminately (Matt. 28:18-20). These are my marching orders from the great Captain of our faith! The difficulty often arises when I encounter somebody that sins differently than I do. I can relate to most every sinner listed in our text. God saved me out of most of those sins. But the sin of homosexuality is one I have never struggled with. So I cannot relate.

Following the ruling of the Supreme Court, many believers have lashed out with rash comments that were less than

gracious. We are commanded, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). And again, "...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). Sometimes, in trying to defend the Bible, we do not follow God's instructions. Certainly, this is one of those times.

But why? Why are believers so quick to speak hatefully of homosexuals? Firstly, most of us cannot relate to the sin. To most, the sin is unthinkable and disgusting. To most of us (since we have never been tempted in this way) we cannot fathom anybody else being tempted in such a way. Since we are quicker to open our mouths than we ought to be, we say things which ought not to be said – at least not in the "manner" in which they are said.

Secondly, we view homosexuality as some type of different sin than other sins. But our text clearly lists it as a sin that will lead people to Hell. Without a doubt, homosexuality is a disgusting sin. But apparently, so is sexual immorality, idolatry, adultery, theft, greed, drunkenness, reviling and swindling. To God, all of these sins are disgusting. In fact, all sin whether listed here or not is a stench in His nostrils. And certainly, this is a short list of sins. Even often overlooked sins such as covetousness are disgusting to God. Remember, He calls covetousness idolatry (Col. 3:5).

How then are believers to respond to such a thing? First and foremost, we must be Biblical. This entails not only clearly stating the Biblical position of such a sin, but also stating the remedy for that sin. To denounce a sin as damning without offering the truth of the Gospel is cold

hearted. To have the remedy for a disease while refusing to share it is unthinkable. Jesus died for the sin of homosexuality. Secondly, we must share this Good News lovingly and mercifully with great hope that God will use it. Let us never be like the Prophet Jonah who refused to preach because he knew God was gracious (Jonah 4:1-2). Lastly, let us be sure we are faithful in Biblical marriages. One of the best arguments of the supporters of the recent ruling is that heterosexual marriages end in divorce some 50% of the time. Like it or not, that is a fact. Though two wrongs certainly do not make a right, this statistic needs corrected. We would do well to get the log out of our eye before removing one from somebody else's (Matthew 7:1-5). Certainly, our words would carry more weight.



God's Goodness

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another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them

who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom 2:1-11).



Living the Life

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What is or is not oppressive may depend on who you are talking to. I imagine that if I could talk to the millions of babies murdered in the womb, they would say a government who sanctioned such was oppressive to say the least.

The states of Rhode Island, Minnesota and Pennsylvania, 13 out of 50 states have recently "legalized" sodomite "marriage." Minnesota went so far as to say that employees have no protection from the law for their jobs if they cannot recognize such "marriages."

The progression I foresee, unless God intervenes, is that sodomites will seek to overturn state laws against sodomy and sodomite "marriages." Then, federal government may allow religious toleration for a while, but before long, you will lose your tax exempt status, then, you can not deduct church offerings from your taxes, and then, you are not recognized as a church, but a rogue cult, an enemy of the state

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Living the Life

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and a violator of human "rights." What do we do when the lines are clearly drawn and we may be called upon to give our lives for Christ by death by the hands of an oppressive government?

After the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to pen the doctrines for salvation, predestination, justification, sanctification, practical teachings in regards to the Christian's response to government. We are well equipped and armed, if you will, with such powerful doctrines which are established upon our Lord God Omnipotent Who reigns by Whom we can do all things, even the most difficult and Who saves us to the uttermost. Daniel 11:32 says: **"And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."**

We want to consider three strategies in Living the Life Amidst an Oppressive Government: First, Go Fight; second, Take Flight; and finally, Hold Tight.

I. GO FIGHT

A. I do not mean that we should fight against the government with an armed militia. We may be fighting against God, as Judah was admonished by Jeremiah concerning their demise by the hand of Babylonians, or possibly in our case Muslims, Marxists. . .

1. John 18:36: **"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."**

2. II Corinthians 10:4-5: **"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through**

God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

3. Yeah, but, . . . I will deal with the "yeah, but's" in a moment. Colossians 1:14-16: **"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."**

4. Peter writes to people who were scattered across Asia Minor. These believers lived in potentially volatile social and political situations. The believers reading it were possibly under the rule of the emperor Nero. Either way they were driven abroad by the ruling authorities (Jewish authorities) and yet Peter writes the following: I Peter 2:13-17: **"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king (person in position of power), as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."** Honor the king? We are not to be swayed by current socio-political

events. Our allegiance is to Christ and as followers of Christ we are to submit ourselves to the existing government, even when the existing government is corrupt and oppressive (as it was in the days of Peter).

5. Yeah, but, what about Israel, the judges, David? The United States is not Israel, there is no other Israel even the one now is not under the same circumstances as the Israel of the Old Testament. Besides, Jesus said that His kingdom is not of this world.

6. Yeah, but, what about the American Revolution? The argument in that day was that civil magistrates should be obeyed so long as "they do not grossly abuse their power and trust, but exercise it for the good of those that are governed" - it would seem the Holy Spirit would give such a qualification knowing the government oppression and persecution.

7. Yeah, but, what about a tyrannical government with a Hitler at its head? The involvement of individuals such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer partnering with the German Resistance shows a rebellion over a leader that (and this is hard to say) was ordained by God. Bonhoeffer joined the resistance, plotted to overthrow the Nazi regime and was even executed for his involvement. God did not bless their efforts.

8. Yeah, but, if our government declared martial law or monarchy, the law of my land allows me to resist with force (2nd Amendment). Some say the 2nd Amendment implies that such armed resistance should be within an organized militia (presumably under the authority of my state). The constitution may allow a person to be a sodomite and get married, but God does

not allow it. God does not allow me to take up arms to overthrow the government, so even if the Constitution says I can does not mean I can before God. Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. He does not say the Roman government, but those individual human agents that God has placed in authority.

9. Do you see Paul - anywhere - preaching any kind of unlawful activity to depose Nero or Jesus trying to get Pilate removed from office? How about David taking matters into his own hands and killing Saul when he had opportunity?

10. It strikes me as rather easy to go out in a blaze of glory, firing on both barrels, shooting to the end. It is much harder to obey Christ by being willing to die for the cause of Christ, even in a slow process of torture. This strikes me as one of the hardest things to do, and yet many of the early Christians did this at the hands of Roman governors.

11. We are not pacifists:

a) Also, Jesus told Peter that two swords was sufficient. Luke 22:38: **"And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough"** as traveling was dangerous in that day due to thieves, murderers, etc., we can defend ourselves when our life is in danger.

b) Moreover, providing protection for our families is lawful and commendable. I Timothy 5:8: **"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."**

B. I do mean we fight in this way. I Timothy 6:12: **"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art**

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Living the Life

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also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

1. *Prayer.* II Timothy 1:1-2: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” Prayer and fasting.

2. *Appeal to the authorities* according to means God provides, Moses before Pharaoh, Daniel before steward about food, widow and unjust judge, Paul before Felix (Acts 24) part of our 1st Amendment.

3. *Confront authority* respectively and submissively: Nathan before David, Daniel and Belteshazzar, John the Baptist before Herod (Luke 3:19: “**But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip’s wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done.**” Paul about his flogging (Acts 22) as a Roman citizen, not a doormat.

4. *Defy authority.*

a) No authority of itself is worthy of our submission because they are filled by human beings, but the bottom line is that God-ordained this authority, it cannot command what God forbids or forbid what God commands.

b) Preach the Word of God: Peter and John as preaching in the name of Jesus, go to most public place and preach. Acts 4:18-20: “**And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto**

you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. Also, Acts 5:27-29: “And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”

c) Of course we could add other Scriptural examples of civil disobedience, such as the Hebrew midwives in ancient Egypt (Ex. 1:15-21) or Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in ancient Babylon (otherwise known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, Dan. 3:8-18), or Daniel in Persia (Dan. 6:1-23). But the point is that in none of these cases is overthrow of the government involved. They disobeyed only at those points where the governing authority expressly required them to disobey God.

C. Note Paul’s disposition, posture, and demeanor of respect: Acts 22:30 - 23:6: “**On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them. And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou**

whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandedest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God’s high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.” (Not sarcasm, the Roman government allowed Jewish authorities in matters of their law to deal with their people. Note, Galileo, provincial deputy of the Roman province of Achaia, Acts 18:15: “**But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.**”)

D. Carry out the Great Commission: Matthew 28:18-20: “**And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.**”

E. Ephesians 4:15: “**But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.**”

II. TAKE FLIGHT

A. Hebrews 11:37-40: “**They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about (fleeing in hiding) in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the**

promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

B. Matthew 10:16-23: “**Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.”** They were to shake the dust off their feet, cast not pearls before swine, and go to another place to preach, not to simply hide there under a bushel basket. We must still go into all the world and preach the gospel of Christ.

C. Pastors are limited to some degree in this, because they are called to care for the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers. Does not mean we can not, for Paul fled, but we should be very careful we do not neglect the flock God has called us to pastor. John 10:12-13: “**But**

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he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."

III. HOLD TIGHT

A. It may be a rough ride. We need to hold tight to Christ, cleave to Him, abide in Him.

B. Endure to the end and submit to punishment respectively, apostles John and Peter accepted punishment. Mark 13:13: **"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."**

C. II Timothy 2:3: **"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."**

D. I Corinthians 10:13: **"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."** Do we trust God in this or not?

E. God forbid that we exhibit pompous attitudes because we do not experience oppression, many of God's people in other countries, can not and will not. An arrogant flippant attitude with our pseudo macho chests thrown out about obeying authority, even oppressive ones, our Baptist forefathers obeyed God in the midst of oppressive governments. This is the legacy God left in His Word, this is the legacy our Baptist forefathers have left us as well.

In closing, in addition to proper

fight, flight, holding tight, we need to have proper foresight. They say that hindsight is 20/20, but it has not always been my experience, and I know my foresight is not 20/20. Yet, God's foresight is perfect, because He is truth, He is omniscient, He is omnipresent, He is omnipotent, and He is sovereign.

Psalm 9:9: **"The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble."**

God used Stephen's martyrdom by the Jewish authorities to bring Saul, later Paul, to Himself.

Any of these Biblical responses may result in imprisonment, torture and death. Yet this is not a bad thing. Jesus commanded that we are not to fear those who can take our lives (Luke 12:4-5) for we know our true life is with God, in Heaven. Jesus also commanded us to rejoice and be glad when we are persecuted for the sake of doing what is right, because this means that we will have a great reward for all eternity (Matt. 5:10-12). Finally, to be martyred for the sake of our faith in Christ and obedience to His will during the coming time of persecution means that we will receive a martyr's reward (Rev. 20:4).

Ecclesiastes 5:8: **"If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they."**



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obedient to the Lord, we ask, who among the Lord's people have not felt at times their own carnality? Are we not often grieved and

burdened that we who have been regenerated at times feel our own wretched fleshly natures? Do we not find that we need ongoing repentance because of thoughts, words, deeds and omissions – things that we now see as sins? Are we not aware of times in which the Holy Spirit within us is grieved? Have we not at times quenched Him? It is God who teaches us that we, too, are like Paul who wrote: **"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not"** (Rom. 7:18). So it is that God, who has justified us, continues the work of salvation in progressive steps of sanctification. He continues to work practical holiness in us.

The Psalmist wrote: **"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all"** (Ps. 34:19). We understand that wicked men, their religious organizations, and governments are often the means of afflicting the righteous. So also are health issues and physical suffering. But why is it that God deems it necessary to send these things into the lives of His elect? And be sure: it is God who sends plagues, diseases and all physical evils upon men. God's prophet said, **"...shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?"** (Amos 3:6). But why do those whom God has justified – those whom He sees as righteous – why must they suffer? We say these things are necessary for the benefit of God's elect because God does not willingly or capriciously send them upon us. It is revealed that **"...though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children**

of men" (Lam. 3:32-33). God afflicts because it is necessary to bring to fruition what He desires for His children, "the righteous." Sometimes the righteous suffer more than the wicked. The Psalmist confessed his distress at seeing this. He wrote, **"For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm"** (Ps. 73:3-4). Even in death often the wicked pass out of this life in painless ease while the children of God languish in awful pains as they near death. And sometimes death comes to the righteous after they endure years of suffering. Is there a purpose in the suffering of saints? Let us learn from one affliction caused directly by God upon one of His elect.

Let us consider Jacob. God said of him: **"...Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated"** (Rom. 9:13). We can be sure that God's grace – His unmerited favor – was toward Jacob in all His dealings with him because God loved him. When he was fleeing Northward from his brother Esau, Jacob had met God at a place called Bethel – that is beth, house and el, God. Thus Bethel means the house of God. He later renamed the place Elbethel – that is El, God, beth, house and el, God. He called the place God in His house. For there he was found by God inasmuch as God came to him in that place. On his trip northward when God visited him in Bethel Jacob said, **"... Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven"** (Gen. 28:16-17). Jacob was not seeking God when God visited him. He was like Saul of Tarsus who was not seeking

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God when God visited him. How foolish to think that the sheep seek the shepherd! It is the shepherd – in our case, the true Shepherd – who seeks the sheep, knowing exactly where they are. And oh how His inner dealings with us pierce our hearts! He knows exactly how to address each one of us as He finds us in our sins. For example, to the woman at the well He said **“...Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly”** (John 4:16-18). Christ knew she was living with a man outside of marriage. And He addressed her heart regarding that sin. To the chief rabbi in Israel, Nicodemus, the Lord specified his need saying, **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”** (John 3:6-7). The Lord in the instance of the woman of Samaria anticipated her questions. In the case of Nicodemus he prevented his questions. God knows exactly how to reach the real issues of the heart rather than dealing with superfluous matters and curious questions that may be of interest to sinners.

The Bible points out a number of things that are accomplished by suffering. In this present article we will consider only one. This one is revealed to us in an incident in the life of this fellow Jacob whom we mentioned above. He was, as you will remember, father of the twelve tribes of Israel. The

account we wish to consider is as follows: **“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he [the “man”] saw that he prevailed not against him [Jacob], he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he [the “man”] said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh”** (Gen. 32:24-31 – brackets added).

Most all Bible students are agreed that the “man” that wrestled with Jacob was God – a pre-incarnate visit from God the Son. Theologians call this a Christophany. Before we go farther, let us note that whenever God visits someone on the earth He does it for a reason. That reason is to do something about that person’s situation. God does not need to take a tour to learn what is going on on earth. He comes with a purpose, a plan, and the ability to carry out that plan. From the above text we learn that Jacob, after his wrestling match said, **“I have seen God face to face.”** He recognized the “man” as being God. By the way, the

“man” came and wrestled with Jacob – that is, the “man” initiated the wrestling match. Men do not initiate either their salvation or their true encounters with God after salvation. Jacob did not see the “man” and decide that He had something Jacob wanted. Jacob did not jump on the “man” – rather the “man” began the wrestling match with Jacob. And so it is with us. All true encounters between God and lost sinners are initiated by Him. After all, **“...there is none that seeketh after God”** (Rom. 3:11). So it is that God must initiate salvation and He does so by means of the new birth.

Jacob resisted the “man” who wrestled with him so strenuously that the “man” did not win until He supernaturally touched Jacob in “the hollow of his thigh.” What a lesson! In God’s dealings with His elect it takes the supernatural power of God to overcome the natural man’s enmity against God. Men do not willingly submit to God until God makes them willing. Proof: Paul wrote, **“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”** (Phil. 2:13). The wrestling of the preacher is not sufficient to overcome the sinner no matter how accurately or enthusiastically he preaches the Word. The persuading ability of the preacher can move men’s emotions. At times preaching may even produce effects in men’s bodies perhaps causing them to cry out. Sometimes he can get them to walk to the front in a religious meeting. A preacher may even persuade some to be baptized. But all this is vain unless and until God moves in. It is only by His indwelling Holy Spirit that the individual is no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Paul made this clear, saying, **“But ye are not**

in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9). Until and unless the Holy Spirit (here also called the Spirit of Christ) takes up His residence in the sinner, men and women are just “in the flesh.” We realize that all our talk about God initiating the new birth apart from man’s action is strange and unthinkable to the average professing Christian. After all, that would take man’s destiny out of his own hands. That would mean that God is selective in dealing with some and passing by others just as He passed by Esau. But this is the truth: Jacob did not initiate the wrestling match with the Lord Jesus. It was the “man” who wrestled with him until the break of day. It was the “man” who touched Jacob in the hollow of his thigh making a cripple out of him. So it was that at sunrise Jacob crossed the brook Peniel a handicapped man. He **“halted upon his thigh.”**

Jacob halted upon his thigh, but he leaned on the LORD! What caused him to lean on the LORD? It was the affliction brought upon Jacob apart from Jacob’s will by the “man” who wrestled with him. So it is in our regeneration: **“...it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy”** (Rom. 9:16). As my grandmother used to say: ‘put that in your pipe and smoke it!’ Only after it became clear to him that the “man” was more than a mere man did Jacob ask a blessing from Him. He wanted a benefit. He wanted something pleasant. He expected a gift. He did not expect to come away from this encounter as a cripple. Jacob was not asked if he was willing to be made a cripple. His

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will was not involved at all. And so it is with us. Would we choose to be afflicted? Would we choose pain? Would we choose cancer or diabetes or arthritis or some other terrible illness? Of course not! The flesh does not choose to suffer. Even the true believer may at times question his suffering because the reason is to him unknown. Only the regenerated spirit of man can be brought to the place where he is convinced of the absolute goodness of God and the benefits of suffering. What? Benefits of suffering? There are indeed several benefits that come from suffering although we are considering only one at this time.

Only the born again ones who have been made acutely aware of their inner corruption and of the goodness and purpose of God are brought to suffer willingly. Only as the child of God grows spiritually will he arrive at the place where he is willing to halt upon his thigh and at the same time lean on the Lord. The babe in Christ begins to learn as the Holy Ghost teaches him – but his learning is gradual. A newborn child of God may be spiritual immediately, but he is not a mature saint apart from time, experience, sound teaching, etc. Growing spiritually takes time. It takes the Word and the exercises through which God puts each of His own. Did not our Lord say, **“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”** (Matt. 11:29-30). A yoke, such as the hearers of Jesus were acquainted, was for toiling. It was emblematic of the bearing of burdens. How can

a yoke be easy or tolerable rather than galling and oppressive? A yoke is beneficial to a child of God because he learns from it. “Take” infers a willingness. A child of God must be brought to the place where he willingly suffers else he will never “learn” of Christ. Christ and His preciousness are the blessed experience of those learning under His yoke!

Surely we have a hint in Hebrews 5:13-14. There we read: **“For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”** Seventeen times the King James translators translated the Greek word “teleios” as “perfect” in contrast with their one time translation here of “full age.” The word does not denote sinless perfection, but rather manhood/womanhood or maturity. The full-ager is contrasted with the one who is a “babe.” While **“It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth”** (Lam. 3:27), it is those of **“full age”** who have undergone the exercises of their senses or understanding as if they were in a school of athletics - for this is the meaning of the words. God’s school! It is a strenuous school full of sweat and tears, of stretching and aches and pains: in short full of those exercises that enables them to “discern both good and evil.” They are brought to the place where they discern the goodness brought by suffering and the evil of the flesh left to itself. It is a school where one learns that the **“yoke is easy”** and that Christ’s **“burden is light.”** How can this be? James penned it thus: **“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God**

resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6). There it is! **“He giveth more grace!”** More grace to the humble child of God who bears Christ’s yoke. Grace makes the impossible possible and the difficult sweetly and peacefully acceptable.

And so in the kindness of grace and mercy the Almighty God leads us along. He educates and exercises His elect. He teaches them the Word as He sees fit, bringing many sons to a level of maturity wherein they trust Him even in their afflictions. Their faith has grown to the point that they are made willing to suffer. Theirs is an experiential knowledge – knowledge gained by experiences in walking with God. That kind of knowledge is vastly different and vastly superior to mere head knowledge. That kind of knowledge makes a man unmovable in the things of God. And above all they learn to lean on the Lord. It may not be that God literally touched the hollow of your thigh – it may be some other physical ailment, but as surely as afflictions come to the child of God, they come for a reason. And they never come apart from the grace necessary to bear them. Remember, **“He giveth more grace!”** And what inner peace and calm comes to the hearts of those who are learning to lean on the Lord. And I write “learning to lean” for leaning is not something once experienced never to be needed again. It is not a one-time leaning, but a continual one as long as we are in our present state.

And so it was that God – the Almighty Jehovah – took that scoundrel Jacob – that tripper-upper who even in birth reached out and caught the heel of his brother – so it was that God took him and brought him along to the

point that he found it necessary to lean on the Lord. And this leaning on the Lord was a continual thing for when Jacob was dying we read of him: **“By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff”** (Heb. 11:21). The crook was made into a worshiper of God. When he was a dying, he was still a leaning! He who had once thought only of self now worshiped! The self-willed scoundrel was transformed into a “leaner” - not only physically on his staff as here in this verse, but he leaned upon the Lord. Is that not the testimony of all God’s chosen people? May God grant that each one of us learn to lean on the Lord – when we are a dying and long before that time. Lean upon Jehovah and cry ‘grace grace – Lord I need grace’ every moment and in every situation, for **“He giveth more grace.”** And when once our education/edification down here is complete, know this: **“.. when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is”** (1 John 3:2). Oh glorious day – never ending day – when we shall need no more afflictions and God shall not just dry our eyes in the midst of suffering, but instead, **“..God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”** (Rev. 21:4). There is coming a time for the child of God when there will be no more need for suffering. When we have completed the course God has determined for each one of His own, our education shall cease and our glorification and reign with Christ shall begin – never to end!



Commitment

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mediocrity, lukewarmness, and satisfaction with maintaining the status quo. Where there is a measure of commitment, more often than not, it is a commitment to materialism, greed, lust, pleasure, or self-promotion.

Many of the social ills that plague society at large can be traced back to a lack of commitment. Why do one out of two marriages end in divorce? Lack of commitment by one or both spouses. Why do we have so many unwed mothers? Lack of commitment and responsibility on the part of young men. Why do we have in excess of 3,000 abortions per day in America alone? A lack of commitment to the life and well-being of children. Why do we have a generation of young people who have little or no respect for authority and who are often void of moral values? Lack of commitment on the part of parents to instill scriptural principles in the lives of their children.

The liability of lukewarmness has enveloped our lives, our homes, and our churches. Lukewarmness has slowly destroyed the moral fabric of what was once the greatest example of a society built on the Judeo-Christian ethic. We desperately need a revival of true commitment among God's people to the principles and practices of genuine Christianity. I Peter 4:17 declares: **"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"**

COMMITMENT DEFINED AND EXEMPLIFIED

1. Job 23:11-12 provides us with a scriptural definition of the

components of commitment. Job declared that he was committed to God's Word and His way. He was determined to allow nothing to sway him from his purpose in life. He was singularly committed to the glory of God no matter what it cost him. Job was absolutely devoted to God and felt a personal responsibility to express his allegiance in word and deed. In Job's case, his commitment was tested in every area of his life, yet through it all he could say: **".. Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly"** (Job 1:21-22).

2. The dictionary defines commitment as the act of committing; the state of being committed. Commit means to give in trust or charge; consign; to pledge or devote oneself to a position on an issue or a question; to bind or obligate, as by pledge or assurance. There are three key words that help to illustrate what commitment is all about; trust, devote, and obligate. All three of these words express a solemn personal responsibility of the individual. Do we feel as though we have a real obligation to be devoted to God, our families, our church?

3. There is no doubt that the greatest example of commitment can be found in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was given a sacred trust by the Father. His life was entirely devoted to honoring His Father's will and redeeming His elect. The life, death, and resurrection of Christ on behalf of His people illustrates the unwavering commitment and obligation of Jesus to finish the work His Father had given Him to do.

In the eternal Covenant of Grace, framed before the world began, the Father chose a people and gave them to Jesus Christ to redeem. In effect the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ, agreed to become a man by way of the virgin birth, live a perfect life in thought, word, and deed, and then die on the cross for the sins of all that the Father gave Him. After Christ offered Himself and His precious blood on the cross, He rose from the dead affirming that His finished work on the cross was a complete success. Jesus had finished the work His Father had given Him to do! In His High Priestly prayer Jesus said: **"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do"** (John 17:2-4). Christ was committed to carrying out the will of the Father and securing the salvation of all that the Father had given Him before the world began. Hebrews 10:5-7, 14 states the mission Christ was committed to fulfill: **"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God...For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."**

This commitment shines through in many of the sayings of the Lord. **"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the**

will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). **"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day"** (John 6:37-39). **"..I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep...Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father"** (John 10:10-11, 17-18). On the cross Jesus cried out: **"..It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost"** (John 19:30).

REALMS OF COMMITMENT

1. First and foremost, above everything and everyone, those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ are to be committed to God in obedience to the command of Christ: **"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you"** (Matt. 6:33 cf., Matt. 22:37-40; Eccl. 12:13).

Believers have an obligation to present themselves to God to be used in service for His honor and glory. Romans 12:1-2 declares: **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is**

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Why are some Christians against same sex marriage? Should two people not be able to get married if they love each other?



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All genuine Christians should be against homosexual marriage because it is completely contrary to Scripture and good sense. Jesus Christ gave clear parameters for the marriage covenant in Matthew 19:4-6: **“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”** Marriage from the time it was instituted by God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:24) is between one man and one woman, ideally for as long as they both shall live. There is not even one example in Scripture of God ever approving or instituting another type of marriage arrangement. To approve of homosexual unions is anti-Christian, it goes against the teachings of Jesus Christ.

God's Word is very clear in stating that homosexuality is a willful sin condemned by God. There is no such thing as a homosexual gene. People are not born homosexual. Men and women are born totally depraved and

sinful. Every sexual act is a willful decision. If someone engages in homosexuality, fornication, or adultery it is because they have willfully decided to rebel against God and His laws. The first mention of homosexuality in Scripture is when the men of Sodom were violently attempting to fulfill their sexual desires with what they thought were men visiting the home of Lot (Gen. 19:4-11). The Sodomites demanded Lot to release the men (who were really angels sent to deliver Lot and his family), so that they could know them in a sexual way, which Lot clearly recognized as wickedness (19:7). The sin of Sodom was so abominable God rained down fire and brimstone, judging all the inhabitants and even the vegetation (19:23-25). Every mention of Sodom and the sin of homosexuality from that time forward in Scripture is framed in words of condemnation, judgment, and disapproval by God (Deut. 29:23; Isa. 3:9, 13:19; Jer. 49:18, 50:40; Lam. 4:6; Amos 4:11; II Pet. 2:6; Jude 7). The civil laws of Israel contained a prohibition of homosexuality in Leviticus 18:22: **“Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.”** This sin is listed among sins of incest, adultery, rape, and bestiality in the same chapter, all of which are condemned and judged by God (Lev. 18:29-30). The sin of homosexuality is listed in Romans 1:24-32 and is included among other sins that will be judged by God. I Corinthians 6:9-10 declares: **“Know ye not that the**

unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” In light of all these Scriptures there is no way that God could defy His own Word and place His stamp of approval on the sin of homosexuality.

God's Word prohibits sexual relations of any kind outside of the marriage covenant: **“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”** (Heb. 13:4). This verse clearly teaches that the sexual expression of special love between a man and a woman is to be strictly confined to the marriage bed. Any other expression of sexual desires being fulfilled are not to be perceived as acts of “love” but rather of sinful lusts that war against the soul! These inward sexual lusts are manifested in willful acts of fornication, adultery, and homosexuality. A man and a woman who love one another should get married if they have determined it is the will of God for their life. However, sinful lusts should never be mistaken for marital love. I have heard the worn out expression of progressives and liberals who advocate homosexual marriage say time and again: “People should be free to marry who they love.” When the meaning of marriage is redefined by the state based on this euphemism rather than Scripture it will not be long before anything goes. Why limit marriage to two people? What if a man “loves” eight women? What if two lesbians decide they love four men? What if two homosexual men adopt a son, and after he

reaches the age of consent, one of the “dads” decides he now loves his adopted son in a sexual way, and wants to “marry” him? You may say, that is not right! Once you redefine marriage, who are you to judge what is right or wrong? You have dismissed God's Word and His law as foundational truth. Jeremiah 8:9 and 12 tell us that judgment is coming for all who reject God's Word: **“The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?...Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.”**

The issue of homosexual marriage is really a ruse being used by progressives. Homosexuals are pawns in their real design to banish God, His Word, His Church, and His people from society and the public conscience. Progressives want to eliminate anyone who opposes their teachings. They see weak, watered down, professing Christianity as an easy target. I will not comply with their plan or propaganda, by the grace of God. I expect regulatory tyranny, incarceration, physical persecution, and ultimately martyrdom for those who stand against their godless agenda. I will cast my lot with Peter who said: **“We ought to obey God rather than men”** (Acts 5:29). I will cling to the promise of Hebrews 13:5-6: **“...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”**

TOM ROSS

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. How long should a public prayer be (time wise)? And why?

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I am reading a very good book by E.M. Bounds called *The Power of Prayer*. A section of the book states that public prayers ought to be short timely prayers, because long prayers in public tend to become a show for the crowd rather than seeking holy unction from the Spirit of God.

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The purpose of public prayer is to glorify God and edify the saints. Prayer is communion with God and when we gather together in public worship, we need to beseech the Lord to bless our services and to bring our petitions as a congregation before the Throne of Grace! It is the manner in which the entire assembly (men & women) are ushered by prayer into the throne room of almighty God! **“Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if**

she were shaven” (I Cor. 11:4-5). Selah! Think about it!

How long should a public prayer be? That depends upon the person and the purpose. The typical prayer’s content is to point the bowed heads of the members toward the Saviour and Head of the church. To pray for the services to be powerful for those present and to remember the prayer requests of the membership is foremost. To pray for the Gospel to be effectual in the lives of the lost in our midst and our families and neighborhoods, as well as in missionary efforts around the world should always be a part of public prayer. Many times the burdens upon the heart of the individual doing the prayer will be manifest. This might include any of the above, along with prayers for our country and current social and political issues that are causing a detrimental, spiraling effect here in America.

Some “speakers” are naturally more eloquent or fluent in their praying and will sincerely pray longer than those that might be more self-conscious or young in the faith... Genuine prayer that comes from the heart can go as long as the Holy Spirit leads, and will never be “too long.” Public prayer is not a “one size fits all.” A heart-felt prayer of thirty seconds can be very powerful for the entire congregation. But a longer ten minute prayer full of heart-felt groanings and supplications can really support a spiritual time of worship, where the assembly can be moved to tears themselves with the ardor and conviction of the prayer. Selah! Think about it!

What the Lord mostly warned folks about was, 1) prayers made to build up an individual, instead of the congregation and, 2) repetition in their prayers. **“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. ...But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking”** (Matt. 6:5, 7).

Much study and prayer should be done at home before someone stands up to preach and teach in our congregations, both by the speaker and the audience. I see nothing that should make a difference in our preparation for the prayer portion of our services, also! We should be thinking about the burdens within and without our membership and consider bringing attention to them in our prayers, as we lead the congregation. Also, we should be praying for the one leading in prayer, as well as with the one called upon to take the congregation before the throne of our God of mercy.

Some folk tend to unconsciously make repetitious use of phrases and the name of God as they pray. Many times, it is because of nerves and the stress of being thrust into a leadership role. Pray for these folk, and take the time to encourage them by letting them know their prayer was a blessing to you. So many times we find ourselves criticizing, instead of being a Christian help unto our brethren! God forbid that we should be so bored during a fellow saint’s prayer, that we think he prays too long! If the length of the prayer irritates us, the problem is typically not with the petitioner, but with us. Our hearts are not

right with God or our brethren in that case.

If it is a real situation of someone violating the two restrictions given by our Lord above, then, yeah! He is praying too long. God will not hear such a prayer, and we should go to the person with two or three brethren and counsel them to earnestly consider the purpose, content and length of their public prayers. But such a situation is probably much more rare in God’s true Baptist churches than one might think. Selah! Think about it!

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The old adage is; “The longer a man prays in public, the less he will pray, or does not pray at all, in private.” At least that is what my first pastor told me. One time I timed a Brother at our Wednesday night Bible study and prayer meeting. I was wrong to do so but he prayed for sixteen minutes. The problem with his lengthy prayer was he repeated many of the same people and things he was praying for.

In his letter to the Thessalonians Paul tells them to **“pray without ceasing.”** Jesus said in the Book of Matthew **“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking”** (Matt. 6:7). Paul writes Timothy, **“I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting”** (I Tim. 2:8).

With that said, I believe that

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Forum #1

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Why are some Christians against same sex marriages? Every Christian ought to be against same sex marriages. God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. I know that seems silly to say but it has huge implications in the record of God's Holy Word. There are plenty of Scriptures I could use but I am going to take a different approach.

Never has there been, or will there ever be, a child born from such an unnatural relationship. Men and women can have loving relationships, with deep meaningful care and feelings towards the same sex, but anything beyond that would result in a sexual relation which even nature itself demonstrates is not natural.

I have a male friend that I have known for many years. We have shared our feelings with one another many times, I have told him that I love him, and he to me the same. The feelings we share for one another are natural and healthy.

Now, if the government changes the law, it does not mean that Christians have to change what they believe. Eventually Christians will have to make a stand for what they believe. When the time comes, make a stand but there is no need to pick a fight, the fight will come to you. It is how you react in the face of trials that wins souls and heaps coals of fire

on the heads of those by which the trials come.

Remember those of same sex marriages do not procreate, they recruit. We must educate our children and church members what the Scriptures teach about marriage, and I am not talking about any liberal view of marriage.

They are sinners in unbelief and need the gospel of reconciliation, not only preached to them, but demonstrated by our good works that some may be saved.

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Why are Christians ever against anything? Really, I would say, this is the crux of the question. Christians are Christ-followers and do not have any options about what they are for/against! Moral equivalency is not an option for Christians, in particular the Baptists in the Lord's true churches! Whatever the BIBLE says is GOOD, then we are FOR that. Whatever the BIBLE says is EVIL, then we are AGAINST that! **"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"** (Isa. 5:20). Selah! Think about it!

Morals are the key to understanding right and wrong; what is good or evil. Really it is all relative, is it not? In America it is wrong to murder another person (unless she happens to still be in her momma's womb?), but in cannibalistic jungles of darkest heathenism, it is the right thing to do! Who says what is

right and what is wrong? In a true monarchy, the king does; in a true democracy, the people do... If the United States of America duly passes laws against speeding; for wearing seat belts; for gun licensing; against heroin for the purposes of safety/regulation/civil liberty, then who is responsible and accountable to keep said laws? Why the citizens of the United States, of course. They hold NO sway over Canadians or Mexicans. Filipinos are NOT accountable to those laws! None of these citizens of other governments are under the jurisdiction of America. Selah! Think about it!

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. ...But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:13-16). Christians are the quintessential dual citizens. While we are obediently subject unto our earthly governments, we are also obediently subject to our heavenly King. But which is the HIGHER authority? **"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men"** (Acts 5:29).

The Bible's laws are written by God. They are eternal and universal, because God is the authorizing alpha and omega (creator and ender) of this universe and ultimately His laws are more binding than the temporal and territorial laws of puny, transient kingdoms and democracies of this earth.

Abortion and homosexuality may be temporarily legal to US citizens, but when this life is over, they as citizens of God's creation will have to stand before the throne of authority and face charges for breaking the eternal laws of our arresting Sovereign.

Not just same-sex marriage, but the very act of homosexuality is an abomination to God Almighty. **"If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them"** (Lev. 20:13). The New Testament word "fornication" speaks of sexual sins, and God's Word terms these types of sins to be a greater abomination than thievery and lying. **"Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house. But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul"** (Pro. 6:30-32). There is something deeper, that can NEVER be restored in violating marriage vows and destroying (potential) intimate relationships by these abominable sexual sins of premarital sex and homosexuality. If a thief steals my car, it can be replaced, but if a predator rapes a loved one, abuses a child, effeminizes a boy—they are FOREVER stained and it can never be rectified outside of a miraculous restoration by God. **"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body"** (I Cor. 6:18).

The three main reasons why gay marriage is an abomination

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Forum #1

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to both God and ALL true Christians:

1) Gay marriage is stark rebellion against humanity's primal purpose. **"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it"** (Gen. 1:27-28). True, godly marriage is a perpetuation of the human race. Gay marriage is arrogant self-absorption that will (if universal) disrupt the great commission of mankind. No seed, no lineage, entropy.

2) Gay marriage is destructive in very Nature. **"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves... Without natural affection"** (II Tim. 3:1-3). Unnatural sins are disruptive of our very nature. Man and woman come together naturally, but gays or lesbians do not. Their lustful acts then become abusive of their bodies and others. Deprived of NATURAL satisfaction, they utilize self-gratifying tools and emotions that leave only frustration and denial. **"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the (Peace of the-TMS) kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind"** (I Cor. 6:9). Homosexuals will never find true peace, but as is evidenced by statistics and history, they will always be militant, abusive and selfish. **"And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to**

thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, ...And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door" (Gen. 19:5, 9). The Sodomites' agenda will not stop at TOLERANCE of gay marriage, but rather will require all citizens to ACKNOWLEDGE gay marriage.

3) Gay marriage is ignorance of God's order. Whether it is willful ignorance or apathetic ignorance matters not. God is GOOD. His ways are GOOD. His LAWS are for our GOOD! To ignore God's GOOD ways and laws is to invite disaster and judgment. **"Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities"** (Jude 1:7-8). What proponents of gay marriage need, is the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The common plea of liberalism is "should two gay/lesbian people not be able to get married if they love each other?" And that is all this question is, liberal emotionalism! Their rationale is: if it feels good, go for it. Never mind the consequences. Never mind if civilization falls around them or Rome burns. Selah! Think about it.

Under this same rationale, I suppose if two people love to light fires, they should be able to burn down buildings and blow up transportation systems? If two people love to walk naked (or the virtual nudity of our beaches/malls) in the town square, then the

streets will be full of promiscuity and rape? If two people love to eat pizza and fast foods, then our health-care system will pay for their diabetes, heart attacks and cancerous results? Ultimate liberalism only sees as far as the end of their nose and that is why they bankrupt nations, destroy civilizations, and never see the blessings and bounty of God. **"Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee"** (Deut. 28:47-48).

Two sodomites (that profess lust for each other) getting married is not an isolated, private affair, but is an outright affront of God's order and is symptomatic of the devastation of an entire society. As the US Supreme Court rules in favor of gay marriage it will be the final step of a long process of the demolition of America. And we will have lost the battle for our beloved country. **"Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence"** (Jer. 14:10-12). Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP

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I must say first of all that I am a little perplexed at the question since it is a sore subject to us Baptists. And I am very saddened that the questioner asked, "Why are *some* Christians against same sex marriage?" Some, meaning, that all Christians are not against it, of which I am totally aware. My question is, How can you be a Christian and not be against it?

Though the question cuts to the very marrow of my bones, I knew sooner or later a question like this would be asked. I will give the only true answer that can be given: IT IS AN ABOMINATION AND AFFRONT TO GOD!! **"If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them"** (Lev. 20:13). There is only one marriage in all of Holy Writ that God instituted and that is the marriage between one man and one woman.

The Bible is very clear on this subject and a true student of the Bible should not have any problem seeing the truth in this matter, and it is irritating to me that any true "born again believer" would have any question about the truth concerning this subject. There are, I am afraid, too many liberal Christians, if in fact they are true Christians at all. Many today are pushing the love of Jesus to a sickening height and they do not have the first clue what Jesus would do if He were here because they can not see past their bleeding

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Forum #1

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heart liberalisms.

I do not want to cause the Editor of the BBB any hardship because of the length of my answer and I do want to keep it fairly brief if I can, but I want to point out something that I think many of God's people miss when they start throwing around this "love of Jesus" stuff that has infiltrated the Christian world. And do not get me wrong—we are to have a love for people, but it is a love for their souls that matters most. Nowhere, and I mean nowhere, does it say we are to love ours' or anyone's sinful ways. The reprobate and non-elect will never be saved because they have already been condemned by God **"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).

The point I want to bring to the attention of you, dear reader, is something Jesus did in the temple when he walked in and saw all the corruption in the house of God. I would encourage every pastor to preach this for I have only ever heard it preached once. Maybe some have preached it and to that I applaud them. It would do well for all to take a close look at this verse in John which many seem to ignore, **"And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables"** (John 2:15). I will just ask one question here, what did Jesus do with that scourge? I am sure He made it with tender love, and I say that sarcastically.

Now back to the question. I can not speak for other Christians but

God hates same sex marriage and that is why I hate it, too. As I said at the beginning of this answer, **IT IS AN ABOMINATION AND AFFRONT TO GOD!!**

"And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:22-24). As you can see by the verses just quoted, that this was the first union (marriage) that got instituted between one man (husband) and one woman (wife). My online dictionary has as one meaning of man; an adult male person, as distinguished from a boy or a woman; another meaning; is rendered Husband. And for the woman the meaning is; the female human being, as distinguished from a girl or a man; an adult female person; wife. This should not be too hard to understand.

Genesis 2:24 is recorded in Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:7 and was quoted by Jesus. And then quoted by Paul in Ephesians 5:31. Now what part of this is not understood? There is no Scripture I know of where God institutes a man with a man or a woman with a woman. In fact according to Romans, God gave **"them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves"** (Rom. 1:24). Let's just look at the whole part of this in Romans 1:21-32, **"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise,**

they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." **"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers**

of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:9-10). **"Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"** (Jude 1:7).

Now what part of these Scriptures doesn't the reader understand, and I will not apologize for my sarcasm. It is totally ridiculous that any saved person can read these verses of Scriptures and walk away and say oh, God approves of same sex marriage. If you can, then Satan has blinded you and you need to go back and reexamine your salvation because there is something definitely wrong!

Do you know that sodomy is against the law? Homosexuals have organized and have a very real political and social agenda. One of their chants at a recent San Francisco rally was, "We're young. We're queer. We're going to rule the world!" They are making specific legislative demands such as the repeal of all sodomy laws, legalization of same-sex marriages, and legalization for the adoption of children, lowering the age of consent laws that would allow homosexual sex with young people, etc.

There is more that I could say but it is too disgusting to talk about and if the questioner does not understand that same sex marriage **IS AN ABOMINATION AND AFFRONT TO GOD** then nothing more I could say will change your minds. Homosexuals say they were born that way or God made them that way, but I believe that all these folks are demon possessed, **"For a certain**

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Forum #1

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woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter" (Mark 7:25-26). An unclean spirit is a devil. They can and must be cast out if the affected individual wants to be set free from their bondage. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines unclean: 1. Morally or spiritually impure. 2. Infected with a harmful supernatural contagion.

The second part of the question that was asked, "Should two people not be able to get married if they love each other?" Yes, if one is a man and the other is a woman. But why again, should we condone that which God condemns? God HATES same sex marriages and the end result is the "lake of fire" for all those who disobey God's Word. I pray that questioner and reader alike would come to the knowledge of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and that you would confess Him as Lord and Saviour, because without Him you are DOOMED! God Bless!

ROGER REED



Forum #2

(Continued from page 13) ◊

prayer is definitely an essential part of a Christian's life. Prayer is also essential in any and all church services. I believe men and woman should be in silent prayer while the preacher is preaching. Here is a paragraph from "Men Of Revival: C. H. Spurgeon" by E. A. Johnston: "While eating lunch with the congregation in

the basement of that church, I was struck with the following story. In that very basement, it is the only part of the original church which survived a bombing from WWII, in that basement would be 300 of Spurgeon's choicest men who always missed his sermon because they would gather in the basement every time the good man preached and spent the entire time of the service on their knees crying out to God in prayer. Spurgeon had 300 deacons praying to God the whole time he preached. It is no wonder his preaching was so well attended with success. Spurgeon knew the importance of prayer in an anointed ministry." I believe Spurgeon believed in praying while he preached, do you not? **"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"** (Jam. 5:16).

I have heard so many criticisms about how men pray, how long they pray, and what they pray about that it sickens me. I even had one woman leave the church and told me her reason was that the men's prayers were not spiritual enough for her. Come to find out, she was having sex in the back seat of a car at her work place with a married man. The spiritualness of a man's prayer is not going to help that.

I think that the question asked here is a good one, so with what I have already alluded to, I would say this. A man praying publicly should not be trying to bring attention to how long, how eloquent, or how graceful he prays, but he should pray by the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit and pray from his heart and not his head. If it is done in that manner then it will be neither too long, nor too short. Public prayer should be done with love and courtesy considering others that are in the assembly. I do think it is rude for someone to go

on and on and never say anything but empty words, **"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking"** (Matt. 6:7). If a man prays as he should in public we will not have to worry about time, or how long he prays.

One last thought. When I pray in public I am very nervous because I am going before the throne of God, (very serious to me) and if I want to be lengthy I will do that in the privacy of my own home (I am still nervous, again very serious) **"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly"** (Matt. 6:6).

We should never criticize, how a man prays, how much he stutters, or how often he says "Lord" or "Father" while he prays. God is the judge of these things no matter how irritating someone's prayers seem to us. Let us learn to pray silently with love if the occasion arises that someone is praying too long to suit us. If it is that irritating to the questioner, or you dear reader (I really do understand), sit down with your pastor and see if he would be willing to preach a message on the subject, or even do a mini-series on proper prayer in the church. God Bless!

ROGER REED

<p>Tom Ross 6339 County Rd. 15 South Point, OH 45680</p> <p>Pastor Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church 6939 County Rd. 15 Chesapeake, OH 45619</p>	
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Every public prayer should be at least two hours long. Just kidding! As far as I know there is no set time for the length of

prayer outlined in the Scripture. If you went by the Model Prayer set forth by Jesus in Matthew 6:5-13 it could be a few minutes long. Prayer is an outpouring of a heart moved and led by the Holy Spirit, so there is really no way I can give a definitive answer. Whether short or long our public prayers should not be filled with vain or empty repetitions. Rather, it should be reverent, earnest, fervent, sincere, and powerful according to James 5:16: **"...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."**

TOM ROSS



Commitment

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your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Christ bore our sin debt and redeemed us with the ransom price of His own blood. As blood bought believers we ought to daily yield ourselves to His will: **"What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"** (I Cor. 6:19-20).

This commitment to God is manifested in a variety of ways in the life of one who desires to demonstrate his devotion, allegiance, loyalty, and love to the Lord:

Believers ought to be committed to the study and application of God's Word (Ps. 19:10-11; 119:9-

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11; II Tim. 2:15).

Believers ought to be committed to communion and fellowship with God in prayer and meditation (Ps. 19:14; 42:1-2; 55:16-17; 104:33-34; Luke 18:1; Eph. 6:18).

Believers ought to be committed to the work of the Lord (I Cor. 15:57-58; Gal. 6:9-10)

Believers ought to be committed to the Lord's church in attendance, worship, witnessing, stewardship, and support of missions (Heb. 10:23-25; Matt. 28:18-20; II Cor. 9:6-10).

2. The second major realm of commitment is the devotion we should manifest in our family. The family was the first civil institution formed and perpetuated by God.

Husbands and wives ought to be unreservedly committed to one another, fulfilling your marriage vows no matter what the costs and in all circumstances of life. We must remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ when it comes to the sacred bond of marriage: **"Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder"** (Matt. 19:4-6). The number one cause of divorce is not adultery, unfaithfulness, finances, or incompatibility. Rather, it is a lack of commitment on the part of the husband or wife to love and to cherish, in sickness and in health, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, till death do

us part.

This commitment begins with the husband who is to be the head of the home and the spiritual guide for his family. He is to love his wife like Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25-28, 33). The man of the house is also responsible for providing the temporal needs of his family through honest labor (I Tim. 5:8). Oh, that God would raise up men who would echo the commitment of Joshua who proclaimed: **"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"** (Josh. 24:14-15)

The wife is to be committed as a helpmeet to her husband and a blessing to her children (Prov. 31:10-12, 26-29; Titus 2:3-5).

Parents are to be committed to their children in raising them in the fear and admonition of the Lord by instruction and example (Deut. 6:5-7; Prov. 22:1,6; 23:22-26).

Children are to be committed to honoring their parents by cheerful obedience, love, and respect for their authority (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3).

Commitment is the key to a happy, disciplined, and godly home. All must work together for the glory of God (Psalm 128). One of the reasons why homes lack commitment is that most families are so disconnected. Precious little time is spent with

one another in many families. We can not be committed to our families if everyone is going in different directions and not communicating with one another. The rise of machines and technology have distracted many families.

3. The third realm of commitment is to others. I fear that many of us are like those in Philippians 2:20-21: **"For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."** Most folks in our day are self-centered, selfish, and care little about others. May God be pleased to open our eyes to see how we can be a help and a blessing to others!

Believers are commanded to love and care for one another within the church (John 13:34-35; Phil. 2:2-5). We ought to seek out ways we can be a blessing to other members in the church (I Pet. 4:8-10). We ought to get to know one another and minister to one another (I John 3:16-19).

We should be committed to those within our sphere of influence. We may be the only Bible that people read on a daily basis. We must be committed to our friends, co-workers, and community members enough to show forth a testimony of honesty, compassion, and kindness. We should strive to love our neighbors as ourselves by not injuring them through dishonesty, deception, or immorality (Rom. 13:8-10; I Thess. 4:11-12; I Tim. 2:2-3).

We ought to be committed to the lost, the unsaved, those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hearts should be filled with compassion that overflows in our witness to the lost. We must be committed to sharing the Gospel with the lost no matter the cost or the consequences (Rom. 1:14-16;

II Tim. 2:10; I Pet. 3:14-16).

4. The fourth realm of commitment is to our vocation. We ought to strive to be the best at our job for the glory of God. We should have a respect for honest work and the profit it yields. No matter what our field of labor we should be committed to excellence (Prov. 14:23; Eccl. 9:10; Col. 3:22-24).

THE LIABILITY OF LUKEWARMNESS

1. Of the seven churches named by Christ in Revelation chapters two and three, the only one He had no word of commendation for was the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22). Rather, the Lord Jesus had several complaints against the church, the chief of which was that it was lukewarm. Not cold and dead, not hot and thriving, but tepid, lukewarm, indifferent, and neutral. The church at Laodicea had become so self satisfied that the Lord was not even in their midst, He was on the outside knocking on the door! The church at Laodicea was just a religious machine that operated without the power and presence of Christ, yet they did not even know or care. This kind of attitude is nauseating to the Lord.

2. The liability of lukewarmness is manifested when believers can compromise with the world and feel little or no conviction (James 4:3-4; I John 2:15-17). How many people are non-committal when it comes to God, His Word, truth, His church, and service? It is almost as if people have developed a take it or leave it, careless, apathetic attitude. There is no real passion for the things of God. People have become so indifferent and disinterested they will not take a stand for God.

3. The liability of lukewarmness

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is evident when the lust for riches, money, and possessions become a driving force in our lives. I fear that we live in an age when many believers and churches are far too concerned with the things they have rather than the presence and power of the Lord! God is not impressed with our bank accounts, investments, houses, buildings, etc. I Timothy 6:9-10 warns: **“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”** (cf. Mark 4:19; Col. 3:5).

4. The liability of lukewarmness is evident when people are self-centered, narcissistic, proud, arrogant, and boastful. The Laodiceans declared that they were rich and had need of nothing. They felt as though they could live independently without the Lord guiding and empowering them. I wonder how many professing believers could get along just fine without the Word, prayer, fellowship, and worship? If you can go days and weeks without the Lord speaking to you through the Word, beware! If you can not remember the last time you went to God in prayer for strength and guidance, beware! If fellowship and worship with God's saints holds no value, beware! You are living in the liability of lukewarmness!

5. Perhaps the greatest and most telling sign that the liability of lukewarmness is operating in your life is that you are spiritually blind and are unaware of your present

condition. You have become so indifferent and accustomed to spiritual mediocrity you do not even recognize how far away from the Lord you are! In fact, you probably think everything is alright. You may even go through the motions of reading the Word, going to church, and saying half-hearted prayers. The church at Laodicea did not even recognize that the Lord was on the outside saying: **“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). They were guilty of seeing what they wanted in worldly riches, but failed to see what they really needed, the power and presence of Christ. When lukewarmness takes over a believer's life they become like the proverbial frog in the water. They do not recognize the spiritual danger they are in due to indifference, apathy, neutrality, and mediocrity. They become so accustomed to the world's philosophy and ideology that the Word has no real impact upon their life. There is no conviction, no zeal, no passion, no desire, no longing for God's presence and power. Oh, that God would deliver us, our homes, and our churches from the liability of lukewarmness!

CULTIVATING CONSISTENT COMMITMENT

1. We must be yielded to the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in our lives. We must make a conscious decision to be led of the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, and to submit to the Word of God each and every day (Rom. 8:13-14; Gal. 5:16, 18, 22-25; Ps. 119:59-60). There will be no consistent commitment in our lives apart from God working in

us, both to will and do of His good pleasure!

2. There is a definite cost associated with consistent commitment to God. We must determine to die to self will, self fulfillment, and self promotion. Instead, we must be committed to God's will no matter what the consequences. This is the essence of true discipleship in the school of Christ: **“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it”** (Matt. 16:24-25). Paul stated that he died daily. He exhorts believers to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God. He declared at the end of his life that he was ready to be offered. How could one be so committed to Christ? Read II Corinthians 11:23-28, Philippians 3:3-14, and II Timothy 2:9-12 and you will discover an attitude of sweet resignation to the will of God no matter the cost.

3. We must seek God to put a sustained desire within us to be committed to Him, our family, and others. Many people slack off on their commitments because their desire to do what is right and honorable wanes over time. If we are to be committed Christians, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, workers, church members it is imperative that our desire be renewed on a daily basis. We must daily ask God to keep the commitment fires burning within if we are to forge a testimony that endures (Haggai 1:12-14; II Cor. 8:5, 11-12)

4. Consistent commitment requires an element of discipline. Proverbs 25:28 declares: **“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down,**

and without walls.” The strength of a committed life is developed by the exercise of godly discipline. Without spiritual discipline our lives would soon spiral into a state of disaster and chaos. The lack of discipline in individuals, in homes, in churches, and in society at large is why the practice of real commitment is fading.

In his book titled *Spiritual Disciplines For the Christian Life* Donald Whitney quotes v. Raymond Edman on page 13:

“Ours in an undisciplined age... The old disciplines are breaking down... Above all the discipline of Divine grace is derided as legalism or is entirely unknown to a generation that is largely illiterate in the Scriptures. We need the rugged strength of Christian character that can only come from discipline.”

Paul exhorted young Timothy: **“But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profited little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance”** (I Tim. 4:7-9).

5. To be consistently committed we must have a sincere dedication to stay the course and persevere. We must make a daily determination to dedicate and consecrate ourselves anew to the glory of God. This dedication is not a one time declaration, but rather an ongoing habit in everyday life. Dedication to lead a committed life of consecration will enable us to say with Paul: **“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth**

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there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:6-8). Hebrews 6:10-12 declares: **"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."**

GEMS FROM OTHERS

In his book titled *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* Donald Whitney cites an illustration of commitment to God's Word:

"Evangelist Robert L. Sumner, in his book *The Wonder of the Word of God*, tells of a man in Kansas City who was severely injured in an explosion. His face was badly disfigured, and he lost his eyesight as well as both hands. He had just become a Christian when the accident happened, and one of his greatest disappointments was that he could no longer read the Bible. Then he heard about a lady in England who read braille with her lips. Hoping to do the same, he sent for some books of the Bible in braille. But he discovered that the nerve endings in his lips had been too badly damaged to distinguish the characters. One day, as he brought one of the braille pages to his lips, his tongue happened to touch a few of the raised characters and he could feel them. Like a flash he thought,

'I can read the Bible using my tongue.' At the time Robert Sumner wrote his book, the man had read through the entire Bible four times. If he can do that, can you discipline yourself to read the Bible" (pp. 30-31)?

The following quotes are taken from *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* originally compiled by Tryon Edwards, D.D. and revised by Ralph Emerson Browns, A.M.:

John Jason Owen: "Without consistency there is no moral strength...He who prays as he ought, will endeavor to live as he prays" (p. 107).

William Dyer: "Either take Christ into your lives, or cast him out of your lips. Either be what thou seemest or else be what thou art" (p. 107).

Giuseppe Mazzini: "Constancy is the complement of all other human virtues" (p. 108).

Benjamin Disraeli: "The secret of success is constancy of purpose" (p. 108).

Joseph Addison: "Without constancy there is neither love, friendship, nor virtue in the world" (p. 108).

W. A. Criswell, long time pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas wrote the following comment in his *Expository Sermons on Revelation*:

"The Laodicean church was indifferent in devotion, in zeal, in energy, in whole-souled earnestness. To the Laodiceans, in their tepid, in-betweenness and their spiritual lukewarmness, to be enthusiastic about God and Christ and His word would seem to be offensive to cultivated tastes, We are enthusiastic about everything else. At the Cotton Bowl the whole thing rocks from side to side as one of the teams makes a touchdown. We are enthusiastic about entertainment or emoluments or advancements

or art or literature or a thousand things. But when it comes to Christ and religion and the church there is no enthusiasm, no zeal, nothing but deadness of soul and heart. How earnest this world is! Military armies are in earnest, business is in earnest, the whole world is busy in hand and heart and mind. But God's people are apathetic and

lethargic, lukewarm. Such was the Laodicean church. But there is no religion without enthusiasm. Religion is a fire in the bones. It is a moving in the soul. It is a stirring of the heart. It is a vast, illimitable commitment of life. If it is not that, we do not have it" (Vol. 2, p. 172).



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.

GRAHAM UNVEILS 20-WEEK ABORTION BAN IN SENATE

(WNS)--Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., has a message for his U.S. Senate colleagues: Get ready for a debate on late-term abortions. Graham on June 11 unveiled a Senate bill mirroring the 20-week abortion ban the House passed last month. The Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act has 45 Republican co-sponsors, and Graham guaranteed it will receive a full debate in the Senate by the end of 2015. "What I'm looking for is a debate with those who oppose this," Graham said at a Capitol press conference with pro-life leaders. "Tell me the upside of [late-term abortion]. ... What are we achieving here? Why are we better as a nation? I'm dying for that debate." Graham's announcement came 10 days after he officially joined the 2016 Republican presidential field with a campaign mostly focused on foreign-policy issues. On Thursday, Graham signaled he's not leaving social conservatives behind. Citing the bill's widespread public support, he said fellow Senate Republicans in tight 2016 reelection campaigns

shouldn't worry about voting on it.

NORTH CAROLINA ENACTS RELIGIOUS PROTECTIONS FOR MARRIAGE OFFICIALS

(WNS)--The North Carolina House voted in early June to override the governor's veto and institute religious freedom protections for state employees who perform marriages and issue marriage licenses. The law creates a legal way for magistrates and workers in register of deeds offices to opt out if they have a "sincerely held religious objection" to same-sex marriage. Under the law, employees with religious objections can refuse to participate in same-sex weddings but also must stop performing all marriages for at least six months. The chief district court judge or the county register of deeds—both elected officials—would fill in on these marriages if needed.

LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE TOUTS GREATER NEED FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

(WNS)--With the passing of

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several state laws protecting religious liberty and the U.S. Supreme Court decision on gay marriage, three Republican presidential candidates had one central theme at a Thursday conference organized by the Faith and Freedom Coalition. "Religious liberty has never been more threatened in America," said Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, amid assertive hums from the audience. "I believe 2016 will be the religious liberty election." Cruz recalled how men and women fleeing religious oppression founded America: "If people of faith show up, if we stand up for our faith and liberty in the constitution, we will win and turn the country around." Sen. Marco Rubio, R- Fla., touched on every American's right to live out his or her faith. He also talked about helping the government transition to the 21st century.

ACLU PLANS SUIT OVER RELIGIOUS LIBERTY PROTECTIONS FOR MICHIGAN ADOPTION AGENCIES

(WNS)--Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder signed into law late last week three bills that provide protections for faith-based adoption agencies that don't want to place children with same-sex couples. Adoption agencies routinely use discretion when placing children, including evaluating the prospective parents' marital status, mental and physical health, the presence of additional children in the home, and any history of misdemeanor or felony convictions. Michigan's new legislation simply protects the discretion that faith-based agencies already have to selectively place children in the homes of heterosexual, married couples. If an applicant does not meet an agency's criteria for any reason, the agency is required to refer them to

another "willing and able" adoption service provider.

NORTH CAROLINA ULTRASOUND LAW LOSES AT THE SUPREME COURT

(WNS)--North Carolina abortionists will not have to describe to mothers ultrasound images of their unborn babies. This week, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a lower court ruling that overturned a 2011 law requiring abortionists to show women the ultrasound images so that they would fully understand what happens during the procedure. The lower court ruled the law violated abortionists' free speech rights and was "ideological in intent." North Carolina legislators passed the measure overwhelmingly, even overriding a veto from the governor to put it into effect. Tami Fitzgerald, executive director of the NC Values Coalition, said the measure was intended to provide women with life-saving information. "In any other medical procedure, doctors would have a duty to disclose all of the relevant information, and, yet, a procedure as destructive and life-changing as abortion is held to a lower standard," she said.

SUPREME COURT: MARRIAGE IS BETWEEN "TWO PERSONS"

(WNS)--The U.S. Supreme Court on June 26 legalized same-sex marriage nationwide in a sweeping, moralizing opinion written by Justice Anthony Kennedy. He delivered the ruling softly and without much expression, but outside the courtroom, huge crowds swarmed the Supreme Court plaza in celebration, singing the national anthem. As anticipated since the high court first took up the case, the ruling was 5-4, with Kennedy joining the court's liberals: Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor, and Elena

Kagan. The dissenters—Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, and Samuel Alito—each penned separate dissents, an expression of profound frustration. Scalia opened his apoplectic dissent, concurring with Roberts' dissent, by saying, "I write separately to call attention to this court's threat to American democracy."

JUDGE BLOCKS KANSAS DISMEMBERMENT ABORTION BAN

(WNS)--A Kansas District Court judge granted a temporary injunction blocking the Kansas Unborn Child Protection from Dismemberment Abortion Act. Kansas was the first state in the nation to ban the dilation and extraction (D&E) procedure, the most common form of second trimester abortion. Signed into law in April by Gov. Sam Brownback, the law would have gone into effect July 1. According to the pro-abortion Alan Guttmacher Institute, about 11 percent of abortions are carried out after the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. In Kansas, about 8 percent of abortions are done by D&E. The Kansas law would have saved the lives of about 600 babies each year.

KANSAS GOVERNOR PROTECTS PASTORS FROM LAWSUITS OVER GAY WEDDINGS

(WNS)--Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback issued an executive order today protecting clergy and churches from lawsuits over their refusal to participate in same-sex marriages. "We have a duty to govern and to govern in accordance with the Constitution as it has been determined by the Supreme Court decision," Brownback said in a prepared statement. "We also recognize that religious liberty is at the heart of who we are as Kansans and Americans, and should be

protected. The Kansas Bill of Rights affirms the right to worship according to 'dictates of conscience' and further protects against any infringement of that right. Today's Executive Order protects Kansas clergy and religious organizations from being forced to participate in activities that violate their sincerely and deeply held beliefs." County clerks in Kentucky have been sued for refusing to issue marriage licenses. But so far, no members of the clergy or religious institutions are facing lawsuits for refusing to conduct or host a wedding for a homosexual couple.

COUPLES SUE CHRISTIAN CLERK WHO WON'T ISSUE MARRIAGE LICENSES

(WNS)--Four Kentucky couples—two heterosexual and two homosexual—have sued a county clerk who refused to issue marriage licenses to them. "My conscience will not allow me to issue a license for a same-sex couple because I know that God ordained marriage from the very foundation of this world to be between a man and a woman," Rowan County Clerk Kim Davis told local news channel LEX18. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last week that same-sex couples have the right to receive marriage licenses. Shortly thereafter, Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear, a Democrat, ordered all of the state's county clerks to comply with the ruling. The American Civil Liberties Union filed the suit in federal court on behalf of the couples. The suit claims Davis' duties as a government official should supersede her religious beliefs.

MONTANA MAN DEMANDS "LEGITIMACY" FOR SECOND WIFE

(WNS)--A married Montana man plans to sue the state for the right to wed a second woman. Nathan Collier traveled to the Yellowstone

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Bible & the Newspaper

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County Courthouse on Tuesday to legitimize his union with two wives, Victoria and Christine. The county clerk denied his request, but said she will consult with the county's chief civil litigator and give Collier a final decision by next week. All 50 states now outlaw multiple marriage licenses. But U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, in his dissenting opinion on *Obergefell v. Hodges*, said the same-sex-marriage arguments used in that case could apply equal force to plural marriage.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH FORMALLY EMBRACES GAY MARRIAGE

(WNS)--Less than a week after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage, the Episcopal Church formally amended its canons and liturgy so that two people of the same sex can marry in the denomination's churches. Yesterday's decision in Salt Lake City completes a decade-long trajectory towards the mainstreaming of homosexuality in the mainline denomination and raises further questions about the health of the worldwide Anglican communion. Episcopal deputies voted 184-23 in favor of the new marriage liturgy and 173-27 in favor of redefining marriage, according to the *Deseret News*. Because the Episcopal House of Bishops voted similarly earlier this week, Episcopal marriage is now between two people, not a man and a woman.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS POPE APOLOGIZES FOR CHURCH'S PERSECUTION OF ITALIAN CHRISTIAN MINORITY

(WNS)--Pope Francis made news last month for something other than his environmental encyclical. He offered a rare papal apology. "On the

part of the Catholic Church, I ask your forgiveness, I ask it for the non-Christian and even inhuman attitudes and behavior that we have showed you," the pope said in an address to Waldensians, in Turin, Italy, in June. Founded by Peter Waldo, a merchant from Lyon, France, in the 12th century, the Waldensians have maintained their identity in the face of severe persecution. Waldensians focused on preaching, voluntary poverty, and faithfulness to the Bible's teaching. They translated the Bible into the language of their people (Franco-Provençal) and rejected papal teaching on purgatory and transubstantiation. Though the Third Lateran Council (1179) commanded them to stop preaching, they refused. Pope Lucius III excommunicated them in 1184. At the Reformation they joined the cause of Calvin and Luther.

KENYAN EVANGELICALS PROTEST UPCOMING OBAMA VISIT

(WNS)--President Barack Obama's upcoming visit to Kenya sent a small group of protestors to the streets. Their message to him: Don't advocate for gay rights in Kenya. About 35 people attended the demonstration organized by The Evangelical Alliance of Kenya in Nairobi, the country's capital. Alliance leader Bishop Mark Kariuki said at the protest homosexuality goes against the country's moral values and sends the wrong message to youths. The event followed a statement by Kenyan Deputy President William Ruto, who said same-sex couples should leave the country, as the government will never legalize gay marriage. Obama will visit Kenya later this month for the first time since he took office in 2008. He will attend the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, a platform for connecting upcoming entrepreneurs with leaders from

business, international organizations, and governments.



The Short Pews



Brief
Articles
by Curtis
Pugh

NOAH NEVER WENT FORWARD

Everyone has heard of Noah and the big boat he built. But did you know that he never "went forward" at the close of a religious service? (In fact the practice of giving an "invitation" at the close of a meeting is of fairly recent origin. It was started by a Presbyterian preacher in about 1820, so the practice is not yet 200 years old.) In fact we are never told anything about an "invitation" in the Bible. Why? Because the Bible does not tell us to do such a thing! And nobody in the Bible ever gave one! And nobody in the Bible ever "went forward."

But it is a fact! God has been saving His people from the days of Adam until now without an invitation! Let us look at the old timer Noah. He is one who was saved, but who never "went forward." The Bible says: "**And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD**" (Gen. 6:7-8). Noah found grace in God's eyes! Grace means unmerited or undeserved favor.

Noah was not worthy of being saved. He was a sinner. But God

was gracious to him and saved him. He saved Noah spiritually and He saved Noah physically from the flood. The Bible says: "**By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith**" (Heb. 11:7).

When the Holy Spirit works "**godly sorrow**" (II Cor. 7:10) we may be sure "**The heart knoweth his own bitterness...**" or as the King James marginal note says, "...the bitterness of his soul" (Pro. 14:10). The experience of "**godly sorrow**" over sins is a private matter between the individual and God. Unless it is expressed in words to another, all those around know nothing about what is going on in the heart of the one experiencing it. But it is a real and necessary experience for this "**godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death**" (II Cor. 7:10). Oh! Beware of mere intellectual belief. Beware of a shallow mechanical "decision" or of some other effort on your part to gain Heaven. There is more to God's salvation than anything you can do! The new birth is a work of the Spirit. Jesus said, "**That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again**" (John 3:6-7). Noah experienced such a birth from above. Have you?

RELIGION OR CHRIST

By nature man is a pleasure seeking animal. He was created in the image of God, but that image has been so marred by sin that men

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The Short Pews

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are now totally depraved. Adam fell by disobedience to a simple command. His descendants, unless God intervenes in their lives, spend their money, time, and energy in pleasure. Many people, uneasy about their eternal destiny, find pleasure in religion. This is true worldwide. All of the world's religions have one thing in common except Biblical Christianity. The one thing that all the world's religions have in common – including a great many that pretend to be Christianity – is this: they all believe that they will be saved by their works. Some may think to please their god and be saved by making a pilgrimage to a supposedly holy place. Others by bathing in some river. Others by being baptized, supposing that obedience produces eternal life. Only Biblical Christianity says what the Bible says: **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”** (Eph. 2:8-9). Plain words these and easily understood, but seldom believed.

The Bible is quite specific. Speaking of Christ, Peter said, **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). But he did not mean mere religion in the name of Christ was sufficient to bring salvation. In fact Jesus spoke of very zealous religious folk who in spite of their religion – or rather because of it – would be lost. Christ's words are found in Matthew 7:21-23 as follows: **“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.” Prophesying, casting out devils, performing many miracles – and all in Christ's name – religious folk think all these kinds of things indicate their acceptability. But Christ said they meant nothing because He did not know them. They claimed to know Him, but that claim did not matter.

What matters is this: does Christ know you? Religion talks about accepting Christ. The Bible talks about people being made acceptable in the beloved – in the Beloved Son of God. Paul, in Ephesians 1:6 wrote about himself and other genuinely saved people saying that God **“hath made us accepted in the beloved.”** Mere religion will not do! Only by being made accepted in Christ is there salvation. Being made accepted is a work of God, not of man or his religious deeds and efforts. **“Ye must be born again”** (John 3:7).

WHAT IS LACKING IN MANKIND?

The Bible teaches that Adam was created in untested holiness. It also teaches that God established a testing or probation for him. Had Adam passed the test, he would have been confirmed in holiness. But, alas! Adam failed to obey God. His nature was confirmed in sin. And so Adam's nature was passed on to his offspring – and on to us today. But just how bad is the damage that Adam did? How badly are we affected today by what he did? The Bible makes it clear that men today lack so much that they are unable to do what

is right. Consider: **“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”** (Jer. 10:23).

A look around shows this statement to be true. Men and women do not do what is right. We human beings mistreat one another. We human beings seek after pleasure and the money that we think will buy happiness through pleasure. Again the prophet wrote: **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it”** (Jer. 17:9)? Human beings are not incapable of acts of human goodness, but even these spring from wicked hearts that often have ulterior motives. We are so bad off we do not even know our hearts!

So the issue is not how bad humankind is, but how bad off men are. The hearts of men, being deceitful, cause men to think that they are able to do something to please God. Some say that praying a certain prayer will please God and result in the sinner's new birth. Others say that obeying this or that command will do the trick. Some say this obedience is being baptized by this or that religious group. But what does the Bible say? Forget what men say! The Bible says, **“...they that are in the flesh cannot please God”** (Rom. 8:8). The conclusion of the whole discussion regarding man's supposed ability is this: men and women as they are naturally born cannot please God. So human beings do not have anything with which to bargain with God. Even though they may pray, weep, make decisions, go through religious rituals such as baptism, etc., they cannot please God. So the answer to the question in our title, What Is Lacking In Mankind is this: no

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BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 6-1-2015 to 6-30-2015

Beginning Balance	\$7,636.39
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
Calvary I. B. C., Everson, WA	100.00
.....	425.00
TOTAL	8,061.39
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	454.98
Program Production	195.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	649.98
.....	7,411.41
Interest	+06
ENDING BALANCE	\$7,411.47



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 6-1-2015 to 6-30-2015

Beginning Balance	\$1,874.73
RECEIPTS:	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX	50.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	25.00
Benjamin Layne, Sacramento, CA	1,315.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	50.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	150.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	313.45
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Elton Dunbar, Pelion, SC	25.00
Emmanuel M. B. C., Oldtown, KY	100.00
Faith B. C. Lynn, AR	12.50
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
Kimm Zamarron, Boyne City, MI	74.28
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	30.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
Parkway Landmark B. C., Springfield, OR	100.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR	50.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	74.00
Anonymous	210.00
Dividing checks	160.00
Sub Total	\$3,859.23
TOTAL	\$5,733.96
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	738.42
Supplies	81.50
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.96
Dividing checks	160.00
Bank Charge	13.00
Total Expenditures	\$3,958.88
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,775.08

Postage & Shipping Chart

Order Value	Add
Minimum	\$5.00
\$25.00-49.99	\$6.00
\$50.00-74.99	\$7.00
\$75.00-99.99	\$8.00
\$100.00 and Up	FREE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Landmark Baptist Church of Moncks Corner, SC, is in need of a pastor and are prayerfully seeking qualified candidates. Any interested Brother possessing the qualifications found in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 should contact Bro. Andrew Cook at 843-873-6945.

The Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church of Chesapeake, OH is hosting its Annual Fellowship Conference on Saturday, August 22, 2015. The meeting starts at 9:30 a.m. with Elders Hank Bailess, Matt Stepp, and Mark Minney preaching.

A fried chicken dinner with all the trimmings will be served after the services. Come for a grand time of singing, praying, preaching, and worship!

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Caldwell, KS is holding Sunday afternoon services in Pratt, KS at 117 W. 3rd St., Pratt, KS (Municipal Building). Services begin at 4:00 p.m. and will be held from May 24th thru October 25th. If you happen to know anyone who lives in the Pratt, KS area please let them know we are having worship services. Please pray that the Lord might be pleased to use this endeavor to save souls and glorify His name.

If anyone has any questions, please feel free to contact Pastor Hille at nhille@gmail.com or at (620) 845-4183.

The Berea Baptist Broadcast can now be heard on WQRL 106.3 FM in the southern Illinois area at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings. The program is being sponsored by the Grace Missionary Baptist Church, 306 North Vicksburg St,

Marion, IL 22959. If you enjoy the program, let them know by calling them at (618) 841-0228.

A new mission work has begun. The Providence Baptist Church located at 1115 Jones Mill Road, Cartersville, GA 30120, is an outreach of the Tibet Baptist Church of Ludowici, GA. Service times are Sunday School at 9:45 a.m., Morning Worship at 10:45 a.m., and Evening Worship at 5:00 p.m.

For more information please contact Bro. Bruce Allen (502) 468-6563, Email: providencebc30120@gmail.com or on Facebook under Providence Baptist.

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 Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Galena, OH is in need of a pastor. Any interested candidates possessing the qualifications and traits concerning the office as found in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are asked to contact either of the following: Bro. Randy Coffey

at (614) 871-2406 or email recaffepot@aol.com, or Bro. Joe Vass at (614) 846-8699 or email jamijoe@wowway.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.

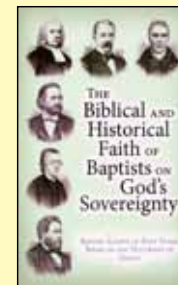
The Victory Baptist Church of Chehalis, Washington is in need of a pastor. Any interested brother may call Gerry Greisen at (360) 985-7975, or Mark Fenison at (360) 751-2929.

The Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Marion, IL is in need of a replacement pastor. Elder Raymond T. Ellis is the current pastor, but due to his age, is needing to resign. The church believes and preaches the doctrines of grace and the local church. Any interested Elder may contact Elder Ellis at (618) 983-8697, or Bro. Gary Ratley at (618) 841-0228.

The Twinbrook Hills Baptist Church of Hamilton, OH is prayerfully seeking a pastor. Organized in 1938, the church holds to historic Baptist truths, including the Doctrines of Grace. Please visit the church's website at <http://twinbrook.net> to view the

Church Constitution and other items that describe our beliefs and show what the church is doing today. Please contact Bro. Chris Willis at Elohimfirst@gmail.com for more information.

Any church that is without a pastor, please feel free to send your information in regards to the pastoral position for publication in these announcements.



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For postage see chart on page 23.

The Short Pews

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man or woman as they came from their parents can do anything to please God. Man lacks the ability to please God! When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, God's voice said, **"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him"** (Matt. 17:5). Have you heard Christ? Christ said a great many things, one of which is this: **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again"** (John 3:6-7). Has God's Spirit birthed you into God's family?



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