

The Berea Baptist Banner

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

Going to All Manner of People

By Billy Holbrook

Oblong, Illinois

Read: Acts 10:1-22 (To understand this message it is necessary for you to read the scriptures if you are not familiar with the story)

As I plan to bring out the highlights in these



Billy Holbrook

verses, I hope and pray that it will teach, help and encourage us in some way in dealing with people and in going to all sorts or manner of people. Peter here receives a vision and the meaning of this vision is not just that now we are free to eat all manner of food. The spiritual application is that Peter needs to go unto the Gentiles and all manner of people. Just before Peter preached to those at Cornelius's house, the Word says in vv. 34 and 35, "**Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.**" This is basically the teaching that he received from the vision that he had. I do not plan on getting into what all took place here at Cornelius's house but rather what led up to Peter getting there and

then consider what these different manners of animals represent.

First of all, in verses one through five we see that it is praying Cornelius that was shown to get Peter. As Churches do mission work and are led by the Holy Spirit, they can be certain that someone out there is praying for God to help them.

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Meditations on Missions

By Milburn Cockrell

(1941 -2002)

"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

At the outset there needs to be a clear conception of the term "missions." What is a comprehensive definition of the word? Our English word, derived from the Latin, means "the sending out with authority of persons by a religious organization to preach, teach, or proselyte



Milburn Cockrell

in a foreign country." The term "missionary" means "a person sent on a mission."

In Matthew's account of the choosing of the twelve we see what a missionary is: "**And when he had called**

unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power. . . These twelve Jesus sent forth. . . and He said unto them: "**And as ye go, preach**" (Matt. 10:1,5,7). Here we see Jesus sending the twelve out with authority to preach. These twelve men were missionaries. The very word "apostle" is borrowed from the Greek word "apostolos" which means, "one sent off" or "sent forth." The Greek word "apostolos" is translated "one that is sent" in John 13:16.

THE BAPTIST A MISSIONARY

John the Baptist was a missionary: "**There was a man sent from God, whose name was John**" (John 1:6). God gave him his mission and his message. Jehovah had said by prophecy centuries before of John: "**Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me**" (Mal. 3:1; Matt. 11:10).

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Will God Punish Sin?

By Rolfe Barnard

(1904 - 1969)

May I ask you a question, dear ones, do you believe that God will punish sin? Do you believe that *God ought to punish sin?* Do you believe that *the very Holy character of God demands that sin shall be punished?* My experience after forty-one years of trying to be a Gospel preacher is that the greatest need of this hour is for men and women to be confronted with and have burned into their souls afresh the awful dynamic Truth that the God of all Heaven and earth, *the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is determined to punish sin!* According to II Thessalonians 1:7-10: "**And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall**



Rolfe Barnard

be revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in His

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Let Us Search and Try Our Ways

By Paul Stepp

Indore, West Virginia

"Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned" (Lam. 3:40-42). This passage that we would look at today, is one that comes at the center of this Book of the Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah. In the Greek this Book was known simply as "Tears" or "Wailings." I suppose that there is not another book in the Bible that is so consistently sorrowful and of such a poignant and sad nature.

As we study the Lamentations of



Paul Stepp

Jeremiah, we see that he now here blames God for the trouble that has come upon the Children of Israel. In Chapter One we read many troubled verses including v. 12, "**Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD**

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Houses We Did Not Build

By Jeff Short

Mantachie, Mississippi

"And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deut. 6:10-12).



Jeff Short

These words were spoken to the children of Israel by Moses before they were to go in and possess the land of Canaan. The Israelites had been brought into bondage in Egypt after Joseph died. They were brought into a serious and sore slavery in that strange land. There they were

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Will God Punish

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saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day."

Here is the question: "Will God punish sin?" If not, then Christianity is what Bible-denying liberals and modernists today say it is—it is merely a philosophy, it is just a good way of life, it is a system of ethics or something like that. If that answer is yes, God will punish sin, then we need to ask how will He punish sin? *If God is set to punish sin, how has God declared in His Word that He will go about it?*

In order to answer that question, let us answer the question first, What is sin? Our question is: Will God punish sin? Not misery, not ignorance, but sin—and *sin isn't ignorance, it is rebellion.* What is sin? When we turn to the Word of God we read expressions like this in I John 3:4: "Whoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." A better

expression is this: *sin is lawlessness and lawless attitude.* Listen, sin is not simply just not knowing about something; *sin is refusal to walk in what light one has.* Sin is absolutely willful, for sin means you are trying to live in God's world as if you were God.

Now of course, any definition of sin falls short. There are several definitions in the Bible; but some people think the Law is merely a code of ethics of an outworn generation back yonder in the time of Moses. But my friends, that is not so, *the Law is the Righteousness and the Glory of the eternal Almighty God.*

When the Law is seen as it truly is and men are seen as they truly are, we have to conclude that the Apostle Paul was right when he said in Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

For men and women today who feel that they are not transgressors of the Law, not lawless rebels, the Word of God gives other definitions which perhaps show our sin more vividly; for instance, the Scriptures will say in Romans 14:23: "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." *And that certainly slays us all—any doubt, any anxiety, any worry is the product of faithlessness and such, says the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is sin.*

The Apostle James puts it this way in James 4:17: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." This comes in under the category of what we call neglect.

Then here is another definition of sin in Proverbs 24:9: "The thought of foolishness is sin. . ." and here is still another in James 2:9: "But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors."

The Apostle Paul was right, dear ones, "all have sinned." You say, "Preacher, if it is true that all have sinned, so what? A God of love Who understands us surely wouldn't harm us for a little thing like sin, would He?" That's what people are saying today. *I'm afraid this is the typical understanding of God that men of this generation have.* They say, "So, well, we've all sinned, so what? God is love, so it must not be too bad." When we base our faith and our doctrine on this concept of God, the end result leads to this type of thinking: "Well, sin is not so bad after all—none of us are perfect and I don't think this is any more harm than that, and God is so good, that I don't believe He will punish us for our sin." Now God help us, this is the thinking that was produced by the god of this age (Satan) who blinds the minds of those who believe not. II Corinthians 4:4: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Old Satan doesn't want us to see the

Gospel of the Glory in Christ, why? It reveals God's pure light and His Holy judgments. The Gospel of Glory reveals God's Holiness, which when it is seen exposes our sinful hearts. So men prefer to create for themselves a god of love, as they call him, who winks at sin. They say God is too good to send men to hell.

Dear ones, the better we understand God, the God of the Bible, the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more we are able to understand *how awful and terrible sin is.* A revelation of God reveals this: God hates sin so much that He drove Adam and Eve from Eden's Paradise because of sin. God hates sin so much that He killed all but eight people once in the days of Noah because of it. Scientists tell us that the population of the earth in Noah's day was about what it is today, nearly three billion people. I don't know whether they are right or not, but if they are God killed about three billion people by the flood because of S-I-N, sin. *Who did that? The God of the Bible.*

Oh! *men need to fear such a wrathful God as this One described in the Word of God.* This God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone because of sin. God hates sin, He hates sin so much that He created a region called hell and has decreed that its fires shall burn forever and ever! Who did that? *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Who did that? The God before Whom all people must stand at the judgment. This God created hell for Satan and all whom Satan keeps blinded to their sinful lost condition.*

May the Lord burn it into our souls—He has determined to punish sin! He cannot remain God unless He puts sin out of business. And since all have sinned, it means all are damned, for none of us are exempt from the race of Adam; *all of us are sure to be sent by a Holy God to eternal hell apart from Christ.* All are under condemnation, all are condemned, sin must be punished. God began punishing sin, and everything contrary to His Holy nature, back there in Eden. He has been doing that ever since, and *He will ultimately punish all sin by eternal fire.*

Since fire itself cannot eradicate sin from God's Holy flaming eyes, hell must go on forever and ever; for the fire can only begin to punish sin. An infinite crime S-I-N, sin deserves infinite punishment H-E-L-L. Hell and such punishment can only be just by lasting throughout eternity. God help us! *This is how much God hates sin—He will punish it by eternal fire!*

There is only one other thing, but thank God there is one other thing, which God uses to punish sin, and that's blood. One drop of Christ's blood—oh, one drop of Christ's precious blood—just one drop satisfied God's eternal justice more than 20 million years of burning fire. The same God Who set out to destroy all Egypt's firstborn some 3,500 years ago is looking fiercely at this sinful and wicked world

with but one hopeful utterance: "When I see the blood I will pass over you." *Thank God, there is a refuge from God's Holy wrath in the precious blood of His dear Son.* Oh, that refuge is to be found! God looks at the blood and passes over those whose sins are covered by His blood. Thanks be unto God. Some of us sing that little couplet: "My only hope, my only plea, Christ Jesus died and He died for me," and that's our faith, and that's our trust, and our only trust and our only hope, but thank God, it abides forever.

My dear friends, God is fierce and He is grieved with people today. *Men's awful sins are hideous in His Holy eyes;* and the Word of God is crystal clear that He is set to punish men as certainly as you listen to these words. I want to ask you in your condition right now, are you as sure for hell as the dawning of the sun? Don't sneer, don't laugh, don't blaspheme; *God's day is coming,* it's just around the corner for you. Are you going to hell? Oh! you now may laugh at Holiness and righteousness, but then you will weep and wail and gnash your teeth in a burning hell that knows no end.

Oh! *may I beg you to flee to Christ and bow before Him.* There is still hope. Are you weary? Are you troubled? Are you broken in heart for your sins? The Saviour says in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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." This is *His love; it's found only in Christ.* Flee from the wrath of God to come—let nothing stop you.

"Flee to Jesus Christ the Living Lord is my prayer, Amen."

Meditations on

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It is interesting to note that the first Baptist preacher was a missionary Baptist preacher. This is at least one good reason for all true Baptists today to be missionary Baptists. I will go far enough to say that all true Baptists today are missionary Baptists.

THE SEVENTY MISSIONARIES

In Luke 10:1 we find where Christ sent out seventy missionaries: "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come." Christ sent these men on a mission, hence they were missionaries. I believe Christ is still calling men today and sending them out to preach the gospel.

TWO MISSIONARIES AT ANTIOCH

In Acts 13:1-3 we see a church sending out two missionaries: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch

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certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

I believe the Holy Spirit is still calling men today to go out and preach the gospel where it has not been heard. I further believe that when the Lord calls a man who is a member of the local church to this work, it is the duty of that church to send him forth to preach the glorious gospel of the Son of God.

EVANGELISM

Along with the word "missions" we use a second word worthy of study. It is the word "evangelism." Though the word is not found in the Bible, the word "evangelist" is. It occurs in Acts 21:8, Ephesians 4:11 and II Timothy 4:5. Most Bible scholars agree that this term was used in New Testament times of a person who went about preaching the gospel. The evangelists of Bible times were the missionaries of that day.

Hence we use the term "evangelism" today to mean, "a zealous spreading of the gospel." Though Paul did not use this term, he certainly had the idea in mind when he wrote: **"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things"** (Rom. 10:15).

We might say that missions is God's plan, through saved men, of reaching those who are not saved by the gospel of Christ. Evangelism is the endeavor to communicate the Christian faith to individual men by the propagation of the gospel. Since all of this is God's plan, it is not subject to alteration by any mortal man. It recognizes human instrumentality as agents, but not as designers. This plan antedates creation.

WHAT THE TASK OF MISSIONS IS NOT

From a negative standpoint, missions is not to win the world for Christ, or as others say, to take the world for Christ. While the Scriptures command us to witness to all the world about Christ, they never command us to take the world for Christ as Post-Millennialists often say. Instead we are duty bound to take Christ to the world.

God never intended to save the entire world of mankind without any exception. The Lord's purpose from times eternal was to take out from Adam's fallen race, a great multitude out of all nations, to be the recipients of His saving grace. It is His

plan to save only a remnant according to the election of grace. You cannot add to the number of God's elect.

The greatest missionary outside of Christ was the Apostle Paul. He never said that he expected to take the world for Christ. He ever realized that there were some who would not believe the gospel. To the Corinthians he said: **"To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some"** (I Cor. 9:22). He had enough sense to know that when we use all the means at our disposal, we can do no more than save some of those we witness unto.

In Matthew 13, we have a parabolic prophetic description of the character of this dispensation. In the parable of the sower, we see that only one-fourth of the seed sown got in, and brought forth fruit. The sower is the minister of the Word of the kingdom. This reveals that we can expect one out of four to believe the gospel when it is preached.

There will be gospel-rejecters even when Christ returns to this earth the second time. I Thessalonians 1:7-8 discloses that He is coming to take vengeance on them that obey not the gospel. At the Second Advent He will not find faith covering the earth, nor will He find a converted world who will gladly welcome His return.

NOT TO ENTERTAIN THE WORLD

Entertaining the world is not Bible evangelism. Some personal workers and churches have a distorted idea that their task in missionary work is to entertain folks. This is to make the weapons of our warfare carnal, which is forbidden (II Cor. 10:4). We are not to entertain but to instruct the people in the world. Entertainment is too frivolous to involve our time and talents.

The early churches never resorted to hayrides, wiener roasts, ball games, "chili" suppers, or Halloween parties as an aid to reaching men for Christ. Those who use these carnal weapons today soon discover that they have been successful in making hay riders, wiener roasters, ball players, "chili" eaters, and trick-or-treaters, not converters to the gospel of Christ.

In the last hundred years churches have become social centers instead of religious centers. The traditional religious institutions have become basketball courts, bingo parlors, dance halls, and liquor stores. The church is no longer concerning herself with people's salvation from sin; rather she seeks man's salvation from poverty and social discrimination. In all of this the church has lost sight of what mission work really is. She is guilty of putting darkness for light. She now preaches the gospel of amusement instead of the gospel of the Son of God.

Providing carnal pleasures for unconverted men is nowhere commanded in the Scriptures as a

function of missionary work. If the Lord had intended for His church to be an entertainment center, He would hardly have left so important a branch of service unmentioned. When Christ said: **"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,"** He spoke very clearly. So would He have if He had added; "And provide amusement for those who have no relish for the gospel." However, no such utterance ever fell from His lips.

We learn from Ephesians 4 that the ascended Christ gave His church specially qualified men for carrying out His missionary work. The Bible says: **"he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"** (Eph. 4:11-12). There is no mention of the "public entertainers." As to these, the Scriptures know nothing.

If providing recreation be a part of missionary work, where is God's promise to encourage us in this toilsome task? I find the heart rejoicing declaration concerning the gospel: **"It is the power of God unto salvation."** But never do I read where the Scriptures say: "Church socials and midnight hay rides are the power of God unto salvation." The Lord has promised only that His Word will not return void, not the gospel of amusement!

TRUE MISSIONARY WORK

True scriptural missionary work is to preach the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ under the power of the Holy Spirit to the hearts of sinners and to leave the results in the hands of God as to whether any one is saved or ever will be saved. It is to present Christ to the Christless. It is to water and plant by the Word of Life, and to expect God to give the increase.

JOHN'S METHOD

Did John the Baptist preach the gospel of amusement? Did he seek to lead a person to a little decision for Christ by signing a card? Did he tell them that God had a great plan for their life? No, he told them that God's plan for them was Hell if they did not repent of their sins against God!

What message did he deliver to those who heard him preach? He preached Jesus Christ as man's only Saviour: **"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the**

world" (John 1:29). The Apostle Paul said of him: **"John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus"** (Acts 19:4). The Gospel of John says of the Baptist: **"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe"** (John 1:6-7).

THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST

The evangelism practiced by Christ is our model for all time. He introduced His ministry by saying: **"Repent ye, and believe the gospel"** (Mark 1:15). In this same chapter He told His disciples: **"Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth"** (Mark 1:38). To confirm the wavering faith of John the Baptist about His Messiahship, He sent him this message: **"The poor have the gospel preached to them"** (Matt. 11:5). Wherever people gathered together, Christ **"preached the word unto them"** (Mark 2:2). When some went away from Him (John 6:66; Mark 10:23-27), He comforted Himself with the thought: **"I have given them thy word"** (John 17:14).

Christ never changed this method of His nor learned of a more effective plan. His first command to His disciples was: **"As ye go, preach."** His last: **"Preach the gospel to every creature."**

THE EARLY CHURCH

How did the Lord's inspired Apostles carry on missionary work? The early church had boundless confidence in the power of the gospel, and they employed no other weapon in the salvation of the lost. On Pentecost Peter preached about **"Jesus, whom ye have crucified,"** and three thousand were saved that day. Acts 5:42 tells us that **"daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."** The scattered Jerusalem church **"went every where preaching the word"** (Acts 8:4). **"Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them"** (Acts 8:5). Paul said: **"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"** (I Cor. 2:2).

THE FAILURE OF MODERN EVANGELISM

The early Christians attained great

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Berea Baptist Broadcast

STATION	TIME	DIAL	WATTS
WFTA, Tupelo, MS	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	101.9	3,000 FM
WLZA, Starkville, MS	Sunday 1:00 - 1:30 p.m.	710	2,500 AM
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WCTT, Corbin, KY	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	680	5,000 AM
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DXRA, Davao City, Philippines	Sunday 8:15 - 8:45 a.m.	783 Khz...	10,000 AM
DWSS, Manila, Philippines	Sunday 5:30 - 6:00 p.m.	1494	16,000 AM

Meditations on

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success in evangelism by preaching Christ. This is the point on which the modern church fails. Today personal workers often announce an evangelist, or a church program, or something attractive to the flesh of man. Too often we urge the unconverted to come to church rather than pointing them to Christ Who can save. We have confused the world as to what the gospel of Christ really is.

Many missionaries and evangelists present a false gospel. Much of the technique of personal evangelism revolves around the application of fleshly psychology to play on the human desire of lost people to get them to respond. Too frequently Heaven is presented as a free gift with no mention of God's purpose for man after he is saved. Personal workers are forgetting to tell sinners to repent. They are ignoring Holy Spirit conviction that is essential to salvation. Hence many church members imagine they can continue in a life of sin while adding Jesus as a personal Hell insurance for the world to come.

False conversions obtained by fleshly means often give people no more faith than the devils (Jas. 2:19). These false converts do not add to their faith. Their faith does not work by love. The large number of post-conversions shows the fallacy of human persuasion and social influence in missionary work.

CONCLUSION

Though it is proper to reason with men and to persuade men, there will be no response to the gospel unless the God of all grace attends our witnessing with enabling power. Our missionary work must be based upon dependence on the Lord. Our confidence must not rest upon psychological techniques. Our hope of results must be in Him, not in man's will or in any other faculty of our hearer. But let us remember that it pleases God to bless His Word and to save sinners through the foolishness of gospel preaching.

Oh! how we need to return to preaching the true gospel! Away with the gospel of amusement which cannot save a soul! Down with those who preach another gospel and damn countless multitudes to the fires of an eternal Hell! Let every believer in missions go out and declare repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. May we tell lost sinners that Christ is bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, life to the dead, health to the sick, sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf! For Jesus Christ is all this and much, much more.



Going to All

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If God is in a work, then He's working on both ends. As we do mission work from this Church and are doing what God has led us to do, we can be certain that God is preparing some people for us to reach. There just may be some devout God-fearing people out there that God is working on to receive us. Peter sure didn't expect to happen what was about to take place and neither can we know what all God has in store ahead of us as we do His work. At this moment, Cornelius sends for Peter. On the other end of this work that God is about to do, He is preparing Peter. Anytime the Lord is sending a man to a certain place He is working on both sides of it. He's preparing a people to receive to the man of God and preparing the man of God to go to the people.

In verses nine and ten we find that it is praying Peter that is about to be led to a people that needed to hear the word of God. The greatest thing that we can do to be led to the right people is keep in touch with God. I want God to guide me to those whose heart He has prepared so that the seed might fall on good ground and bear fruit. It was the praying Church that knew who to send. Likewise, it's praying Peter that knows in a little while where to go.

We find here that Peter was very hungry. Though it's speaking of a physical hunger, we need a spiritual hunger and longing to see people saved. Paul said in Romans 10:1, "**Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.**" I long to see people's lives changed by the power of God; for the Spirit of God to get a hold of them and break them of their sin and see them run to Jesus. I long to see one saved, that I might rejoice and shout for joy as the angels of heaven do over one repenting sinner! I don't know what Peter was praying for at this moment but maybe it was that God would guide him to where He wanted him. Are you praying for the lost and asking God to show you where to go in your life?

In verses eleven through sixteen, you can read the vision. The vision is not for the purpose of teaching Peter that he is free to eat all manner of meat. That Peter knows later that the vision meant more than that which is seen, is clear from what he says in verse 28: "**And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.**" God was obviously teaching him to go unto all manners of people and not just to the lost sheep of Israel.

Now, what I wish to do is provide us with an analogy of these animals as they

MARK OF THE BEAST

Look at your name on the front page of this month's paper. If you see the mark 12-03, so detestable to a Baptist, wash it out by renewal of green-backs. If not your paper will stop next month. We are not able to credit. It is not a good plan.



are meant to represent all manner of people. As Peter was to go unto all manner of people, so are we. I'm not saying that these analogies of these animals are all the exact thoughts intended. Nonetheless, we know that no matter what type of people we cause these animals to represent, we are to go unto all manner of people.

Four-Footed Beasts

First, we see in this vision "**all manner of fourfooted beasts.**" With it being all manner, it would have included the tame animal that we have around us day by day. I wish for us to remember those that we come in contact with very often; those we may talk to or those that may come to our home. We need to not forget these people and try to reach them. I have found it difficult sometimes to speak with those you are around all the time. Is it that we get so used to them being around that we forget that they have a soul and need Jesus? If we can't get a burden and a longing for these, then whom can we get a burden for? We need to try to reach those that are around us at work, our friends, and family. God has placed these in our life for a reason.

Also, this "**all manner of four-footed beasts**" would include animals that were abominable. Let us not forget those who are involved in sins that are an abomination. In our day of homosexuality, we need to remember this. Hopefully, we're preaching against such gross, immoral sins. But, are we willing to tell one involved in such the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Wild Beasts

Second, we see "**wild beasts**" in Peter's vision. I believe that could represent those people that we are afraid of. Just as there are some animals that would bring fear to you if they are close, some people are the same way. I love going to the zoo and enjoy looking at those bears, leopards and so on, but to be face to face with one; I would have to say, "No thanks." There are some people, I think, that we are just afraid to talk to; not just those people who may be mean but those that we may feel intimidated by.

We need not to fear man. Those people that we fear need the gospel of Jesus also. Listen to the following scriptures: "**The LORD is my light and**

my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psa. 27:1), "**The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?"** (Psa. 118:6). We just need to fear God, for He will protect us as Psalms 34:7 states: "**The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.**" We can't see into the spiritual realm and see all the angels God has for us! You need not to be afraid of anyone dear child of the Almighty God!

Creeping Things

Third, we have the class of animals in Peter's vision called "**creeping things.**" Here we will consider those whom we may "think" are beneath us or of a "lower" class. First of all, there are those you may think are beneath you physically. You need not ever let the physical character of someone keep you from preaching the gospel unto them; whether it be skin color, handicap, fat or ugly. People can be so cruel about people's appearance sometimes. Remember, that person has the same maker as you. The same God that formed you formed them.

Second, there are those who may be beneath you mentally. Do you know someone of whom you may have said, "They just aren't all there." Have you cared enough about them to tell them about Jesus? God has not sent us to pick and choose what kind of people we want to see saved. We are to give the gospel unto all manner of people.

Third, there are those who may be beneath you financially. God help us if we only want to win the rich. Preachers, do you go to the poor trailer courts like you are willing to go to the nicer neighborhoods? Are you a respecter of persons as you go out visiting? Read through Psalms, and you'll find out what God thinks about those who turn away the poor. Shame on us if we don't want to reach the poor because they may lower our class as a church!

Then also with "**creeping things,**" I thought of "creeps." Creeps got their name somehow didn't they? Are there some people who you just simply don't like and sometimes it may be for just reasons? They are disgusting perverts who turn your stomach just to look at them. You don't have to approve of someone to tell them the gospel. For "creeps" need Jesus too, just as you did before you were saved.

Fowls of the Air

Fourth, we see "**fowls of the air.**" That could typify those that you cannot reach. Those you don't come in contact with. You see them but maybe they don't see you. I've prayed for people whom I have never met, seen, or known their name. Sometimes I may see an ambulance and pray for the spiritual well being of the person inside. I may see a bar and pray for the man that enters in that God would

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save him. We don't always have opportunity to witness do we? People often throw beer cans in my yard and do you know what they often get from me as I pick that can up? They get a prayer that God would grant them repentance and save them.

These "**fowls of the air**" could involve people of upper class that don't come near us. Or, it could involve people in high places such as the President. All we can do for these "**fowls of the air**" is pray for them. We may not be able to witness to them and be around them physically, but I know one that can reach them and send someone to them that can tell them the gospel. I Timothy 2:1-4 states: "**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. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.**" It is good and acceptable unto God when we would "**have all men to be saved,**" no matter if we know them or not. Someday we'll be shocked as we see the people that were saved that we never knew but we prayed for.

Conclusion

In verse twenty, the Spirit told Peter, "**Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.**" When God brings people into your life, no matter their manner or class, know that God has brought them to you for a reason. I don't think that it's a coincidence that that lady at the check out at Wal-Mart got that job. Those of you who have a secular job need to know that your co-workers have been placed there by our Sovereign Lord. All the people that we meet, no matter their "**manner,**" have been brought to us by God. Give them the gospel of Jesus Christ and it will be a sweet savor unto God whether they receive it or not. Give the seed to "**all manner**" of people. It's up to God to give the increase.

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hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." This is a terrible time that is come upon Jerusalem. Jeremiah is beholding the scourging of his people. We read also in v. 16, "**For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.**" Oh the sorrow and

pain that Jeremiah felt on behalf of his people! And yet, we read in v. 18, "**The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment...**" Jeremiah is not speaking here of his own rebellion, but rather of the rebellion of the people of Jacob. In spite of all that has happened, and all that will still yet happen, Jeremiah could truly say that the "**Lord is righteous.**" The sinfulness of the people could in no way affect the holiness, perfection, and righteousness of their God. They might fail, but not God. The intentions and desires of the hearts of men can be challenged, but never can we challenge the purpose and purity of God Almighty. Jeremiah knew and understood this. Though all the city would burn around him, and though all men, women, and children would be destroyed, yet God would remain True and Righteous. Near the end of the book, in Lam. 5:19, Jeremiah tells us, "**Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation.**"

Still, we know that Jeremiah felt deeply the sorrow and grief of his people. As we turn again to our text, we read in Lam. 3:40-42, that there are certain things that are required of those that would serve the Lord. Jeremiah is reminding the people that they have fallen far short of those requirements, and that they need to "**search and try**" their ways. They also need to **turn again to the Lord.** In v. 41 he tells us that we should all "**lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.**" Oh that our nation would do what is asked of the people of Jerusalem

in this passage! I want to think about these phrases that are mentioned above. These could all be applied to our nation, but could also be applied to each of us as individuals.

Search and Try Our Ways

How do we do this? This seems like a very basic idea, one that does not need expounding. Surely, each of us, as we have grown up, have been accustomed to examining our actions, and have been told many times that we need to conform to a certain standard. The first thing that I would like to point out is that it is not just every person that is equipped to search out his own ways. Many today are blind to their own faults and will not see them, though they search all of their lives.

We know, of course, that the Lord does search and try our ways. We are told in Ps. 139:1, "**O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.**" Again, in the same chapter, in v. 23, David says, "**Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:**" We can see from these verses, that it is within the Power of God to search and try us. Can we do this ourselves, as Jeremiah has commanded? I think as we ponder Lam. 3:40, that we can see salvation acted out. Left to our own devices, we cannot "**search and try our ways.**" In our natural condition, we must see ourselves as successful and good. It is only when the Spirit of God would work within us, that we would see our truly sinful condition. Jeremiah, himself, tells us in Jer. 17:9-10, "**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know**

it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

I think as we compare this passage in Jeremiah and the passage that we have been studying in Lamentations that we can see that it is truly of the Lord that we can search and try our ways. Our heart is "**desperately wicked.**" We are not capable of an objective searching and trying of our ways. The Apostle Paul says in 1Cor. 2:10, "**But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.**" I believe, that as Jeremiah would have the people to "**search and try**" their ways, he would have them do it through God. He would have them examine their lives and consider their condition. Jeremiah would have the Children of Israel as a people, and as individuals, to examine their lives. This can only be done through the workings of the Holy Spirit. The Land of Israel was full of people that needed to examine their situation.

The same can be said in our time. Sinner, won't you examine your life? Won't you consider your situation? You are a sinner! There is no hope for you! I pray that God will give you the sight and ability to search and try your ways. Look at your ways and try them according to the Law of God. Have you performed according to the lofty standards that are set for you? Can you say that you are without sin, and so you do not need the Salvation that is provided through the Blood of Jesus Christ? Behold your sinfulness and abhor it. In actuality, this phrase, which we would consider one of acknowledging our own hopelessness, cannot be separated from the one that follows, just as repentance cannot be separated from faith.

Turn Again to the Lord

Just as we examine ourselves, and find that we are unworthy of life itself, and find that we are truly worthy of eternal damnation, then we turn to the Lord. We realize that we only begin to examine ourselves, to search and try our ways, through the Spirit of God. Then as we see ourselves as the poor and hopeless sinners that we are, then the Spirit will direct us to Him in whom is our hope. Read the words of Jeremiah in Jer. 31:18-19. "**I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.**" This is a wonderful portion of Scripture that would place the Lord in His place, and man in his place. It is the Lord that causes us to turn and repent!

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Even at the end of this Book of Lamentations, Jeremiah proclaims that it is the Lord that makes us able to turn from our wickedness and turn unto Him. **“Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old”** (Lam. 5:21). The Lord is Sovereign over His people!

It seems to me that this turning is two-fold. First we must *turn from* our sins. **“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”** (Ez. 33:11). As we **“search and try”** our ways, we find them to be evil. We must turn from them! This is true of us as individuals and as a people.

Second, as we turn from our evilness and our sinfulness, we must *turn unto* God. I know, that in reality, if we turn completely from sin, then we must behold God. But let's make this plain. As we turn from sin and self, let's cast our hope upon God. Let us behold our Saviour, through the eye of faith, and remain centered upon Him. Paul, speaking of the Thessalonians, used them as an example when he said **“..ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God”** (1Thess. 1:9).

Elsewhere in the Scriptures, a similar thought is conveyed in the word 'convert'. Once the Spirit of God has brought to life the dead spirit within us, then the soul is converted; it is turned from following death and destruction to following life and glory. **“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul..”** (Ps. 19:7). There must be a transformation in the lives of those that would serve the Lord! There is no true repentance, where there is no true conversion.

How sad it is, that even amongst Christians today, there sometimes is no outward evidence of the inward conversion. How the souls of some Christians must be in anguish, as the flesh dominates the lives of these Christians. No holiness or piety is seen in them, nor do they attend upon the things of God as they ought. This was the condition of Judah and all Israel in the time of Jeremiah. There were some that were saved, but they did not live as they should. Through their laxness the entire nation was allowed to descend into sin.

You know, even in the times of the faithful kings, such as David and Hezekiah, the land was not populated entirely with saved individuals. But the Lord would uphold them in such a way that even the wickedness of the reprobate was not allowed to be as prevalent as the reprobate would desire.

The same is true in our country. We must not deceive ourselves in thinking

that in the time of the Founding Fathers all were saved and all were morally upright. Such was not the case. But the Lord would be faithful to those that sought to follow Him in such a way that the entire nation was blessed. You might say that the Nation was blessed in spite of the wickedness of many because of the faithfulness of the few. Though the number was few, how great was their faith! It is to our shame, that the faithfulness of God's people has not been such today that the Lord would continue to bless the nation in a moral sense and that He would restrain the wickedness of the wicked. We blame the downfall of the moral values of our nation on the wickedness of the wicked. The wicked always have and always will be here! Rather, I think that we should blame the moral demise of our nation on the lack of faithfulness on the part of the Christians.

Some would pose the argument that it is not really the fault of anyone that the morality of our nation is on the decline. They would have us believe that it is necessary that the world must become more and more wicked until the time of the return of Jesus Christ. How foolish this is! Would you have us to retreat now to the caves and seclude ourselves from the world, and let the world go on its wicked way? No, that is not the answer. I disagree with any such attitude. I believe that it is our duty to preach the Gospel and to be a Light and a Watchman to those around us. It is not necessary that this Nation fall into the sad shape in which she is. It is not necessary to the scheme of the End Times that this Nation, too, should be completely and totally wicked. There is enough wickedness already in the nations around us to warrant the return of the Lord. Don't let us fall into this trap of fatalism and resign this Nation over to the control of Satan. There is always hope for individuals and for our Nation as long as the Lord will allow us to remain on this earth.

Lift up our Hearts

Let's think about this thing now that Jeremiah commands the people of Israel to perform. The phrase that we find in v. 41 actually reads: **“Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.”** A couple of things that I see first as I examine the grammar in this verse. Notice that the word **“heart”** is singular. Jeremiah would have each of us to lift up our heart. He would have universal participation across the nation of Judah. In our day and time, I would desire that all that would be under the sound of my voice would do the same. Each of us, as individuals, need to lift up our heart to God.

Notice also that Jeremiah would have us use our **“hands.”** I think that we could take this portion of the verse in two ways.

First, we can understand that to be faithful unto God, we must perform our

Outlines for Country Preachers by a Country Preacher *Sermon Outlines by Milburn Cockrell*

CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

Eph. 4:8-16

Text v. 13. The various ministerial gifts to the church by the ascended Christ (v. 8) are here described. They are for the purpose of building up the body of Christ. It is not enough to hold services and even secure converts. The final object is to build up the church itself by developing its manhood and cementing its unity.

I. THE NEED OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN EACH MEMBER.

- Not all Christians are the same size spiritually (John 21:15-16; I Cor. 3:1-2; Eph. 4:13-14; Heb. 5:12-14; I John 2:12-14).
- Christian growth is a gradual attainment.
- The work of the gospel is to make strong men of us—full-grown men (Acts 9:22).
- The perfect Christian is the perfect man. He must have—
 - Increase in knowledge (v. 13).
 - Stability of belief (v. 14).
 - Fidelity to truth—“dealing truly” (v. 15).
 - We live and move in the element of truth.
 - Fidelity to truth is the backbone of church growth
 - Love—“in love” (v. 15).
 - Christ is the end of Christian growth (v. 15).
 - We have to grow up into Him.
 - Progress is determined by our nearness to Christ.
 - Increase in knowledge is no good if we are drifting from Christ.
 - The perfect Christian is the person most Christ-like in character and nearest to Christ in communion.

II. THE MEANS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

- The grace of God (II Pet. 3:18).
- The Word of God and its ministers (Eph. 4:11-12).
- Adding Christian graces (II Pet. 1:5-8).
- Church attendance (Ps. 84:7).
- Press on (Phil. 3:12-14).

III. HOW DO YOU MEASURE UP TO A FULL-GROWN MAN?

- Begin right—baptism (I Cor. 12:13) and church membership (Matt. 5:15; Rev. 1:20).
- Feed on the Word of God (Ps. 1:2; I Pet. 2:2; Acts 17:11). This prevents backsliding.
- Witness for Christ (Mark 16:15-16).
- Daily pray to God (Luke 18:1; I Thess. 5:17).
- Tithe your income to the church (I Cor. 16:1-2).
- Work hard for the Lord (I Cor. 15:58).
- Follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:25).
- Live in expectation of Christ's coming (Tit. 2:13).

CONCLUSION.

- Are you growing up in Christ? Standing still? Going backward?
- Are you a full-grown man or woman in Christ?

duties. This takes action on our part. We cannot just in our minds and hearts declare our devotion unto God, but we must show this willing conformity to His Word and to His Commands by the use of our **“hands”** and our every action. **“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might..”** (Eccl. 9:10). **“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”** (Col. 3:17). In other words, we must *with* our hands lift up our heart unto God.

Second, I believe that Jeremiah would also have us to lift up our **“hands”** in

praise to God. The work and manner of the hands can betray the desire and the intentions of the heart. We should be in an attitude of praise and prayer unto God at all times. Paul tells us in 1Tim. 2:8, **“I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”** As we pray, we bare our hearts to God. We expose our inmost desires and confess our most secret faults to our God. For this reason, Jeremiah mentions both the heart and the hands.

As we ponder this phrase a little longer though, I think that we can also see that

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this desire that Jeremiah has must also be applied to the nation as a whole. As the people of Israel and Judah, Jeremiah wants them to collectively, as a people, **"lift up" their "heart with" their "hands unto God in the heavens."** Shouldn't we desire the same for our Nation today? I would to God that our Nation and its leaders would once again lift up their heart unto God! The heart and soul of this Nation is turned away from God. Paul, speaking of the Jews said, **"For the heart of this people is waxed gross..."** (Acts 28:27). The same could be applied to the Jews in Jeremiah's day. The same could be said of the country in which we live. Sometimes we wonder, how could this Nation be any more wicked than what it is? Or, how can the heart of this people be any more contrary to God and His ways than what it is already? Yet, I tell you, that this nation will only get more wicked and more vile unless it and we lift up our hearts unto God.

God in the Heavens

We have been talking for a while about this v. 42. I want to spend just a little more time thinking about the conclusion of this verse. Who do we lift up our heart with our hands unto? We lift them up to God. Where is God? He is in the Heavens. Jeremiah is telling the people that their God, if they would look to Him, is in the Heavens. He is far, far, above them, and yet He is nigh. Why must they *lift up* their hearts and hands? It is because He is *above* them and *higher* than them in *location, might, knowledge, and purity*. He is not like them, in that they would surround themselves with sin. He would have none of it. Surely, if they would think that God was with them in their error, they were greatly mistaken.

There were, of course, false prophets in the time of Jeremiah that would speak soothing words unto the people. **"Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my**

people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD." (Jer. 23:30-32). There were prophets in Jeremiah's time that would deceive the people into believing that the Lord was with them. They would prophesy **"...Peace, peace; when there is no peace."** (Jer. 6:14). And yet, God was not among that nation in an intimate way. He was far from them. He was far above them. How long had it been since He came down from the Heavens and visited with His people? Surely there were some of His people, including Jeremiah, who still worshipped Him. But the nation as a whole had left Him long ago. King Josiah would try to bring them back to God, but their destruction was already imminent.

This reminds me of our nation again. In the beginning of this great country, our leaders were godly and moral. In the beginning of this great country, our laws were godly and moral. Now, look how far this Nation is from God. Is it any wonder if God should leave this Nation? What if He were to leave us completely to our own devices and remain in the Heavens? What if, we as Christians refuse to rebuke evil? No matter how wicked this Nation or this World would become, it cannot affect Him. He is above us, and cannot be defiled by our sins. Our evils and wickedness cannot reach into Heaven. In all reality, this is the just desert of this Nation. God has been gracious to this country above any other country on the face of the earth. Yet, we have forsaken Him, and have turned unto our own devices. The country is full of false prophets and teachers that would have us believe that our social liberality and moral blindness is the correct thing to do. They tell us **"peace, peace; when there is no peace."** God will not ignore the wickedness of this nation forever. He did not ignore the wickedness of Israel forever, so why should we be any different?

From both a personal and a national perspective, let us remember that our God is in the Heavens. Let us lift up our hearts unto Him, and do again those things that would honor Him, for He is above us, and He is deserving of our praise, honor, and worship.

to refuse signing away the control of their children by not joining the Convention.

The U.N. also stated that Canadian parents should "explicitly prohibit all forms of violence against children, however light, within the family, in schools and in other institutions where children might be placed." I totally agree children should be protected from violence, and abusive parents should be dealt with severely, but the empty heads at the U.N. have made the mistake of dull minded liberals: equating an old fashioned switching or spanking with violence. The dictionary defines violence as *"the quality of being violent; vehemence; outrage; injury."* None of the preceding words properly define Godly, Biblical punishment. By the way, this committee consistently tells its member nations to outlaw spanking in their countries.

The ultimate issue boils down to who really should have authority over children: parents or government? Any clear thinking conservative Bible believer knows the answer, for it was never even a question to those who think for themselves. But now let's hit this question head on. Should children be spanked, switched or even paddled? I thank God today for being the deserving recipient of all three during my formative years, from parents and teachers, for they helped shape this twig to grow in the right direction.

Discipline which includes corporal punishment is Biblical. Parents who refuse to practice it hate their children (**Proverbs 13:24**) and parents who practice it love their children and are actually practicing pre-evangelism, according to **Proverbs 23:13,14**. **"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."**

I can hear some spineless liberal crying "abuse" from the use of the word beat. The Hebrew word used here for "beat" can mean to strike lightly or severely, but common sense within context dictates the word means to strike lightly in this case. If it meant a severe beating, the verse would not give the promise the child will not die. Punishment brings the will into obedience and submission to authority, therefore when parents teach children to submit to parental authority, they are being prepared to submit to the ultimate authority, God, which can result in salvation.

Discipline which includes punishment actually affects learning. **Proverbs 29:15**, **"The rod and reproof give wisdom..."** Ask any teacher in the public school system who made the transition from the days of discipline and control to today's anarchy in the classroom. They will tell you there is a correlation. That which affects the bottom affects the brain.

There is a direct connection between the paddle and learning. Kids cannot be taught if they cannot be disciplined. And no sane person argues about whether discipline should be administered in love. That issue is understood. What most do not realize is, discipline IS love.

Certainly all children are not the same and different levels and methods need to be used, depending on the child. But again the issue is: who is to be the authority? Parents or government. My wife and I, through God's grace and His plan of procreation, brought our children into this world and WE are responsible for them. When the state begins conceiving and birthing children, then the state can rear their own. But until that happens (Read **Brave New World** by Aldous Huxley) the U. N. and all governments need to keep their hands off my children. Now if I can just get the governments hand out of my pocket.....

Houses We Did

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nearly obscured in heathen darkness, almost hidden in the world. They were far away from the land of their fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, we are reminded in our text that God had forgotten neither His covenant nor His people. Here He speaks of the promised land, **"which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not..."** He had promised them that they were going to inherit that good land.

God designed to bring them into a land of blessings. Moses wrote, **"For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee"** (Deut. 8:7-10). Despite their sore affliction in Egypt, God had not forgotten nor cast off His people. They were oppressed in a strange land, yet God designed to bring them into this good land.

The promised land held an abundance of blessings for the Israelites. There they would inherit cities they had not built. They were going to live in houses full of good things that they did not labor to build or fill. They were going to eat from vineyards, farms and gardens that they

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Mini-Edition

By Joseph Harris
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That great protector of humanity and producer of peace for nations is at it again. The United Nations is once again sticking its nose where it doesn't belong. The U.N.'s Committee on *Rights of the Child* has slapped the hand of Canada, ordering parents to abstain from

"reasonable force in disciplining children" to quote from their own statement. Canada's mistake was in signing the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, thereby becoming accountable to the U.N. According to World Net Daily, The US and Somalia are the only two nations

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did not plant nor cultivate, but they were going to enjoy the blessings from them. God was going to cause the men of the world to give into their bosom and they were going to be increased.

This text contains a warning to Israel when they came to this land. God said, **“When thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”** He reiterates this warning in Deuteronomy 8:10-18. God was preparing the people to enter that land. Though they had been over four hundred years in the land of Egypt and not possessed the land of promise, He said they were going to go in and inherit the land. He warned them to beware when they went and had eaten and were full, **“lest thou forget the LORD.”** Israel was in danger of becoming comfortable dwelling in houses they did not build. They were in danger of enjoying the privileges and benefits of God’s blessings and neglecting and shunning the responsibilities that accompanied it.

Israel was about to come into a prosperity that they had not known. Their flocks and herds were going to be multiplied. Their silver and gold was going to be multiplied. God promised that **“all that thou hast...”** will be **“multiplied”** (Deu. 8:13). Moreover, when they were handed unmerited blessings, the command was, **“But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day”** (Deu. 8:18).

I wish to submit that the Lord’s church in this generation is dwelling in houses we did not build. The church is here today because of that group of Apostles and Disciples that made up the first church at Jerusalem. The Lord told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with the power from on High. After that the Holy Ghost was given, they did not tarry in Jerusalem any longer but they went everywhere preaching the word. They turned the world upside down and planted churches beyond the borders of their own country.

This pattern has continued down through the centuries. The church is here in the United States today because there were faithful men and women that left the comforts of their home and their country and came to the wilderness of America preaching the gospel. They established and organized churches. We are here because there were people that prayed, wept, mourned, labored and preached. We today have inherited these blessings. We are dwelling in houses we did not build. And, just as God gave this

warning to the nation of Israel, this warning is to us today, to **“beware lest thou forget the LORD.”**

I wish now to consider this passage in application to the Lord’s church today. The church is **“the pillar and ground of the truth”** (I Tim. 3:15). The unsearchable riches of God’s truth have been committed to the church. Having such a rich inheritance, we are in danger of resting comfortably in the blessings of God’s Word and shunning the responsibilities of His Word. Let us consider four points where we are most in danger.

I. Firstly, we want the benefits of God’s sovereignty. *We love to tout the supremacy of God.* We love to say that our God is in the Heavens and He has done whatsoever He has pleased. We love to tell others that their god is a weak god whose hand is shortened that he cannot save, but this is not so with our God. Our God **“doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”** (Dan. 4:35). He reigns over all of this universe, sitting upon the throne. He is the Absolute Sovereign. There is one God and none like Him.

We also want the benefit of turning to Romans 8:28 when we have trouble in our life, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” We want to be comforted by these words when sorrow attends our way. Oftentimes we cannot understand our circumstances. We question, “Why must my father die? Why must my mother have cancer? Why must my child be stricken with disease? How can these be for God’s glory?” But the child of God finds hope and comfort in knowing **“that all things work together for to them that love God.”**

Yet, if God is not sovereign, this verse is not true. If God is not directing the affairs of this world, this verse cannot be so. We rejoice that **“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD”** (Psa. 37:23). However, if God is not absolutely sovereign and in total control of this universe, there is no real comfort in these verses. But, thanks be to God, He is absolutely sovereign **“for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth”** (Rev. 19:6). There is comfort in knowing that the Sovereign Lord is **“touched with the feeling of our infirmities”** (Heb. 4:15).

We certainly want the benefits of God’s sovereignty, but often *we shun the responsibility that accompanies it.* What are the responsibilities that God’s sovereignty brings upon His children? We must obey Him. Jesus said, **“If ye love me, keep my commandments”** (John 14:15). If we want the benefits of Romans 8:28, then we must also have the responsibilities of keeping His commandments. We must obey Him.

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

Sovereign Grace Baptists sometimes boast that they believe in the sovereignty of God and Arminians do not. For the most part, that assessment is true. However, there is no appreciable difference between a Freewill Baptist that does not obey Christ and a Sovereign Grace, Landmark Baptist that will not obey Christ either. If anything, it is more scandalous that a Sovereign Grace Landmark Baptist would turn the **“grace of our God into lasciviousness”** by inconsistent profession and practice. Jesus said, **“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”** (Luke 6:46). He is asking, “Why do you call me Sovereign and you will not follow my word?”

The sovereignty of God makes us responsible before God to obey Him. We love to have God reigning and ruling on a throne up in the Heavens, but He is to reign and rule in our hearts. He is to be sovereign of our life. Jesus Christ is not just the Savior, but He is also the Lord. **“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”** (Acts 2:36). The responsibility that comes with His power is to submit to His absolute rule in our own life.

II. Secondly, we want the benefits of Divine election. *We love to rest in the fact of eternal security.* We **“are kept by the power of God through faith”** (I Peter 1:5). We have received the earnest of the Spirit and are sealed unto the day of redemption. We know that we do not keep ourselves. We are in His hand and no man is greater than He. No man can pluck us out. We rejoice in that blessed preservation that Christ taught when He said, **“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).

We also love to ponder that eternal, unconditional love that God bestowed upon us. He said to Jeremiah, **“I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee”** (Jer. 31:3). We thrill to think that God would look down and see a rotten, vile sinner, wicked and rebellious, and that He would set His love on us. Of a truth, Christ died for his enemies. We were at enmity with God. God set His love upon us when we were so unlovable. Oh, how this thrills our heart.

We revel in the love of the Father. We love to be able to proclaim, **“Who shall**

lay any thing to the charge to God’s elect” (Rom. 8:33). We cannot fathom God’s electing grace and love, but we love to tell the story.

However, *we often shun the responsibility that comes along with Divine election.* The free grace in election that has come to us, calls us to holiness in life. Paul wrote of that grace, **“Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”** (Titus 2:10-14). The responsibility that comes with Divine election is holiness of heart and life before God. That very grace that we rejoice in, teaches to deny **“ungodliness and worldly lusts,”** and that **“we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”**

The Bible teaches us to **“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see The Lord”** (Heb. 12:14). God has said, **“Be ye holy; for I am holy”** (I Peter 1:16). His grace calls us to a life of separation from the world. It calls us to a life of forsaking the lusts of the flesh and presenting our bodies as living sacrifices daily to God. It calls us to a life of service, holiness, godliness and righteousness.

The righteousness of Christ, when we are saved, is imputed unto us. We can never be any more justified or righteous than what we are in Jesus Christ at the time of our salvation. This is our positional righteousness, but we are called to practical righteousness as well. God has instructed us in His Word and the responsibility is laid upon us to **“Be ye holy.”** The very doctrine of His free grace teaches us to deny the flesh and live a holy life in this present world.

The nation of Israel felt the same way about their privilege of election. They were an elect nation unto God and they loved the benefits that brought. However, God warned them, **“Beware lest thou forget the LORD.”** Divine election calls us to holiness.

Divine election also requires us to have a burden for lost souls. Paul wrote, **“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved”** (Rom. 10:1). This is the very same man that wrote of God, **“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated”** (Rom. 9:13) that His purpose **“according to election might stand”** (Rom. 9:11). His understanding of Divine election did not hinder his compassion and burden for lost

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souls. Paul makes a more powerful statement about his burden in Romans 9:2-3, **"That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."** I recall hearing a sermon preached by Rolfe Barnard about the burden for lost souls. He got to these verses and said, "When I read verses like this, if that is supposed to be a Christian, I wonder sometimes if I'm even saved."

Paul had a real compassion and burden for lost souls. Paul told Timothy, **"I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"** (II Tim. 2:10). He wrote to the Corinthians, **"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men"** (II Cor. 5:11). It rejoices my heart to think that God would set His love on me from all eternity, before the foundation of the world, that He would **"predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son"** (Rom. 8:29), but this love requires me to have a burden for lost souls.

God help us if we cannot pray for lost souls! God help us if we cannot weep over the lost condition of sinners around us! If you cannot weep for sinners, then get on your knees and pray to God that He will give you tears to weep for sinners! Jesus Christ wept for sinners. Paul wept for sinners. David wept for sinners. Jeremiah wept for sinners. In Ezekiel's day, God told them to set a mark on those of Israel that did sigh and cry. David said, **"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law"** (Ps. 119:136).

I believe in eternal, unconditional election but that does not relieve our responsibility of having a burden for lost souls. We must be careful that we do not shun or neglect this responsibility. We can be very straight doctrinally and yet we can shun the responsibilities. Do you realize that the Pharisees killed the Lord Jesus Christ because they were defending their doctrinal position? They crucified Him because they thought He was violating it.

We can die spiritually on doctrine. God help us for our heart to be concerned about those that are lost, ruined, and undone! If God does not save them in mercy and love and grace they are going to go to Hell! We cannot save them nor condemn them, but we sure can pray for them. We can preach the gospel to them. We can tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ. We must not enjoy the benefits of election and neglect and shun the responsibility that it brings on us to be holy and have a burden for the lost souls of men.

III. Thirdly, we want the benefits of the local church. *We love to rejoice in our heritage and lineage.* There is reason to rejoice when we think that the Lord's church has stood on this earth since the time that He founded the very first one in Jerusalem. She has continued and is with us today. That is something to rejoice over.

We are glad the gates of Hell cannot prevail against the Lord's church. It is established on the Solid Rock. The winds of the world have beat upon it, Satan has brought the floods to wash it away, and yet she still stands and continues to go forth. The gates of Hell cannot stop the Lord's church. Satan with all the world at his side, cannot stop the Lord's church.

We love the benefits of the Lord's church. We love to ponder being in the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are tremendous benefits to being in the Lord's church, but with these come responsibility. We can be guilty of enjoying the benefits and privileges of the Lord's church while shunning and neglecting the responsibility.

In fact, *we often shun the responsibility of the Lord's church.* We do not want to attend the services of the church. We can find the slightest reason to excuse ourselves from assembling together. We think that we can just come every now and then and we are being faithful. If you do not attend all the services of the church where you are a member, you are not being faithful. There are some reasons sometimes that we cannot be there, but most people just have excuses. And if we do attend, we do not want anyone to ask us to do anything.

We believe in the doctrine of succession and perpetuity of the Lord's churches and it is absolutely incumbent upon us to believe that the Lord's church is a missionary church. If a church is not a missionary church, then it is not one of the Lord's churches. He said He would send His church out. He told His church, **"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"** (Mark 16:15). His church is a missionary church.

We have a responsibility to be involved in the mission work. How many preaching points do we have? How many missions do we have? How many churches have we organized? What kind of work are we doing in that direction? This is the mission work of the Lord's church. We say we believe in church perpetuity, do we practice it? We believe in succession, are churches succeeding? Oh, how this convicts me. God help us to get up and get out.

It is usually easier for the Lord's church to gather some money and send it halfway around the world for some mission work to go on than it is to send ourselves across the street to witness to someone about the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's church has the responsibility to go. We cannot sit back and say that God has not called me

to go. Again, Christ said, **"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"** (Mark 16:15). It then becomes incumbent upon us to explain why we have not gone.

The Lord's church is a missionary church. Are we practicing this? I am not saying that we should not send money halfway around the world. We must send money wherever the Lord would lead us to send it, but often it is easier to send our money and not send ourselves. The members of the church, not just the pastor, are to be busy about this work in fulfilling the commission. We all are to go and make disciples, make Christians. We are to preach the gospel, see lost souls saved and teach them to follow everything that the Lord has commanded.

Propagating the church is to be a continual process. Humanly speaking, if we do not do it the church dies out. It is not going to die out because God has His people and He is going to perpetuate His church on this earth until the end of the age when the Lord comes back. Christ said, **"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"** (Matt. 16:18). This should empower us to think that if we go forward in the cause of Christ, all Hell cannot stop us. They can hinder us or try to thwart us, but they cannot stop us. That should thrill our hearts! It should make us more vigilant and diligent in the Lord's work. Hell cannot stop the Lord's Church. Praise the Lord!

IV. Lastly, we want the benefits of revival. *We love to see sinners get saved and everybody else get their heart right with God.* When a revival comes there is a disturbing presence of the Holy Spirit that begins to permeate His church. It is the holiness of God and glory of God that comes down and fills the place. Sinners begin to be converted and Christians begin to be set right with God. Christians separate from the world and live holy lives serving Him. We want to see everyone in the church be on fire for God.

We love to have God to meet with us and to feel the power of the Holy Spirit in our meetings. I sat not too long ago in a service and through the preaching of the Word of God, the Lord was blessing my heart. The tears begin to well up in my eyes. There have been times in situations like that, that I have fought it. I now believe I was quenching the Holy Spirit of God by doing that when He was blessing my heart and soul. True worship is a response to His presence.

We want to feel the power of the Spirit. I am not talking about emotionalism; I am talking about the real power of the Spirit. We love to have that experience in our services. We love to come together and for God to meet with us. We love the workings of a real revival.

However, *we shun the responsibility of revival.* Real revival is going to cost us

something. We usually say that if we could see the Lord moving and saving some people, we would be willing to pray and weep over the condition of lost souls. That thought is completely backwards. David said in Psalm 27:13, **"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD."** The Old Testament saints saw those promises **"afar off"** and had faith.

If we want real revival, then we are going to have to have faith, not wait for revival to start and then jump on the bandwagon. We are going to have to have real faith to believe that God is going to move among us mightily. We are going to have to lose a little bit of our dignity. We are going to have to get a little looser in the services. We are going to have to be willing to get on our knees and face before God and pour out our heart and say, "God, bless us in this place."

I believe if revival would come, it would scare half of us to death. I wish that God would move mightily upon us in this day. I wish we would set our dignity aside and be willing to sigh, cry, pray and pour our hearts out to God that He would meet with us. This is serious business. I am afraid we have gotten too dignified for real revival.

Real revival is going to cost us some things. There is going to be some things we are going to have to give up. We are going to have to give up our fellowship with the world, indulgence in the world's entertainment, our conformity to the world in dress and conduct, our indifference to the things of God. There is going to be some things we are going to have to take up. We must take up practical holiness and godliness of life, daily devotion of prayer and Bible study, modesty of dress and conduct, pure speech, thoughts of pure and lovely things. We want the benefits of having that sort of spiritual condition before God and having the power of the Spirit in our services. We want those blessings, but do we want the responsibilities? What about the requirements? God said, **"Beware lest thou forget the LORD!"**

In conclusion, like Israel, we are in a land of blessings, dwelling in houses we did not build. We are feasting on all the past labors and experiences of those that have gone before us. As a preacher of the gospel, I have in my study a stack of books written by godly men. They were men, but they were godly. I love the benefits I get from that stack of books but if I am just going to relish the benefits of their study and am going to shun the responsibilities of my personal study of God's Word, I am not going to progress spiritually. Arthur Pink once said, "Holy Scripture does not yield up its treasures to the indolent; and as long as the individual preacher is willing to let Dr. Scofield or Mr. Pink do his studying for him, he must not expect to make much

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit questions on any Bible topic

The Berea Baptist Banner, PO Box 39, Mantachie, Mississippi 38855

1. Since everything was still good in Genesis 1:31, it seems that Satan had not yet fallen. Additionally, the earth is not cursed until Genesis chapter three. How does this go along with the supposed "Gap Theory"? --- Alabama



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The Gap Theory was formulated in response to the growing popularity of the theory of evolution in the 1800's and early 1900's. There is no such thing as a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. This unscriptural idea was developed as a compromise with the evolutionary theory of origins in an attempt to make the Bible more scientifically acceptable in the minds of scholars. God created everything in six literal, consecutive days with no gaps in between. Let us never compromise with the world in an attempt to appear scholarly. It is always best to take the plain and common sense of Scripture.

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I was brought up under Gap Theory teaching. Having been brought up that way, I naturally embraced the doctrine as truth. However, I am thankful that God has led me away from that teaching. I now believe that God created the heavens and the Earth about 6000 years ago just as the Bible plainly teaches.

The question before us is just one of many reasons that the Gap Theory cannot be true when measured against the rule of the Word of God. Gap Theorists believe that Satan caused some kind of catastrophe between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2. However, if he had not yet fallen in the latter half of the 1st chapter and even the beginning of the 2nd, it's impossible that this is true. Furthermore, when Satan fell (Isa. 14:12-16), he desired to ascend above the stars and clouds. These were created during the 6-day creation. Therefore, Satan couldn't have fallen before this time, which again, drives a stake in the heart of the Gap Theory. In addition,

Satan was still yet unfallen in the Garden of Eden according to Ezekiel 28:12-15. Since the Garden of Eden was created during the 6-day creation that, again proves that Satan had not yet fallen during the creation week. If Satan had not yet fallen, that makes the Gap Theory impossible.

Let me give you a few other truths the Lord used to convict me of the falseness of the Gap Theory. First of all, the Earth is not cursed until Gen. 3:17. However, if the Gap Theory is true, countless multitudes of dead carcasses were already dead under Adam's feet when he was in the Garden. Secondly, Exodus 20:11 includes the creation of the Heaven and the Earth in the 6-day creation. Some would tell us that there is a different Hebrew word used here than that which is used in Genesis 1:1. That is true. However, the Hebrew words *bara* and *asah* are used interchangeably throughout the 1st chapter of Genesis and this is easily seen in Genesis 1:21 and 1:25. Both of these Hebrew words are used in these two verses. However, both verses obviously speak of the creation of animals. Finally, the Gap theory gained its greatest momentum when Christians felt a need to reconcile the Bible with Science. Atheistic scientists will never believe the Bible, no matter how much we water it down. This surely shouldn't be our desire anyway. There are too many holes in the "science" that says the world is millions of years old anyway.

Folks, the plain teaching of the Bible is that God created the Heavens and the Earth about 6000 years ago. True Science supports this and so does an honest examination of the Scriptures.

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"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day." (Genesis 1:31)

This passage of scripture does not go along with the gap theory, and neither does any other scripture in God's Word.

The gap theory is the belief that there is a great, indefinite gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. It is simply an attempt to make God's account of creation coincide with the idea that the universe is untold billions of years old. Gap theorists do not believe in evolution, they believe in the six literal days of creation; however they believe that the earth existed long before these six days. They believe that billions of years ago God created heaven and earth according to Genesis 1:1. They also believe that during this time the earth was populated and that Satan ruled over God's creation before he fell. Then after Satan fell God destroyed the earth and it became void, dark, and without form according to Genesis 1:2. They also site Genesis 1:28 where God told Adam and Eve to **"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth"** as evidence that the earth was populated with humans before creation and needed to be replenished or repopulated. There are various forms of the gap theory and this is a very brief, simplified explanation, but they all revolve around the idea that the earth is extremely old. Now let's see what the scriptures have to say about this.

First, in Exodus 20:11 we read, **"For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth."** The Hebrew words **"heaven"** and **"earth"** are the same words found in Genesis 1:1 which reads, **"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."** This means that heaven and earth were created at the same time as all the rest of God's creation. In Mark 10:6, Christ said, **"But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female,"** in reference to Adam and Eve and the first marriage. Christ did not make any distinction between the beginning of creation and the creation of mankind. The entire creation was accomplished in the same timeframe within those six days.

Second, the scripture in question (Genesis 1:31) says that everything God created was good; notice it says **"every thing"** was **"very good."** This means that there was no evil in all of God's perfect creation. If there was a complete absence of evil then Satan could not have fallen yet and been roaming the earth when God made this declaration. Satan fell sometime after this but obviously before he appeared to Eve in the garden. He deceived Eve into taking of the forbidden fruit and Adam willingly followed.

Because of this sin, death was introduced into the world, **"The wages of sin is death"** (Romans 6:23), **"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin"** (Romans 5:12). Death did not exist before the fall. Gap theorists wrongfully believe that there was death and destruction in the world for millions of years before Adam sinned.

Third, the word "replenish" in Genesis 1:28 is translated from the Hebrew word **"male"** which means to fill. It is never translated refill. In our modern English language 'replenish' means to fill again and this is why some people are confused, but at the time the King James Bible was translated the word replenish meant simply to fill. Proof of this is in Genesis 1:22 where the same Hebrew word is translated 'fill' in a similar context **"And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas."** The King James Bible is a completely accurate translation; however the English language has changed some in the last four hundred years.

The earth is not billions of years old but only about six thousand. There are countless proofs both biblical and scientific that substantiate this fact. I believe that the gap theory was conjured up in the imaginations of men whose faith staggered when they were faced with the false teachings of evolution and the popular beliefs of the world. The gap theory is really a compromise between God's Word and man's, just as is theistic evolution and progressive creation. God's Word should be our only foundation for all faith and practice. Anything that contradicts it is false.

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I personally do not accept the Gap Theory. I do not believe there is any scripture that allows for the theory if the scripture is taken in context. I believe the curse of God because of sin came when Adam, the federal head of the human race, deliberately sinned and fell from his sinless state after Genesis chapter two. I agree with the questioner that everything was very good even in the sight of God until Adam fell.

The Gap Theory was an attempt by some Christian theologians that did not believe in evolution to reconcile the short history of the world as given in Genesis with the popular belief that some geologists claim that the earth is billions of years old. They may not have been evo-

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

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2. Could you please give your scriptural views as to the belief that the "New Testament (Covenant)" is only for true Baptist churches; that the covenant was made for them only and not for all of God's elect?" --- Kentucky



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This sounds like a form of the "priesthood of the church" heresy. When carried to the farthest extent, this theory says that a person must be in a Baptist pew, in a Baptist church listening to a Baptist preacher in order for the Lord to convict. It's beyond me how anybody could believe such a theory. I do believe every person alive (especially believers) would do well to be in a Baptist church because only among them will we find the Lord's true churches. However, to go so far and say that it is necessary to salvation is no better than what Rome promotes. Possibly, it is worse for Rome has never had the truth. I am very concerned that those who believe what this question proposes are just a step away from "priesthood-ism."

Every book in the Bible is addressed to a specific person or group of people. Some are written to churches (like Corinthians and Ephesians) and some are written to individuals (like Luke and Acts). It's hardly possible to see that some of these books weren't written to churches and then conclude that they are only good for true Baptist churches today. Surely, one can see the holes in that theory. One could just as well say that they were written to the specific people and can be of no use to us today. This obviously would be wrong as well.

The truth is the Word of God can be of use to any child of God in whatever situation they may be. God's Word has been used by Him to bring many of His children out of darkness into the glorious light of Christ. This has not always been done in a congregation. Many will testify that this has been done in private when reading the Word of God, a tract, a gospel paper, or some other form of written literature. God has also used His Word to bring many of His children out of whatever error they might have been in at that time. Both of these examples would be enough to disprove the theory spoken of in the question before us.

Let me restate that I do believe all would be better to be in one of the Lord's true New Testament Baptist churches.

However, to go so far and say that unless they are in the church the Bible is of no use to them, is to go too far. By doing this, some would limit the Holy Spirit, which we cannot do.

God's Word is of use to His people—wherever...whenever.

TODD BRYANT



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The new covenant is the gospel of Jesus Christ. **"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."** (Matthew 26:28). It has to do with Him shedding His blood for His people to pay their penalty and free them from the curse of sin (Galatians 3:10-13). The new covenant has to do with God being satisfied with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ once for all the elect and imputing His righteousness on every one of them. **"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."** (Hebrews 10:10). **"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."** (Hebrews 10:16-17). The new covenant is Jesus Christ redeeming a chosen people unto himself (Titus 2:13-14). The new covenant is Jesus Christ doing all the work necessary to bring each and every one of His sheep to full salvation (John 10:26-30). The new covenant is Jesus Christ fulfilling all the types and shadows of the old. **"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."** (Hebrews 8:6).

I have never in my life heard of anyone who believed or preached that God has some elect (church members) that are part of the new covenant and some elect (non-church members) that are not part of the new covenant. Is not the new covenant for all God's elect, church member or not? How could someone be saved outside of the new covenant? Can

men be saved outside of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Does being a true Baptist somehow add to one's spiritual salvation? Perhaps I am naive when it comes to the modern teachings and doctrines of men, but I have never heard of such teachings. If men believe these things let them attempt to prove their own doctrine for I certainly cannot.

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The contrast here in Hebrews chapter twelve is between Moses and Christ, Sinai and Mt. Zion, and the Old and New Covenant. In verse 22 through verse 24 we have a description of the new Covenant blessings in Christ. There are three groups of people here in the context of this Scripture, so we see the New Covenant is for more than just Baptist churches.

Those that promote that the New Covenant is only for Baptist churches promote the Church Priesthood idea, which declares that all of the New Testament speaks with only the Lord's church in view, and all of the Lord's promises are only for His churches.

Those who believe in the universal church also adhere to the idea that all of the saved are in the church therefore the New Covenant is only for the church.

I believe the Scriptures show that the New Covenant is for all believers, even the Old Testament saints, which I think are referred to in Hebrews 12:24 as **"just men made perfect."** They were not made perfect until Jesus died and put the New Covenant into effect. In Jeremiah 31:31, the prophet prophesied that the Lord would make a New Covenant with Israel and Judah. I believe this prophecy is revealed in Hebrews 8:10, **"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."**

In Matthew 26:28 we are told that Jesus' blood was shed for all the elect for the remission of sins. Romans 11:27 and

Hebrews 8:1-13 show us that Christ made this promise of a new covenant effective in His death even for Israel. No doubt these are sufficient evidences that the New Covenant is for more than just the Baptist churches.

I know there are those referred to as New Lighters, who claim the book of Hebrews just means God's chosen people, not the natural seed of Israel, but refers to spiritual Israel, which they say is the true Baptist church today.

The Apostle Paul disagreed with this theory in Philippians 3:4-5. Paul said he was a Hebrew, referring to his being of the tribe of Benjamin, making him literally a natural Hebrew or Israelite.

I might also add or mention that Joseph Smith, the originator of the Mormons or Latter Day Saints, referred to his followers as Israel. I do not believe that the Mormons are latter day saints nor the Israel referred to in the Bible and neither do I believe that the New Testament church took the place of Israel and are the only recipients of the blessings of the New Covenant.

GARNER SMITH



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The idea that the New Testament is only for true Baptist churches is a throw-back to the Catholic and Campbellite dogma of church salvation. The New Testament was inspired by God and is profitable for all believers, not just for Baptist church members. Granted, many of the epistles were written to specific churches that existed in apostolic times, but the principles, precepts, and truths may be enjoyed by all.

I believe that Jesus started His church during His earthly ministry and He promised that it would enjoy a holy succession until He returns again. I also believe He gave the Great Commission exclusively to what we would today identify as a Baptist church. However, I don't believe you have to be a Baptist church member to be saved or to claim the promises and precepts of Scripture. It would be ideal if every believer followed the Lord in scriptural baptism and united with a true New Testament Church, but it is not a reality. I Corinthians 12:28 declares: **"And God hath set some in the church..."** God has not chosen to set all believers in His church, only some. In fact, true Baptist church members compose a very small minority in comparison to all believers on the earth today. It would be foolish to believe that the New

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lutionists, but they were greatly influenced by the writings of other men that may have been evolutionists.

One of the most influential writers adhering to the Gap Theory was C. I. Scofield, the publisher of the Scofield Bible. Actually this theory may be traced back to some obscure writings of Dutchman Episcopius (1583-1643).

The Gap Theorists run into many difficulties and inconsistencies. They ignore any evidence of a young earth of less than 10,000 years. There is a great deal of both geologic and biblical evidence for a short history of the earth. There are many arguments we could give against the Gap Theory but do not believe that at the present time the Forum is the place to present all of such material. Maybe sometime in the future, we will write an article on the subject. We will just give some Bible thoughts concerning the matter at this time.

On the basis of Romans 5:12, **"Wherefore, as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,"** there could not have been sin on earth before Adam. This would include any pre-adamic race. In I Corinthians 15:45 the Bible says Adam was the first man. Genesis 1:29-30 tells us that Adam and the animals were the original creation and this is consistent with God's description of everything being **"very good"** leaving no room for a gap between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 for some other race before Adam to bring a curse on earth to destroy it.

GARNER SMITH

Forum #2

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Testament was only written for a very small number. I believe there are saved people who are not Baptists who profit from the Word daily. II Timothy 3:16 declares: **"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."**

TOM ROSS

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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.

CONSERVATIVE V. CONSERVATIVE—JUSTICE ROY MOORE ASKS BILL PRYOR TO STEP DOWN AS PROSECUTOR IN HIS TEN COMMANDMENTS CASE

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (EP)—Attorneys for suspended Chief Justice Roy Moore filed a motion in court this week asking that Attorney General Bill Pryor not be allowed to serve as prosecutor in the judicial ethics case that could remove Moore from office.

The motion filed with the Court of the Judiciary said Pryor has legal conflicts and should not be allowed to prosecute Moore for disobeying a federal judge's order to remove a Ten Commandments monument from the rotunda of the Alabama Judiciary Building, according to the Associated Press.

Pryor is the appointed prosecutor in a case that has pitted conservative against conservative. Both Pryor and Moore are conservative, evangelical Christians. And while the two share a common faith, they clearly don't share the same view of Moore's highly publicized case.

Last month, Pryor told WORLD magazine that he believed civil disobedience should be practiced by private citizens, not public officials, and only as a last resort. "As a Christian, I think we're all supposed to submit to governing authorities," he told WORLD. "At the same time, I do have a perspective that you have to disobey government when it flatly contradicts your moral obligations," he continued. "But those are extreme circumstances, such as being ordered to worship a graven image. If you were being ordered to do that as an individual, you would be bound to disobey."

Pryor doesn't believe Moore's case fits into that category because Moore is a public official and, Pryor contends, he is not being ordered to sin.

Moore's attorneys believe that Pryor should be removed from the case, and filed a motion citing 14 reasons he should be disqualified.

Among the reasons cited is the attorney general's role defending Moore in court when Moore was a circuit judge in Etowah County and fighting to keep a Ten Commandments display on his courtroom wall.

Pryor's office was involved in the case on Moore's side, and the motion describes

Pryor as defending Moore and contends the attorney general cannot now oppose him.

"You can't take a position contrary to your client or former client, unless he gives consent," said Terry Butts, a former state Supreme Court justice and one of Moore's attorneys, according to AP.

Pryor insists that the case at hand is not about the Ten Commandments (of which a copy hangs on the wall of his private office), but about Moore's refusal to follow a federal injunction. In a response to this week's motion, Pryor wrote, "The single issue before this court is whether (Moore) violated the canons of judicial ethics when, as the sitting chief justice, he openly defied a federal injunction against him simply because he did not agree with the substance of that order."

The motion also said Pryor has a conflict because of his nomination to a federal judgeship, which has been stalled by Democrats in Congress. By prosecuting Moore, Pryor "perhaps gains the support and vote of liberal Democrats in the United States Senate," the motion said.

"The lawyer's code says that you can't have any interest, and that includes personal interest, that would have an adverse effect on the representation of your client," Butts said.

Pryor's nomination to the federal post has been held up in a filibuster on the Senate floor for months. His critics are opposed to the attorney general's conservative views. None have indicated that Pryor's opinion on Moore's case will change their mind.

The Judicial Inquiry Commission suspended Moore with pay Aug. 22, when it charged him with the ethics violations. Five days later, on orders of the eight associate justices, the monument was wheeled out of the rotunda and locked in a storage room to comply with U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson's ruling that it was an unconstitutional promotion of religion by government.

The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals has upheld Thompson's ruling. Moore has appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

SUPREME COURT'S MOST CONSERVATIVE JUSTICE STEPS DOWN FROM PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE CASE

WASHINGTON (EP)—Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia stepped down this week from what promises to be one of the most watched cases of this term's session: whether "under God" should remain part of the Pledge of Allegiance recited in public schools.

The exit of Scalia, an almost sure vote to keep "under God," opens the possibility that the other eight justices will deadlock.

The justice created controversy with comments last January at a "Religious Freedom Day" event in Fredericksburg, Ga. He criticized a California court decision that said including "under God" improperly mixes church and state. Justices are supposed to refrain from commenting on cases that could reach them.

There was one protester at the event, according to the Associated Press, with a sign that said religion should stay out of government.

Scalia responded to the man, saying: "I have no problem with that philosophy being adopted democratically. If the gentleman holding the sign would persuade all of you of that, then we could eliminate 'under God' from the Pledge of Allegiance. That could be democratically done."

Scalia recused himself from the case this week without offering an explanation. Justices traditionally do not give explanations when they recuse themselves.

Most court watchers suspect Scalia made the decision alone, according to AP.

Without Scalia's vote on the case, it is possible that the justices will deadlock on the decision with a 4-4 vote. If they deadlock, the decision of the lower 9th Circuit Court (which found the "under God" phrase unconstitutional) would stand, but only in the nine states in that court's jurisdiction. The Supreme Court's decision would apply to all the states in the U.S. if the justices reach a majority decision.

The high court is scheduled to take up several other religious rights cases this term, including whether or not states can withhold educational grants from students pursuing religious education. It is likely that Scalia will not step down from those cases.

**DEMOCRATS DENOUNCE
CONSERVATIVE
JUDICIAL NOMINEE AS
'ANOTHER CLARENCE THOMAS'**
WASHINGTON (EP)—The Congressional Black Caucus denounced White House judicial nominee Janice Rogers Brown of California on Friday, with one member saying she was "cut from the same cloth as Clarence Thomas" and should be kept off a federal appellate court, the Associated Press reported.

President Bush has nominated Brown, a California state justice, for a seat on the

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U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. She is expected to appear next Wednesday before the Senate Judiciary Committee for a confirmation hearing.

The 12-member appeals court decides important government cases involving separation of powers, the role of the federal government, the responsibilities of federal officials and the authority of federal agencies. It now has five Republican and four Democratic appointees.

Brown, who is black, is considered among the California high court's most conservative justices. She supported limits on abortion rights and corporate liability, routinely votes to uphold death penalty sentences and opposes affirmative action. The democrats from the black Caucus say her conservative ideals make her unfit for the appointment.

Republican senators immediately defended Brown. "If critics don't like Justice Brown's decisions, they should change the law, rather than attack her for partisan political gain. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, a member of the Senate judiciary Committee told AP.

Thomas, who became the Supreme Court's second black justice, is one of that court's most conservative members and a longtime critic of civil rights legislation and affirmative action programs.

If confirmed, Brown would become the second black woman on the D.C. court.

Senate Democrats have not said whether they will filibuster Brown. They are filibustering three judicial nominees and have forced one, conservative Hispanic lawyer Miguel Estrada, to withdraw his nomination.

GOVERNMENT DISCRIMINATING AGAINST U.S. CITIZENS

(AP)—Do American job hunters have to get their up-to-date employment news from the "Economic Times of India?" That faraway newspaper carries sensational items that somehow don't make news in the U.S. The Economic Times published a report that the Bush administration, speaking through U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, has assured India that its workers who come to the U.S. on H-1B visas will receive Social Security benefits even though they don't comply with the rules American workers must meet. The Economic Times of India reported that India's Commerce and Industry Minister, Arun Jaitley, said that Zoellick "gave him the assurance," and that Jaitley also met with Commerce Secretary Bob Evans who presumably confirmed this assurance. Since the article was datelined

out of Washington on June 14, it is all the more remarkable that we didn't hear about this on U.S. networks. In order for you and me to receive Social Security benefits, we have to pay taxes into the system for 10 years or 40 quarters. Those who come here from India on H-1B visas are allowed to work here for three years and get one three-year extension, for a total of six years. "Totalization" is the bureaucratic buzz word to describe executive agreements to give foreigners employed in the U.S. Social Security benefits to which they are not entitled. A similar "totalization" plan is now cooking in our State Department to give Social Security benefits to Mexican aliens, even if they are in our country illegally. Totalization makes sense only if you understand that the goal is to force U.S. taxpayers to subsidize the scandalous practice whereby multinational corporations hire cheap foreign labor to replace American workers. This makes even better sense when you understand that the big contributors to politicians are corporations and their executives, not U.S. workers who are laid off. Corporations are induced to import foreign workers not only because the cost of their wages and benefits is substantially less, but because many federal laws encourage discrimination against American workers. Outsourcing jobs to a foreign country enables the corporations to avoid the numerous regulations with which U.S. businesses must comply (*Phyllis Schlafly Report*).

WHO DEFINES MARRIAGE: GOD OR MAN?

By James Draper

NASHVILLE (BP)—One tenet of a republic is that the voice of the people influences the law of the land. The founders intended this as they wrote the Constitution and created a new nation.

However, a homosexual minority of fewer than 3 percent of our population is pressing its political agenda through a court system dominated by liberal judges who have elevated themselves to the position of rewriting the Constitution instead of interpreting it. The result: America is mocking biblical morality and turning its back on God.

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* overturned a law that classified sodomy as illegal and opened a floodgate that many feel can never be closed again. The decision in effect legalizes homosexuality. The natural progression from that decision is to redefine the biblical model of marriage one man to one woman.

Legalizing homosexual "marriage" will advance the decline of America's remaining morality. No person will remain unaffected. A decision at any time from one of several state courts, where this issue currently is being heard, could release a legislative landslide that will

bury the moral sensibilities of 97 percent of Americans (*Western Recorder*).

GLEANINGS HERE AND THERE IMMIGRATION AND THE WAR ON TERROR

Since the attacks on our country on 9-11-01, we have new laws, new agencies, and lots of new government spending to fight off foreign invaders. But our immigration policies leave the door to our nation open wide to the world's law-breakers and evildoers: 1) According to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, at least 78,000 illegal aliens from terror-supporting or terror-friendly countries live in the U.S. They are among an estimated seven to eleven million aliens who have crossed our borders illegally, overstayed visas illegally, jumped ship illegally and evaded deportation orders illegally. 2) More than 300,000 illegal alien fugitives, including 6,000 from the Middle East, remain on the loose despite deportation orders. 3) Last year, at least 105 foreign nationals suspected of terrorist involvement received U.S. visas because of lapses in a new background check system. 4) There is still no systematic tracking of criminal alien felons across the country. 5) Sanctuary for illegal aliens remains the policy in almost every major metropolis. 6) And "catch and release" remains standard operating procedure for untold thousands of illegal aliens who pass through the fingers of federal immigration authorities every day (*Imprimis*).

LORANGER, La. (EP)—A "pray in" before the latest Loranger High School football game in the small Louisiana town drew enough people to surround the football field in what amounted to a protest against the American Civil Liberties Union, the Associated Press reported. LHS is involved in the third ACLU-related lawsuit filed against the School Board in the last nine years. The latest complaint was filed in federal court in New Orleans Tuesday on behalf of Loranger an unidentified resident and his who are LHS students. The complaint alleges the School Board endorses prayers or religion at LHS football games, during the school day and at board meetings, in violation of school policy and the constitution. "It's very obvious this community is not going to let the ACLU dictate this kind of positive influence on the student body," School Board member Sandra Bailey-Simmons told reporters after the "pray in." Loranger United Methodist Church sold shirts Friday saying, "Yes, I'll pray," Bailey-Simmons said. Community leaders and other church leaders also participated in the event.

CHRISTIANS VICTIMIZED IN AMERICA'S SCHOOL SYSTEM

A Southern Baptist educator says many Christian parents are fooling themselves by thinking their children can provide "salt and light" in the public school system. Ed Gamble is executive director of the Southern Baptist Association of Christian Schools. He says a small percentage of students do succeed at being "salt and light" in their public schools but the vast majority only succeed in "just holding their own" and have little impact in their schools. "An awful lot of them are not having an impact on the environment, but the environment's having an impact on them," Gamble explains. "That's most often the case. And we see that by looking at the facts about our students when they come out of this system. They do not come out with a Christian worldview, and they do not think and act biblically. And the results are lamentable." Gamble says many parents have abandoned an important responsibility. "We are not educating our children. We're handing them over to a secular, humanistic, government-run school system, a Chaldean school system, if you will, and expecting to get back Christians educated with a Christian worldview who think and act biblically," he says. "We're idiots if we think that's going to happen." According to Gamble, it was Albert Einstein who said, "Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results is insanity" (*Sword of the Lord*).

WARSAW, Poland (EP)—This week bishops from Poland's Roman Catholic church criticized the draft proposal for the European Union's constitution as not only lacking a reference to God, but as also discriminating against the religious. The bishops, who gathered in Warsaw for a regular, two-day plenary session, also condemned plans by the ruling ex-communist party to liberalize the nation's strict abortion law and grant homosexual couples partnership rights similar to those for married couples, according to the Associated Press. "With great concern we notice a lack of reference not only to God," in the preamble of the future European Constitution, but also "any reference to conscience as a basic criterion of moral evaluation," the bishops said in a statement.

They said the proposal lacks respect for religious beliefs and is a "discrimination of the faithful, who constitute a decisive majority of European population." Overwhelming Catholic Poland, which is to join the European Union in May, has been campaigning for the inclusion of a reference to Europe's Christian roots in the new EU constitution.

MARRIAGE PROTECTION:

Under the Constitution, Congress has the power to pass laws *limiting the*

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jurisdiction of the federal courts, thus trumping the ability of liberal federal judges to advance their social and cultural agendas from the bench. Rep. John Hostettler (R.-Ind.) wants to do just that in protecting the federal *Defense of Marriage Act* (DOMA), which authorizes states not to recognize same-sex "marriages" contracted in other states.

"The *Marriage Protection Act* will remove the Supreme Court's appellate jurisdiction, as well as remove inferior federal court original and appellate jurisdiction over DOMA's full faith and credit provision," says a summary of Hostettler's bill. "This provision in DOMA codified that no state would be required to give full faith and credit to a marriage license issued by another state, if that relationship was between two people of the same sex" (*Human Events*, Oct. 20, 2003, p. 2).

DOPED-UP KIDS. The number of young children hooked on powerful narcotics has skyrocketed over the past 15 years, but the Drug Enforcement Agency won't be doing anything about it because the drugs in question are being peddled by pediatricians. In the most comprehensive study of its kind, a new report details how legal drug use among youths has more than tripled since 1987, which means that kids are now doped by doctors at the same rate as adults are. As shocking as it is to see that more than 6 percent of children are popping pills on a daily basis, the study merely confirms what has been apparent for years now. A host of factors have together created this embarrassing situation: parents who crave an easy solution, doctors who are all-too-willing to provide it, and at the root of the problem, the educational establishment, which has replaced schoolyard drug dealers as the most persistent pushers of narcotics. Parents of difficult children are lured into drugging their kids with the seductive promise of a quick fix. Doctors and teachers explain how the grass really is greener on the medicated side, persuading parents to ditch discipline in favor of the "modern" approach. Mind-altering narcotics, nor surprisingly, do in fact pack a powerful punch, particularly for a young child. The child may not learn how to modify his behavior, but he is typically zonked out enough that he is no longer a "problem." In an instant-gratification society, the doping of kids to alleviate annoyance of adults should not come as a shock. Parents have busy lives, and dishing out a few pills a day keeps behavioral issues at bay. Doctors are so prone to over-diagnosis that many of the kids being medicated don't have any disease to begin with. In a society where "victims" are

celebrated, children who act out or simply fidget too much in class are ripe targets to induction into the cult of victim-hood. Sometimes parents prod pediatricians, but often doctors are so eager to ascribe a problem child with some affliction (attention deficit disorder is all the rage) that otherwise healthy, if rambunctious, kids get branded. Of course many kids do need medication, and professional help is often necessary to bring some kids into line. But that is the distinct minority of cases now being treated with narcotics. Schools all over the country monitor drug use by students, not to keep it from getting out of hand, mind you, but to blow the whistle when the kids aren't doped up. Teachers' unions continue to fight, sometimes successfully, to block children from attending school if they haven't taken their drugs. The trend has become so pervasive that lawmakers in Vermont last year introduced legislation to prevent schools from requiring kids to pop pills. Without being equipped with the necessary skills to modify properly their behavior, medicated children are likely to become medicated adults. Which leads us to the \$64,000 question: How will today's kids handle their own problem children? (*National Review*)



IS THE COMMISSION STILL BINDING ON US?

By William Carey

Our Lord Jesus Christ, a little before His departure, commissioned His apostles to "Go," and "teach all nations;" or, as another evangelist expresses it, *Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* This commission was as extensive as possible, and laid them under obligation to disperse themselves into every country of the habitable globe, and preach to all the inhabitants, without exception, or limitation. They accordingly went forth in obedience to the command, and the power of God evidently wrought with them. Many attempts of the same kind have been made since their day, and which have been attended with various success; but the work has not been taken up, or prosecuted of late years (except by a few individuals) with that zeal and perseverance with which the primitive Christians went about it. It seems as if many thought the commission was sufficiently put in execution by what the apostles and others have done; that we have enough to do to attend to the salvation of our own countrymen; and that, if God intends the salvation of the heathen, He will some way or other bring them to the gospel, or the gospel to them.

It is thus that multitudes sit at ease, and give themselves no concern about the far greater part of their fellow-sinners, who to this day, are lost in ignorance and idolatry. There seems also to be an opinion existing in the minds of some, that because the apostles were extraordinary officers and have no proper successors, and because many things which were right for them to do would be utterly unwarrantable for us, therefore it may not be immediately binding on us to execute the commission, though it was so upon them. To the consideration of such persons I would offer the following observations.

FIRST, If the command of Christ to teach all nations be restricted to the apostles, or those under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, then that of baptizing should be so too; and every denomination of Christians, except the Quakers, do wrong in baptizing with water at all.

SECONDLY, If the command of Christ to teach all nations be confined to the apostles, then all such ordinary ministers who have endeavored to carry the gospel to the heathens, have acted without a warrant, and run before they were sent. Yea, and though God has promised that most glorious thing to the heathen world by sending His gospel to them, yet whoever goes first, or indeed at all, with that message, unless he have a new and special commission from Heaven, must go without any authority for so doing.

THIRDLY, If the command of Christ to teach all nations extend only to the apostles, then, doubtless, the promise of the divine presence in this work must be so limited; but this is worded in such a manner as expressly precludes such an idea. "**Lo, I am with you always, even unto to the end of the world.**"

That there are cases in which even a divine command may cease to be binding is admitted. As for instance, if it be repealed, as the ceremonial commandments of the Jewish law; or if there be *no subjects* in the world for the commanded act to be exercised upon, as in the law of septennial release, which might be dispensed with when there should be no poor in the land to have their debts forgiven. Deuteronomy 15:4 or if, in any particular instance, we can produce a *counter-revelation*, of equal authority with the original command, as when Paul and Silas were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Bythinia. Acts 16:6,7, or if, in any case, there be a *natural impossibility* of putting it in execution. It was not the duty of Paul to preach Christ to the inhabitants of Otaheite, because no such place was then discovered, nor had he any means of coming at them. But none of these things can be alleged by us in behalf of the neglect of the commission given by Christ. We cannot say that it is repealed,

like the commands of the ceremonial law; nor can we plead that there are no objects for the command to be exercised upon. Alas! The far greater parts of the world, as we shall see presently, are still covered with heathen darkness! Nor can we produce a counter-revelation, concerning any particular nation, like that to Paul and Silas, concerning Bythinia; and, if we could, it would not warrant our sitting still and neglecting all the other parts of the world; for Paul and Silas, when forbidden to preach to those heathens, went elsewhere, and preached to others. Neither can we allege a natural impossibility in the case. It has been said that we ought not to force our way, but to wait for the openings, and leadings of Providence; but it might with equal propriety be answered in this case, neither ought we to neglect embracing those openings in providence which daily present themselves to us. What openings of providence do we wait for? We can neither expect to be transported into the heathen world without ordinary means, nor to be endowed with the gift of tongues, etc. when we arrive there. These would not be providential interpositions, but miraculous ones. Where a command exists nothing can be necessary to render it binding but a removal of those obstacles, which render obedience impossible, and these are removed already. Natural impossibility can never be pleaded so long as facts exist to prove the contrary. Have not the popish millions surmounted all those difficulties, which we have generally thought to be insuperable? Have not the missionaries of the *Unitas Fratrum*, or Moravina Brethren, encountered the scorching heat of Abyssinia, and the frozen climes of Greenland, and Labrador, their difficult languages, and savage manners? Or have not English traders, for the sake of gain, surmounted all those things, which have generally been counted insurmountable obstacles in the way of preaching the gospel? Witness the trade of Persia, the East-Indies, China, and Greenland, yea even the accursed Slave-Trade on the coasts of Africa. Men can insinuate themselves into the favor of the most barbarous clans, and uncultivated tribes, for the sake of gain; and how different soever the circumstances of trading and preaching are, yet this will prove the possibility of ministers being introduced there; and if this is but thought a sufficient reason to make the experiment, my point is gained.

It has been said that some learned divines have proved from Scripture that the time is not yet come that the heathen should be converted; and that first the *witnesses must be slain*, and many other prophecies fulfilled. But admitting this to be the case (which I much doubt) yet if any objection is made from this against preaching to them immediately, it must

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be founded on one of these things; either that the secret purpose of God is the rule of our duty, and then it must be as bad to pray for them, as to preach to them; or else that none shall be converted in the heathen world till the universal down-pouring of the Spirit in the last days. But this objection comes too late; for the success of the gospel has been very considerable in many places already.

It has been objected that there are multitudes in our own nation, and within our immediate spheres of action, who are as ignorant as the South-Sea savages, and that therefore we have work enough at home, without going into other countries. That there are thousands in our own land as far from God as possible, I readily grant, and that this ought to excite us to ten-fold diligence in our work, and in attempts to spread divine knowledge amongst them is a certain fact; but that it ought to supercede all attempts to spread the gospel in foreign parts seems to want proof. Our own countrymen have the means of grace, and may attend on the word preached if they choose it. They have the means of knowing the truth, and faithful ministers are placed in almost every part of the land, whose spheres of action might be much extended if their congregations were but more hearty and active in the cause: but with them the case is widely different, who have no Bible, no written language, (which many of them have not) no ministers, no good civil government, nor any of those advantages which we have. Pity therefore, humanity, and much more Christianity, call loudly for every possible exertion to introduce the gospel amongst them.

ABUNDANCE OF MEANS- ABSENCE OF HEART

by Bill James

“Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?” (Prov. 17:16).

The question in our text is about the privileges and opportunities that some have to acquire wisdom but never seem to improve those opportunities because their heart does not relish that wisdom. The fool spoken of here is not wanting in means but rather wanting in heart. It seems such a waste to have such availability with out the appetite. The writer of this proverb, who raises this question, recognizes this deplorable fact and it seems a grief to him.

There are, in fact, multitudes of opportunities, resources, encouragements, incentives, and favorable circumstances and environment which sinners frankly squander. The price is in his hand to get it but the purpose is not in his heart to secure it. How desperately

they need this wisdom, which is from above, but having no appreciation for it they forfeit it. Solomon emphasizes the critical importance of this blessing throughout the Proverbs. He calls it the principal thing. **“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding”** (Prov. 4:7)

The One Who is made unto us wisdom is not sought though He is ever so nigh. He could not have come closer than He actually came because He actually became one of us, but without our sin. Speaking of availability and opportunity just consider these words. **“But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”** (Rom. 10: 6-10). Yes, there remains an abundance of means but a woeful absence of heart. This only serves to aggravate the sinner’s condemnation. Christ seriously upbraided those cities in Galilee that had witnessed His mighty works and yet were none the better for it. They price was in their hand, so to speak, but their heart was far from Him and thus far from acquiring this wisdom.

Our text says, **“He hath no heart to it.”** This is what we refer to as absence of heart. His heart is “out to lunch.” He’s feeding in the wrong places. His heart and hands are solely engaged in that which is spiritually unprofitable. Samuel warned of this very thing. **“And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain”** (I Sam. 12:20-21). The sinner foolishly turns aside to that which can neither profit nor deliver him. What a grievous waste of opportunity this is.

Our text then speaks of human depravity and instructs us as to why sinners fail to seek the Lord. The text does not mean that he is wanting in any human faculty because it clearly says he has a heart and hands. It is rather the state of those faculties which resulted from the fall in the Garden of Eden. Human depravity does not mean that sinners are as bad experientially as they can possibly be, but rather that each human faculty is tainted by sin. Their

intellects, emotions and will are corrupted by sin. Their consciences are defiled. Consequently their choices relentlessly follow that deplorable pattern. The Bible uses these terms in describing their heart, **(deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked-hard and impenitent-blindness—uncircumcised in heart).**

Jesus taught that out of the heart of man proceeds every evil thought and then every consequent evil act. He also taught that **“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”** Having no heart for wisdom, the sinner follows his own selfish enterprises and traffics in that which is forbidden of God. The Prodigal son is a prime example of squandered resources and opportunities. His heart for a time was in the hog pen. He illustrates pointedly **abundance of means-absence of heart.**

The following verses in Isaiah serve as a commentary on our text in Proverbs. **“Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD. LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them”** (Isa. 26:10-11). Here we see people highly favored yet incapable of learning righteousness. **“Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”** Even in the land of uprightness they are not successfully influenced for good. There can be churches on every corner, a strong Christian witness, airways filled with Christian broadcast, and constant encouragements toward that which is God-honoring but still they abide in darkness. **“He hath no heart to it.” “He will not behold the majesty of the Lord.”** For you see, only the pure in heart shall see God. Though there be the most compelling evidence all about him he remains oblivious of God. He does not see the majesty of God’s sublime handiwork in creation. He does not see the majesty of God’s sovereign government in providence. He does not see the majesty of God’s surpassing benevolence in the gospel. Sadly, one day, he will see the majesty of God’s sobering wrath in judgement. **“Every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God”** (Rom 14:11).

Our text can be further illustrated from a parable Jesus Christ gave to a group of people who failed to recognize their need for repentance even as all others. **“He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyards, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the**

ground?” (Luke 13:6-7) The man in the parable who owned the vineyard had reason to expect fruit because of his investment. This fig tree for three years had born no fruit and he was ready to cut it down. Though the tree had a favorable environment, plenty of sunshine, nutrients from the rich soil, seasonable rains, and the careful attention of the dresser, still there was no productivity. There was indeed an abundance of means for this tree but it only cumbered the ground. The tree may be typical of Israel who were advantaged in every way but remained barren. They had no heart for the wonderful wisdom He brought to them. How favored sinners are in America the land of opportunity. Means abound and so does responsibility. Horrifying indeed the thought of dying and going to hell from such privilege. Maybe worst of all dropping into hell from a Christian home. Sinner, where is your heart?

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progress in Divine things. Ponder Proverbs 2:1-5! If I just want the benefits and privileges without the personal study, labor, and toil it is going to require in order to come closer and get a greater knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am going to be guilty of what He warned the nation of Israel about. I’m going to dwell in a house I did not build. I am going to experience all these blessings that I did not labor for. I am going to forget the Lord and will not be keeping His commandments.

We are just like Israel of old. We are in the land of blessings. How are we using the things that God has committed to our trust? Go back a few generations in this country and life was pretty hard for many. I do not know that from experience because I have had it pretty easy. I know what my grandparents and others of that generation have said about their grandparents and so on. We have had all the benefits of being such an industrialized nation. We have our full freezers and cellars but a few generations ago the people had to have the cows, pigs and gardens. They depended on those. All the family had to work long hours each day and into the night so they could be clothed and fed. We do not have that problem today, comparatively.

How have we used our blessings? How have we used those things that are at our disposal? How have we glorified Him with those things that have been given to us? Have we consumed them upon our own lusts? Have we just filled our bellies like the Israelites and forgotten the Lord? Sometimes, maybe we would be better off if we had things a little tougher.

Last of all, there is responsibility and

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work to be done. The Lord's church is not a social club. We do not gather after work to just get a break and refresh ourselves. The Lord's house is a military outpost. There is responsibility here and work to be done. We are not to be just coming in, sitting down, and feasting on everything and getting up and leaving. **"When thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."** Paul asked, **"What hast thou that thou**

didst not receive?" (I Cor. 4:7). The answer of course, is not a thing do we have that we have not received.

We sit down at the table when we are getting ready to eat and we tell the children to thank God for our food, clothes, house, etc. We tell them that God has given us everything that we have, and He has. If we have freely received then we also should freely give and not shun and neglect the responsibilities that accompany the privileges of being a child of God and the benefits of being a member of the Lord's church. There is responsibility and work to be done.

Identifying False Teachers

By Timothy Hille

Ashland, Illinois

Read Matthew 7:15-20

Jesus instructs us, **"Beware of false prophets."** The Apostle Peter wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, **"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of"** (II Pet. 2:1-2). I am afraid that these words have come to pass in many Baptists churches. Many have a name that they live, but in reality they are dead, and they have forsaken the way of truth, having followed **"seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils,"** (I Tim. 4:1).

Beloved, when false teachers come in, they do not come in and announce themselves as such. Jesus reveals that they will **"come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."** They will have an outward appearance that seems acceptable, which they put on in order to deceive God's people (II Cor. 11:13-15). Let Satan and his ministers put on their Sunday best, if you will, they are still false prophets and teachers and they are to be avoided. The work of false teachers is the work of infiltration and confusion. Satan seeks to obscure the truth and the work of the Lord, so he makes himself appear as an angel of light and his false ministers as ministers of righteousness. False teachers will wear the Baptist name, and will use Baptist words, and will go to Baptist churches; but they are what they are, **"ravening wolves,"** and not sheep. Therefore we are admonished, **"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world"** (I John 4:1). I believe this scripture has never been more true.

False teachers will use scripture, but



Timothy Hille

they will use it unscripturally (Matt. 4:5-7). Satan is a great student of the Bible, for he seeks to twist and pervert the truth. His messengers will use the Bible, but they will use it out of context and

deceitfully. The rule of the New Testament is, **"Let all things be done unto edifying"** (I Cor. 14:26). If someone presents something that does not build God's people up in the faith, but presents it to gender questions and strifes, mark it down – that person will most likely prove to be a heretic whose desire is to cause division. (Read I Tim. 1:4; 6:3-5 and II Tim. 2:14-16.) What is the end of what a person is saying? Will it cause us to be more spiritual, or is it intended to put questions and doubts in our minds so that we will be unstable and prone to ungodliness rather than growth in grace? **"For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God,"** (II Cor. 2:17). Indeed, they are many who do so.

That which false teachers say will not be displeasing to the ears, nor will they present it in an displeasing manner. The greatest flatterers upon the face of the earth are false teachers. False teachers say things to cater to the flesh and the pride of the carnal mind. They promote things which feel good to our sentiments (II Pet. 2:18,19). Satan is the great flatterer, who knows best how to puff up our fleshly pride. He sweetens his "half-truths" (which are whole lies) with sugar that tickles our ears and seems right to the flesh. **"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"** (Gen. 3:4,5). False teachers will

congratulate you on your great work for the Lord and your great potential, and will tell you how they believe all the things you believe, at least in the main, showering you with the kisses of false friendship while the dagger that shall strike your heart is well hidden as they draw closer to you. False teachers can do nothing until you let them in, so they must gain an entrance by flattering you into letting down your guard (Jude 16).

How do we identify these false teachers? **"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."** Fruit is what is produced by the nature of the life that is in the tree. A corrupt and evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. Jesus did not say that a corrupt and evil tree cannot bring forth fruit that looks good outwardly. Baptists have plucked many a shiny apple and thought, "Here is something that seems good;" while inside was rottenness and worms. We will know false teachers by the following:

1. Their False Love.

Was it not with a kiss that Judas Iscariot betrayed our Lord and Saviour? False teachers will manifest a love, and will speak of love, but the love of God is not shed abroad in their hearts. The love of a false teacher is a self-centered love (II Pet. 2:3). Many true ministers of God are maligned by false teachers who accuse them of not loving as they ought, because they reject the false teachers. False teachers will play upon your emotions and your sentiments and your feelings. They will charge you with being too critical, of shooting at your own soldiers (by which they mean themselves) instead of shooting at the enemy. They will say that you are too strict and will show off their great love for you by telling you how wrong you are and seeking to correct you. **"Charity [love] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,"** (I Cor. 13:4). Love is no bragger, but false teachers are great brasters about themselves.

"The kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Prov. 27:6). Satan knows that we prefer kisses to rebuke and reproof. He knows how to play upon our emotions. His ministers will put forth a show of love, but will put down the truth. [Love] **"rejoiceth in the truth"** (I Cor. 13:6). Those who love the truth will love God's people and God's work, and will not need to compromise on the truth for love's sake. Fellowship on false pretences is exactly that, and it will not benefit those who participate in it. (I would remind Baptists of the scriptural admonition which many seem to have forgotten "for love's sake": **"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"** (Amos 3:3).

2. Their False Message.

False teachers will be known by their false message. Remember, Satan mingles a little truth with his lies. Do not expect a false teacher to come right out and declare what he believes. He will sneak it in bit by deceitful bit until you have

swallowed the whole thing. Their message will use Bible words and will involve the quoting of various scriptures, but be sure that it will take God's Word out of context. One way in which many may be identified today is that they speak of the Holy Spirit in a way which is contrary to the scriptures. The Holy Spirit and the Word are always in agreement and never work contrary to one another or what is written!

(Read II Pet. 2:12 and Jude 10) False ministers will speak evil of the way of truth. False teachers will say that true ministers are too strict in their preaching and go beyond the Word of God to obtain their beliefs. They will make insinuations regarding those who are preaching the whole counsel of God to cast them in a bad light in the minds of others. (I will tell you right now so that you will know, people will say that your pastor is too young to know anything. Paul told Timothy, **"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"** (I Tim. 4:12). You judge my example, and not what people say about me.)

The message of a false teacher will be such that minimizes the importance of doctrine. They will say, "Oh yes, doctrine is important, but . . ." That is your clue to give them no more heed. (Read I Tim. 4:13,16.) The Bible is a book of doctrine, and without the doctrines of God's Word we will never be what God wants us to be. Doctrine determines your whole life – those who believe nothing will do nothing.

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). **"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed,"** (Gal. 1:8-9). The problem with many of the Lord's churches is that they have decided that certain things do not need to be stood for. Who said?! Judge their message, discerning spiritually whether what they say is according to THUS SAITH THE LORD; and if not, reject them!

3. Their False Godliness.

False teachers can be identified by their false godliness. They have an appearance of being "godly," but not according to the scriptures. False teachers will do many things to show off their supposed godliness. **"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away"** (II Tim. 3:5). False teachers will shout "Amen" and sing songs. They will pass out tracts and condemn sin. They will brag about how they have exercised self-sacrifice with the things

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they have given up for Jesus. But will they lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty? Will they sit quietly, in meekness and lowliness, and hear and observe the teaching of the Word of God from others? A false teacher has much to say, but little room to hear. A false teacher will do the big things (big in the sight of men), but there will be a lack of consistent faithfulness and godly living. There will be no evidence of true subjection to the will of God and respect for a lifestyle that is pleasing to God.

(Read II Pet. 2:13-14.) False teachers will gladly attend your Bible conferences and fellowship dinners, where they can be seen and heard. They will give a year of their life (or their children's lives) to some so-called "ministry," but they will not serve the Lord faithfully in one of His true New Testament churches without causing trouble. They will speak of grand things; but what of the little things that God wants and expects from us everyday as godly parents, husbands, wives, grandparents, children, employers, employees, and church members? What of making our bodies a living sacrifice every day by living separate from the world and worldliness? (Read Matt. 7:21-23; 25:31-46). False teachers will go in for the grand, but will have no time for those who cannot do them any good or gain them any advantage.

What are we to do with and about those who prove to be false teachers in the light of God's Word? (Read II John :10-11). We have not, as Baptists, been as watchful and severe as we ought to be. We have allowed feelings and sentiment to rule rather than love for Christ and His doctrines. The problem is that underneath the sheep's clothing is a wolf, and the wolf will scatter and injure the sheep. Jesus said, "**Beware!**" We don't like to be harsh as Christians – but be sure the wolves will not spare the sheep in the least!

Short Thoughts

by Jeff Short

(Short devotionals on Bible verses.)

1 Timothy 5:24

"Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after" (I Timothy 5:24).

"Some men's sins are open beforehand," or, they are clearly seen and known. We witness the acts of some men and there is no question that they are sins.

It follows then that by their open wickedness, we know the perpetrators to be wicked. Christ said, "**Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them**" (Matt. 7:20). I could name men such as Adolph Hitler or Charles Manson and immediately we know these to be profligate men. Their sins have been open beforehand.

It is also true that **"some men they follow after,"** referring to their sins. Some men are open and known sinners while others sin more secretly. Their sins **"follow after,"** or are not clearly seen and known, at least for now. They **"devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds"** (Mic. 2:1). They appear to the world to be upright and possess a good heart. Sometimes these ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing are exposed in this life, usually to the surprise of not a few that knew them. Sometimes, however, they are not exposed in this life, but, either way, they will not escape the judgment of God.

The central thought in this verse is that both classes are headed to judgment and neither shall escape punishment. It will not matter that mother and father were fooled, nor even husband, wife, pastor, congregation, or the grocer at the corner market. **"Every man's work shall be made manifest"** (I Cor. 3:13) when they stand before the Righteous Judge of all the earth.

However, let us now leave the broad strokes and train our eyes to trace the fine lines of this passage. Let us set aside all prejudice and appropriate this verse to ourselves, having the courage to hide it in our heart that we might not sin against God.

Firstly, just as we may classify men as open sinners or deceptive hypocrites, we may assess our own sins the same way. Some sins and sinful tendencies are **"open beforehand"** and easily identified. In these things, it is not difficult to be very pious. It is a small matter to be faithful to the assembly, to tithe on the first day of the week, to dress modestly, to maintain clean speech, etc. It is usually not a hard thing to avoid the abuse of alcohol and social drinking, gambling, cussing, the company of openly profane persons, etc.

All of the above items are minimal and you may be very strict in them and have a good report of many. However, know this: the Faithful and True Witness says, **"I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works"** (Rev. 2:23). **"And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is"** (I Cor. 3:13). If these works are merely a façade of piety with you, they will not be able to stand the trial of fire. You ask, "Should I not then be zealous in good works?" You should! You must! It is expected that the branch will bring forth fruit (John 15:8). However, our works must flow from a

pure and humble heart with the glory of God as their designed end in order to be truly good works.

Secondly, there are personal sins that **"follow after."** They are not clearly seen by others. They will escape our own eyes if our eyes are dim and drowsy. These are the sins we harbor in our hearts. They are awful dreadful evils that we feed in secret. These are the sins that we must labor to root out of our heart and guard against their reentry. However, far too many who excel in outward piety are content to let them **"follow after."**

It is high time for us to **"awake to righteousness, and sin not"** (I Cor. 15:34). We must be done with the easy generalities and begin to get precise and deal honestly, abruptly and decidedly with sin. This is serious business. We are not just playing games here. Paul urged the Corinthians, **"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith"** (II Cor. 13:5).

Though you look well outwardly, do you have **"eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin"** (II Peter 2:14)? Do you indulge in the graphic images of television and then seek after more explicit sights on the internet or elsewhere? Do you expect your wife and daughters to dress modestly and then crane your neck to look at every loose woman that comes by dressed provocatively?

Are you greedy of gain and stingy to give? Does it pain you to give to the church or a brother in need? Do you entertain thoughts of an adulterous rendezvous? Do you harbor a secret rebellion in your heart against your husband? Are you zealous in service in order to feed your pride? Do you wish to be noticed by men when you perform some work? There are untold evils that lurk in our hearts, but do not be deceived: **"For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad"** (Luke 8:17). It is no mystery why David exclaimed, **"Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults"** (Psa. 19:12).

These verses should move every child of God to a serious self-examination. We must lay our sinful selves bare before the thrice Holy God and plead with the Psalmist: **"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"** (Psa. 139:23-24). The Psalmist besought God to search and try his heart. He wanted God to define the wickedness found there. This is where we have failed. We have not sought righteous judgment; we have applied the wrong measurement. We are content to let our sins **"follow after"** because we are just as good as everyone else is. In this we are not wise (II Cor. 10:12).

Finally, our sins, open and secret, are just like the sinners in our text. They are

both going to the judgment. **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"** (II Cor. 5:10). All things will be laid open and receive **"a just recompense of reward"** on that day (Heb. 2:2). There will be no second chances only bitter regrets. May God give us grace to **"lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us"** (Heb. 12:1). Amen.

Luke 2:37

"And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:37).

The birth of Christ was very humble, yet He was not without honor. He was greatly honored in the temple on this day; first by Simeon and then by Anna. Anna is one of the minor characters in the New Testament, yet she was highly favored by God in that she saw the Christ of God with her own eyes before her death. She like Simeon, was **"waiting for the consolation of Israel;"** which Simeon saw in Jesus and proclaimed, **"Mine eyes have seen thy salvation."**

It is not clear from the text whether she was eighty-four years old at this time or if she had been a widow for eighty-four years. Either way, she had been a widow for a long time and she had been serving God devoutly for a long time. She **"had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity."** She had had only one husband and after his death, she chose rather to devote her life to God than to remarry, for **"she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband"** (I Cor. 7:34). This is not a negative statement about the remarriage of one whose spouse has died, but it is commendable that she chose to remain single in order to serve God. **"He that is able to receive it, let him receive it"** (Matt. 19:12).

The verse tells us she **"served God"** and that is where I wish us to invest our attention now. Anna is called a prophetess in the thirty-sixth verse of this chapter. That may indicate no more than that she was a teacher of **"the young women,"** or she may have been a foreteller. You will recall that Jezebel called herself a prophetess and undertook to teach others (Rev. 2:20). It is not a great matter in what way she was a prophetess for that is not in consideration in our text. The fact that she was a prophetess is not included here in the testimony that she **"served God."**

Anna here teaches us some things about the service of God. In the first place, it is not only the duty of the religious officers to **serve God.** It is

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Short Thoughts

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certainly expected of such officers to be engaged in and devoted to the service of God. However, some seem to think that only those in official capacity are to be daily employed in God's service. Additionally, there are those that think only the officers can serve God. In other words, unless we are acting in some great capacity or involved in a highly visible work, we cannot serve God. This widow woman proves this untrue as she **"served God... night and day."**

In the second place, we notice of what her service consisted. It is first said of her that she **"departed not from the temple."** She was faithful to attend the house of God. At this time, the church was not established, so there was no New Testament assembly as such. The temple was the place for the public corporate worship of God. However, after the establishment of the Lord's *ekklesia*, the church is the place for the corporate public worship of God and public ministry of His Word. **"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father... But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him"** (John 4:21, 23).

Our private home with our families is the proper setting for private and family devotions, but this will never fulfill our responsibility to the services of the church. We are commanded by the writer of Hebrews, **"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"** (Heb. 10:25). Therefore, faithful attendance to the Lord's house was a part of her life to which the Holy Spirit testified, **"She... served God."**

The second part of her service was that she **"served God with fastings and prayers night and day."** What a testimony of personal holiness and godliness! It was not that she observed the **"hour of prayer"** (Acts 3:1), but rather she prayed **"night and day."** She was always at the business of prayer. She must have relished communion with God to **"pray without ceasing"** (I Thess. 5:17). Prayer was no drudgery or mere perfunctory service. She delighted in conversing with God and heaving praise upon Him that was her joy and strength. She must have exclaimed, **"Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name"** (Psa. 103:1).

Dear Christian, how is it with your testimony at this hour? Could it be said of you that you **"served God with**

fastings and prayers night and day?"

Let us daily be occupied in this blessed service to our faithful God. When the Lord was telling Ananias that Saul of Tarsus had been saved, He said, **"Behold, he prayeth"** (Acts 9:11). Prayer is a mark of the true child of God. Prayer is also the very beginning of service. We cannot do anything without prayer. We are instructed to do **"everything by prayer and supplication"** (Phi. 4:6). May we learn from this humble widow and be more frequent upon our knees doing serious business with God.

James 1:27

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

James does not here make an all-inclusive statement, as if these were the only duties involved in the Christian religion. He rather sets forth two choice adornments of pure and undefiled religion; namely charity and purity. Possessing the system of faith or body of truth is only one aspect of true religion. Paul told Titus to **"adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things"** (Tit. 2:10). **"Adorn"** carries the thought of ornamenting, garnishing, or perhaps embellishing. While the word does imply decoration, the good works of a Christian are not only decorative; they are eminently practical.

Paul writes to the Philippians, **"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ"** (Phi. 1:27). Here the believers' behavior is to "become" the Gospel of Christ. **"Becometh"** in this verse is translated from the Greek word *axios*, which means appropriately, suitably or worthily. The word occurs six times in the New Testament where it is translated **"becometh"** twice; **"worthy,"** three times; and **"a godly sort,"** once. Two of the passages where the word occurs are of particular import here. The first is found in Paul's epistle to the Colossians, **"That ye might walk worthy [axios] of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God"** (Col. 1:10). The second occurs in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, **"That ye would walk worthy [axios] of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and**

glory" (I Thess. 2:12). (Greek added by JFS).

From the above cited passages, we learn that there is in fact a way of walking, or living daily, that is in accordance with and worthy of the pure Word of God. It is the way, or manner of life, that is appropriate or suitable to the profession we have made. James gives an example of this in our text. For our purpose in this devotion, let us further consider the adornment of charity as set forth in this passage.

James makes a statement pertaining to charity in our text, **"To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."** The **"fatherless and widows"** represent a certain class of people. Orphans and widows are sort of weak and helpless; they are also lonely. They are easily oppressed and often neglected. The class is further expanded by adding those that are **"in their affliction,"** for they may be afflicted temporarily or terminally. **"To visit"** speaks of a Christian ministering to them in ways that are available to him. Since loneliness is involved, the actual physical act of visiting is certainly included. They often want for fellowship and companionship.

We may consult the ministry of Dorcas to be instructed in the practicality of charity, for **"this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did"** (Acts 9:36). She did not seem to have an abundance of resources to give alms to the poor. She manifested her charity through **"good works and almsdeeds which she did."** Her religion consisted of a lot of doing and her giving was of her time, energy, and humble resources, while her hands ministered to the necessities of the weak. She visited the widows by making **"coats and garments"** for them (Acts 9:39). Her compassionate work had endeared her to many and there was great weeping at her death.

The works of charity are a test of true religion. Paul the Apostle said, **"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing"** (I Cor. 13:2). The way a man treats the weak and afflicted says a lot about his true character. Christian, how do you treat the weak, needy, poor, and helpless? Do you only help those that are temporarily in need, who have the power to reciprocate? Do you only help when it will be noticed by those of great

influence? In his epistle, James condemned showing preference to whom we would choose to serve based on their social standing (Jas. 2:1-10).

Are you willing to serve and minister to others when it will not be noticed and the ones you help are not able to do anything for you? Do you desire to serve and minister to others when it will not directly benefit you in any way? Remember, John wrote in his first epistle, **"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother"** (I John 3:10). The possessor of true religion will show his faith by his works.

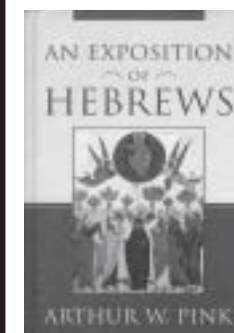
ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

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

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