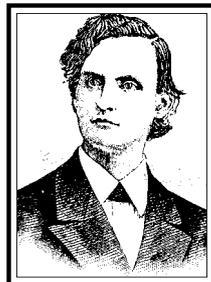


The Berea Baptist Banner

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

Thou Art the Man Or, The Preaching that Identifies the Transgressor

By J. B. Hawthorne
(1837 - 1910)



crime of adultery and murder when he said to David, **"Thou art the man."** Peter located the parties responsible for the murder of Christ when he said to the Jews on the Day of

Pentecost, Whom **"ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."**

Jesus Christ was the ideal preacher. **"Never man spake like this man."** He always addressed the conscience, and the closer we follow His example in this respect the more we shall find ourselves dealing with individuals in our applications of divine truth. No man could hide himself in any multitude to which Christ preached. He was made

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"And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man" (II Sam. 12:7).

"Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

In reading ethical philosophy I have been impressed by the fact that nothing in it is personal. It deals with man rather than persons, and with nations, races and ages rather than individuals. This accounts for its unproductiveness. The men who read it never imagine that it is addressed to them. They do not measure themselves by its standards and therefore have no sense of condemnation.

The men of the Bible, whom God anointed to teach morality, addressed themselves to individuals and classes more than to the world at large. Nathan identified the perpetrator of the double

Church Authority Is It Vertical or Horizontal?

By Steve Cornett
of Brownsburg, Indiana



"And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them,

neither tell I you by what authority I do these things" (Matt. 21:23-27).

Even in Christ's day there was a question about where His authority came from and what it consisted of. Sadly our subject is one that has caused much division among our Baptist churches and their pastors. The subject of how churches were started was never an issue when I was back in the Tri-State area of West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio; we all were in agreement on this very important issue. It seems that this is still another controversy that Satan has marshaled against Baptists to divide them. It's Satan's desire to sow discord

◊ (Continued on page 223)

The Sin of Selfishness

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



self-indulgence, self-interest, self-love, self-opinion, self-regard, self-satisfaction, self-seeking, and self-will.

SELFISHNESS DEFINED

The word "selfishness" means "too much concern with one's self and too little concern for others." Nothing is so destructive in its nature and tendency as selfishness. It has done all the mischief of the past, and is destined to do all the mischief of the unseen future. It has destroyed the temporal and eternal interest of millions in centuries past, and it is certain that it will destroy the interests of millions yet to come. It is the source of all sin and iniquity in the world. Never a wrong takes place but that the actor is moved by his own private personal and selfish

◊ (Continued on page 228)

"And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?" (Zech. 7:6).

The Jews in the days of Zachariah the prophet ate and drank with an eye to themselves. Whether they fasted or feasted, their entire life centered around their own selfish desires and demands. The lines of all their actions, natural, civil and religious, met in the center of self. They cared nothing about God or others. They should have eaten and drunk to the glory of God that their bodies might have been fit to serve Him.

In my text the prophet rebukes the Jews for their selfish and stupid will-worship. They had made a god out of themselves. This rebuke was sorely needed thousands of years ago, but it is needed more in our day when so much stress is placed on self rather than God. In this generation we hear so much about self-assurance,

Who Is A God Like Unto Thee?

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia



"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Micah 7:18-20). Today I want to think about the greatness of our God. In doing so, I want to consider some of the characteristics – or some aspects of the nature of our God. These characteristics

of God (or these aspects of the nature of God), ought to cause us to exclaim, **"Who is a God like unto thee!"**

I want to read to you a hymn written by Samuel Davies in the mid 1700's:

*Great God of wonders! All Thy ways
Are matchless, Godlike and divine;
But the fair glories of Thy grace
More Godlike and unrivaled shine,
More Godlike and unrivaled shine.*

*Crimes of such horror to forgive,
Such guilty, daring worms to spare;
This is Thy grand prerogative,
And none shall in the honor share,
And none shall in the honor share*

*Angels and men, resign your claim
To pity, mercy, love and grace:
These glories crown Jehovah's Name
With an incomparable glaze
With an incomparable glaze.*

*In wonder lost, with trembling joy,
We take the pardon of our God:
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
A pardon bought with Jesus' blood,*

◊ (Continued on page 226)

If you have to swim, the depth is of no consequence.

Since the godly man must swim the sea of life by faith, the depth of his necessity is a very small item.

If we trust at all, Let us trust for all.

"The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (Psalms 18:2).

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The purpose of the *Berea Baptist Banner* is as follows:

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

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Thou Art the Man

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to feel that the eye of the preacher was upon him and that His words, whether of promise or condemnation, were addressed directly to him.

I have heard sermons against Mormons when there was not a Mormon in a thousand miles of the preacher. I have heard sermons to young women where the youngest woman present was scarcely under forty-five. I have heard sermons to agnostics where there was scarcely a human being who had the faintest conception of what Agnosticism was. Christ's preaching was always suited to the occasion. His sermon on the Sadducees was preached to the Sadducees; His sermon on the Pharisees was preached to the Pharisees; His sermon on covetousness was preached to the covetous.

There were some who heard Jesus on many occasions before they began to see and feel the personal bearing of His preaching. When He spoke of wolves in sheep's clothing and whited sepulchers, the Sadducee said within himself, "That's a true picture of the Pharisee"; at the same time the Pharisee said to himself, "What a terrible arraignment of the Sadducee." The Jews imagined that His fierce denunciations were aimed at the Romans, and the Romans were delighted because they supposed them to be hurled against the Jews.

It is just as true now as it was in the days of Christ that many people hear the gospel for years before they awake to the fact that it is addressed to them. You hear a sermon on the tale-bearer, or the scandal-monger, and take no part of it to yourself, but look across the congregation at your neighbor and smile as you think of its fitness to him. You hear a sermon on the love of money and are reminded of the old mammon-worshipper who lives next door to you, when the truth is that there is nothing on the earth or above the earth so precious in your own eyes as silver and gold. When the man in the pulpit is depicting the moral coward, you think of all the weak-kneed church members in the community, but never of your own cowardice in failing to antagonize the worst social evils of your day. You applaud him when he smites the hypocrite, without having one pang of conscience for your own hypocrisy in hiding from the world your real character.

You are a poor judge of your own moral portrait and very slow to recognize it when it is especially accurate and lifelike. The truth is you have no sincere desire to know yourself. You are a Baptist and delight in seeing held up to public gaze the superstitions and vices of the Romanist, but you have no relish for a sight of your own. Your eyes are clear and

keen when the faults of your neighbor are depicted, but they are absolutely blind when your own moral obliquities are set before you. Hearing, you do not hear, and seeing, you do not perceive that God has a controversy with you.

I have shot my weight in lead at game which I never killed. A Baptist deacon once loaned me his gun for a deer hunt, which he said had killed ninety-six ducks at one shot. I was put on a stand with that gun, which carried eight drams of powder and fifty-six buckshot. When the deer appeared I fired, but in what direction I know not. I only remember that when I had partially recovered from the rebound of the gun and brushed the blood from my face the deer was invisible.

I stand here today to plead guilty to the charge that I have done much shooting from the pulpit that was just as indirect and ineffective as that. Have we not come to a time when very few of the messages of God's ministers reach the hearts and consciences of the people who hear them? The Lord knows that in these closing years of my ministry it is my heart's desire and prayer that my preaching may be so direct and personal that every man and woman who hears me may cry out as each of the disciples did at the Last Supper, "**Lord, is it I?**"

My friends, the conviction sinks deeper and deeper into my soul that the worth of any sermon depends upon the application which we make of it to ourselves. Oh, let us rescue ourselves from the mass; let us disentangle ourselves from our social environment; let us shake off the tyranny of the crowd and realize our personal relation to God, His truth and His kingdom.

It is a fact which our observations and experiences will not permit us to deny, that occasions come in the life of every man when the personal bearing of truth is realized. While David was king of Israel and was so conscious of his regal power, popularity and glory, he was overtaken by sin. He was caught in the snare of the tempter. In yielding to temptation he despoiled a bright home of its purity and happiness. Then, to avoid detection, he added to that sin the crime of murder. Amid the pleasures, pomp and splendor of his court he was not conscious of his guilt. But when Nathan, the man of God, came to him and looked into his face, and said, "**Thou art the man,**" David's eyes were opened to his awful condition. In Nathan's indictment he heard a voice from the throne of God, and in response to it he exclaimed, in the bitterness of the deepest remorse, "**I have sinned against the LORD!**"

The Jews who had caused the crucifixion of the meek and innocent Messiah returned from the scene of His execution to their homes, business and pleasures, pleased with their triumph and without one regret for their crime. But when Peter stood before them on

the Day of Pentecost, and in the name of the Lord God charged them with the murder of Christ, they were "**pricked in their hearts.**" They were smitten with an aching sense of their terrible guilt and cried out, "**What shall we do?**"

When Jesus was arrested and led away to the court, where He was condemned, His disciples, demoralized by fear, forsook Him and fled. Peter more than any other disciple had reason to be ashamed of his cowardice---a cowardice which culminated in a base denial of His Lord. But he was not made conscious of his disgrace until his manacled, outraged and condemned Master passed by him and looked sorrowfully into his face. Then he realized the baseness and infamy of his conduct; then with almost maddening remorse he went away and wept bitterly.

The Jews arrested a defenseless woman who had been detected in the act of adultery, dragged her into the presence of Jesus and asked if she should be stoned to death, according to the law of Moses. He fixed His eyes upon them, and said in a voice as solemn as doom, "Let that man among you who is without sin cast the first stone at her." The truth smote them and they knew themselves accused. It crashed through all barriers, penetrated all disguises, exposed all sophistries, silenced all prevarications, and, as by a lightning flash from Heaven, revealed to them the blackness and baseness of their own hearts. The evangelist says, "Being convicted by their own consciences, they went out one by one even unto the last." Mark those words, "**even unto the last.**" That last man in the retiring procession was the last to move out, because he was the most stupid, the most ignorant, the most deluded and the most hardened of them all. But the truth spoken by Jesus finally reached his conscience, and with bowed head and blushing face he retired, knowing himself to be a cowardly and guilty wretch.

When Jesus said, "**Ye whited sepulchers,**" the hypocrite knew that he belonged to the class designated by this epithet. When He said, "**Ye must be born again,**" the religious formalist---the man who had relied upon his fasts and feasts and forms of worship to save him---knew that he belonged to the class which needed the new birth. When He said, "**Ye are in danger of hell fire,**" the presumptuous and God-defying man saw himself at the very entrance to the flaming pit. When He said, "They were eating and drinking unto the very day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all; so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man," the sensualist, the man living for the pleasures of the passing day; was smitten with conviction. He found himself arraigned at the bar of his own conscience. He saw God in the person of the preacher. All nature seemed to him to be bearing witness to the truth

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Thou Art the Man

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of the message. Every sentence seemed to be carved into earth and sky; the sun and stars seemed to be only the letters of the flaming words that fell from His lips. He was Heaven's king sitting on His judgment throne, and the convicted man imagined himself putting on the black cap to receive the death penalty.

Emerson says, "We have no poets now, but scores of poetic writers. We have no Columbus, but hundreds of ship captains with telescopes and barometers; we have no Demosthenes, but any number of clever forensic debaters." When I read this I was tempted to add, "We have no preacher now like the Man of Galilee; we have no Peter, nor Paul, no Chrysostom, no Luther, no Knox, no Jonathan Edwards. We have hundreds and thousands of clever and entertaining pulpit speakers. But have we any man who speaks with a prophet's fire and a prophet's voice? Have we any man so full of truth and God that hypocrites unmask themselves in his presence? Do self-righteous men confess their uncleanness? Do worshipers of fashion and pleasure confess their satanic delusions, and stubborn rejecters of Jesus Christ see themselves sinking into a rayless perdition and cry to God for mercy and help under the preaching of any living man?"

True preaching--the preaching in which every class of sinners sees the personal bearing of divine truth--is followed by diverse results. In some it begets a resentful and vindictive spirit. Matthew tells us that when the Pharisees heard a certain parable from Jesus, "**they perceived that he spake of them,**" and sought to lay hold on Him. The real cause of their offense was that He had told them the truth concerning themselves. This was the secret of all of their opposition to Him. They wanted Him crucified, not because they believed Him to be a blasphemer, and a conspirator against the Roman government, but because He had looked into their faces and told them the truth about themselves.

The same feeling often follows the preaching of the gospel in our day. Guilty men get angry with the preacher instead of getting angry with themselves. A few years ago a liquor-seller heard me speak of the awful account that drunkard-makers must face in the day of final judgment. He went away angry with me and declaring that he would never hear me again. Should he have been angry with me, or with himself? Should he have condemned me, or his own conduct? Was it not kindness in me to warn him of his danger?

In my early ministry a young woman who had forfeited her religious influence by a career of worldliness, reproached me for preaching against "**the pleasures**

of sin." Should she have reproached me, or herself? A gentleman of this city is displeased with my preaching because he thinks I am after him when I emphasize the vital importance of a public profession of Jesus Christ. Should he be displeased with me, or with himself?

The average man does not like personal preaching unless it is addressed to some one a thousand miles away, and who will never hear of it. A million of sermons addressed to men beyond the range of the preacher's voice would not make a single convert to Christ. Only personal preaching and preaching directed to those who are present and hear it will accomplish God's purpose in the institution of the Christian ministry. A man claiming to be a minister of Jesus Christ who preaches against the sins of the church or of the world merely to gratify a disposition to distress the guilty, or to punish some one against whom he has a grudge, is a moral monstrosity, and is neither a Christian minister nor a Christian. He is an ecclesiastical fraud; he is a wolf in sheep's clothing; he has stolen the livery of the court of Heaven to serve the devil in. Behind the personal preaching of the true minister there is a benevolent motive.

Oh, friends, cease to be angry with the preacher; be angry with yourselves. Forsake not God's house, but forsake your sins. Quarrel not with the lighthouse which warns you of the hidden rocks on which many a mariner on life's sea has suffered shipwreck. Quarrel not with the physician who tells you of the loathsome disease with which you are smitten, for he tells you not to harrow your feelings, but to save your life.

But, thanks be to God, often the result of personal preaching is sincere repentance in those who hear. When the servant of God came to David and said, "**Thou art the man,**" David was made conscious of his guilt, and exclaimed, "**I have sinned against the Lord.**" How pathetic and penitential is the psalm in which he says, "**Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.**" God responded to his tears and his cry for mercy and washed his soul from all iniquity. In the company to which Jesus gave the gracious invitation, "**Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,**" there was an unblushing harlot who had invited the noonday to witness her shame. In these tender words she heard the voice of God speaking directly to her guilty soul, and the result was that she came and fell at Jesus' feet and bathed them with her tears, and then went away with the divine benediction, "**Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee.**"

Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost was heard, perhaps, by fifty thousand people, but only three thousand of them applied it to themselves. Only they who inquired the way of life, gladly received the Word, and promptly confessed Christ in the ordinance of baptism.

Young man, young woman, or anybody in this congregation whose sins are unforgiven, to you, to you I repeat the warning of Christ, "**Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish.**" To you, to you I repeat His promise, "**Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.**" Regard that warning and accept that promise today and you will leave this house with a redeemed and renovated soul and with the knowledge that your name is registered forever in the "**Lamb's Book of Life.**"



Practical Christianity

by J.B. Searcy

It is a fact that there never has been a time, perhaps when there were as many professors of Christianity as now. And is it not a fact also that there never was a time when the standard of Christian piety and enjoyment were so low as at the present? What is wanting to correct this evil? I answer most emphatically, practical Christianity. We need to practice what we profess and preach. A man need not think he is charitable who is always scheming great plans for the relief of the poor and wretched and at the same time permits the unfed beggar or lonely orphan to stagger from his door unrelieved. We need not think we are missionaries because we talk eloquently of "**preaching the gospel to every creature,**" of "**teaching all nations,**" and at the same time never go and preach to them ourselves nor help support those who do. We murmur, repine and despond, and all for what? For want of practical Christianity. The scriptural test of Christians is by "**their fruit,**" but, alas! How many bring forth "**corrupt fruit,**" or are mere idle "**cumberers of the ground.**" Reader, what have you done for Christ? What fruit do you bear of being a Christian? If you have the buddings of good resolutions, are they not lasted by the frosts of idleness before they mature into fruit? What did you do last year for the cause of Christ? What are you doing now? What will you try to do this year? Why stand ye here all the day idle, when the Master says go into My vineyard and work today?

The following from a sermon furnished by Spurgeon, for the *Christian Repository*, I heartily commend: "If you would just tuck up your sleeves for work and go and tell the gospel to dying men, you

would find your spiritual health mightily restored; for very much of the sickness of Christians comes through their having nothing to do. All feeding and no working makes men spiritual dyspeptics. Be idle, careless, with nothing to live for, nothing to care for, no sinner to pray for, no backslider to lead back to the cross, no trembler to encourage, no little child to tell of a Savior, no gray headed man to enlighten in the things of God, no object in fact to live for, and who wonders if you begin to groan and to murmur and to look within until you are ready to die of despair? But if the Master shall come to you and put His hand upon you and say, 'I have sent you just as my Father sent me, now go and do My will,' you will find that in keeping His commandments there is great reward; you would find meat to eat that you know nothing of now. Let us have practical Christianity, my brethren. Let us never neglect doctrinal Christianity nor experimental Christianity; but if we do not have the practice of it in being to others what Christ was to us, we shall soon find the doctrines to be without savor and the experience to be flavored with bitterness."

Reader, be encouraged to go to work now. Do something for the poor around you; do something for your pastor. Send a contribution for home or foreign missions or ministerial education. "Work while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." (*The Baptist*, 1873).



Church Authority

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among the brethren and the Lord's churches.

I believe we will all agree that all authority, or power comes from God. Let's notice some things about God's power or authority. The Greek word is "ex-oo-see'-ah," it means (in the sense of ability); privilege, that is, (subjectively) force, capacity, competency, freedom, or (objectively) mastery (concretely magistrate, superhuman, potentate, token of control), delegated influence: authority, jurisdiction, liberty, power, right, strength.

Let's notice some examples in Scripture.

Only God and Christ have power to forgive sins, Luke 5:20-24, God gives sinners the power (ability) to believe on Christ and become sons of God (John 1:12-13). God gave Christ all authority in judgment (John 5:27). Christ has the authority to give eternal life to whomsoever He wills (John 17:2). The power to deliver up Christ to the cross came from God to men by divine will (John 19:10-11). God gives liberating authority in delivering men from darkness (Satan's power) to light (Christ's power) (Acts

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Church Authority

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26:18, Col 1:13). All earthly monarchs and governments derive their authority from God (Rom 13:1-3). Because of the cross, Christ has triumphed over all the powers of darkness and gave us victory (Col 2:15, I Peter 3:22), power to partake of the tree of life (Rev 22:14). I think we all can conclude by these verses that all power and authority comes from God and is delegated as it pleases Him. We see God's authority and power in salvation, defeating Satan, government and in the resurrections to come.

But what about ecclesiastical (church) authority, did Christ give any to His Church? If so, what kind and how much authority does the church have? How is this authority received and passed on to other churches? I have chosen two main texts for us to examine Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 13:1-4. I am humbled by these verses, why? That God has chosen human instrumentality to save His elect in this old fallen world. **"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty"** (I Cor. 1:27).

Now the question is how would Christ accomplish this? What is the Biblical pattern for the ingathering of God's elect? In this age of self sent men and free lance preachers can we find a pattern for authoritative mission work and church organization? Like all Biblical questions the final authority for absolute truth is the Bible, God's inspired Word. The history books of men, including other Baptists, are important but they never have been a text book in place of the Bible in ascertaining truth. God's Word is the measurement for all spiritual and correct doctrine that every New Testament Baptist Church should teach and practice.

What Baptists practiced in the New Testament should be what Baptists practice today. When God built the tabernacle in the Old Testament He built it according to a pattern and it was not to be deviated from. **"According to**

all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Ex. 25:9).

I believe in our two texts we have the authority for doing all mission work and starting new Baptist churches. The question before us is, is the authority for doing this mission work and organizing churches vertical or horizontal? By that I mean is it directly from heaven to men? Or is it directly from churches already established? Lets examine our text and look at some other texts in the Bible and I believe we will find God's answer and that's all that really matters.

1. GOD'S VERTICAL AUTHORITY - MATTHEW 28:18-20

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Certainly all Baptists believe that all authority to do any spiritual work in salvation or mission work comes from the Lord Jesus Christ! This cannot be debated or denied by those who truly believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word. Some questions to stimulate our minds are as follows. What does the word authority mean? Did Christ give all or some authority to anyone? If He did what authority did He give? To whom was this authority given? Is this authority binding in our day and what does it consist of? May God the Holy Spirit lead us in the answering of these questions in my prayer, amen.

A. CHRIST DID GIVE SOME AUTHORITY TO HIS CHURCH

"Go ye" (Matt 28:19). What did Christ mean when He said **"Go ye?"** It is the teaching of God's Word that Christ addressed these words to the eleven disciples mentioned in Matthew 28:16. Were these disciples free lancers, going out to do God's work in the great commission? Was it given to them alone? If it was, then the authority to do God's

work ended when John, the last of the twelve apostles, died near the close of the first century. God's Word clearly teaches that the disciples were the charter members of the church that Christ started during His earthly ministry. **"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles"** (I Cor. 12:28). If there was not a church in place then how could our Lord set the apostles in it? So great commission authority was given to the Lord's church and it is binding on that institution till Christ comes again. The Lord promised His church perpetuity in Matthew 16:18, **"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."** Certainly we can all agree that the Lord's authority is what protects and provides for His church to continue on in this old sinful world, praise God. The gates of hell, Satan's evil servants and those he raises up shall not prevail against the Lord's church as an institution! Oh what comforting words these are to every New Testament Baptist Church!

B. CHRIST'S AUTHORITY IS THREE FOLD IN THIS COMMISSION VS. 18-19.

The great commission is a three fold command and cannot be divorced from Christ's authority to "preach the gospel, make disciples, baptize" (immerse in water) and after they are disciples and baptized, then we are to "teach them to observe all things Christ has commanded." This authority is to be carried out not in part but in the whole. In other words, the goal of this commission is to bring saved disciples into the church by baptism and then those baptized disciples are to be taught God's Word so they can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. **"And 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: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love"** (Eph. 4:11-16). The only way the components of this commission, especially the work of the ministry, can be carried out is in church capacity. How can we come into the unity of the faith and be fitly joined

together unless we do this by gathering every Lord's Day to observe what Christ commanded in His Word?

C. CHURCH AUTHORITY IS FIRST VERTICAL MATTHEW 28:18

We cannot deny what our self constitution brothers believe, that church authority comes down from above. Christ said **"all authority"** is given me in heaven and earth. We do not believe that the church has all authority but Christ did give some authority to His church and to her alone. The Greek word for authority is "exousia" and means power, the ability or right to do a thing or things, of the one giving the privilege. All power comes down from above, the power to be delivered from the powers of darkness and be transferred into God's kingdom (Col 1:13), the power to carry out God's authority in this world by governments (Rom 13:1-3), only Christ has the power to forgive sins, **"But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins"** (Mark 2:10). Christ has authority to judge all of mankind, **"For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man"** (John 5:26-27). Yet He has given His church authority to judge sin in the body and withdraw fellowship from those who walk in open sin and refuse to repent, **"For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within"** (I Cor. 5:12)? So we can agree that Christ has given His church authority to do some things in relation to carrying out His will in all His Baptist churches.

When it comes to great commission authority it is only given to the Lord's church as an institution and cannot be completely carried out apart from church capacity. So we can Biblically say that all authority to preach the gospel, baptize disciples into the church and teach them to obey God's precepts laid down in His Word was given to the Lord's church and cannot be delegated to any other organization or individual. To do so would be usurping the divine authority given by Christ to His kind of church and would be adding to God's Word.

2. GOD'S HORIZONTAL AUTHORITY CARRIED OUT ACTS 13:1-4

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch 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

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Church Authority

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them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus" (Act 13:1-4).

The question before us is how is this church authority passed on? Does it come down directly from above or does it come down from above first and then is passed on from one church to another church? This seems to be a contentious and divisive thing among Baptists today but it really shouldn't be if we just follow the plain teaching of God's Word. We call this self constituted authority and Church authority in establishing churches and carrying out our Savior's great commission. Now let's answer this question by examining our text in Acts 13:1-4.

A. THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH DELEGATING HORIZONTAL AUTHORITY ACTS 13:1-4.

I have some more questions for our readers. Was Saul (Paul) and Barnabas in the church? How did they get into the church? Did not the same Holy Spirit lead these men to the church that sent them out? Did the Holy Spirit alone send them out? Or was it both the church and the Holy Spirit? Did the great apostle Paul submit himself to the authority of the Antioch Church? Did these men report back to the church that sent them out? Let's answer these questions. Were these two missionaries, Paul and Barnabas, in the church? **"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch 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"** (Acts 13:1). If vertical authority only is true then these two men would not have needed to be in any church. They could have just went out on their own authority for they had baptism, did they not? In order to teach the self constituted theory of doing mission work you must deny the clear truth of Scripture that these two men were members in good standing in the Lord's church at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas didn't bypass the Lord's church at Antioch in being the sender forth of missionaries to carry out the great commission and to start other churches. If vertical authority alone (self constitution of churches) is true then why were these men in the church at Antioch? Please answer this question, my Brothers! Who sent these men forth? Was it the Holy Spirit alone, the church alone or both? We must believe that the Lord works in and through His local Baptist church! The Lord worked internally in the hearts of these men by the Holy Spirit to do the missionary work God called them to do. Then they

made that desire known to the church at Antioch as missionaries do today! Why? Because they wanted not only the Lord's blessing but to glorify Christ in His church. **"Unto him is glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"** (Eph. 3:21).

Now what happens? They go on a missionary journey of preaching, baptizing and establishing churches under the authority of the Antioch Baptist Church. How do I know they did this? Look at Act 14:21-23, **"And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."** They confirmed them in the Lord's doctrine and then they appointed elders in every church. Certainly we must conclude churches were organized for only churches that are organized need elders to preach unto them the whole counsel of God and to oversee the flock that assembles in these churches. If these churches would have been self constituted Barnabas and Paul would not have gone back to make sure they were in gospel or church order. Notice John Gill's commentary on Acts 14:23, "As soon as ever any number of disciples were made, or souls were converted to Christ in any place, they were at once formed, by the apostles, into a church state; and as the gifts, as well as the grace of the Holy Ghost, attended the ministry of the word, so among those that were converted, there were some that were honoured with ministerial gifts, qualifying them to preach the Gospel, and take upon them the care of the churches."

What happens next? We see these missionaries reporting back to the church that sent them out with the authority. **"And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples"** (Acts 14:26-28). How do I know that the church sent them out? **"And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled."** Notice the words in bold! This can't refer to the Holy Spirit as some of our self constitution brothers claim; it refers to the sending church of Antioch that gave them the authority to do mission work. What is mission work? To preach

the gospel, baptize saved disciples into a church, and then teach them to observe what God has commanded in His Word! They had to organize churches because the third part of this commission can only be carried out in church capacity, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded. Listen to what Paul told the church at Corinth, **"For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church"** (I Cor. 4:17). If self constitution is true why did they go back to the church that sent them out? They recognized the horizontal authority the church received from Christ who has all authority (vertical) from above.

3. WHY BAPTIST CHURCHES SHOULD PRACTICE HORIZONTAL AUTHORITY AND NOT VERTICAL (Self Constitution) AUTHORITY.

A. IT GLORIFIES CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH

"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21).

The very fact that Christ receives glory in His kind of church, world without end, reveals two great truths, church perpetuity and church authority. How is this glory assured in the Lord's church? By passing that authority on to another church assures that the Lord's church is perpetuated in the world. Does God get glory when things are not done according to the New Testament pattern? The answer is clear, no!

B. IT GUARDS THE ORDINANCES OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER.

"Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you" (I Cor. 11:2). The Lord's church has two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper and neither one can be observed outside of the assembly. The only way they can be passed on is the Biblical pattern for the constitution of churches, like kind begets like kind!

C. IT FOLLOWS THE NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN

The self constitution false doctrine leads to many other questionable and problematic practices. Let's notice a few of them that this false teaching leads to.

4. THE ERRORS OF SELF CONSTITUTION

A. WEAKENS THE GREAT COMMISSION GIVEN TO THE CHURCH (MATT. 28:18-20).

The commission was given to the Lord's church and can only be carried out as it was intended by our Savior Jesus Christ! It is three-fold and is passed on from one church to another true church.

B. WEAKENS THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM

Certainly the Scriptures teach that baptism is a church ordinance and cannot be divorced from its meaning or its intent. **"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"** (I Cor. 12:13). I cannot believe that some Baptists believe that baptism does not place the saved in the church but makes them ready for church membership, this in direct opposition to this Scripture and others. The words **"into one Spirit"** can refer to the leadership of the Holy Spirit guiding saved sinners to membership in the Lord's church by baptism. If baptism does not place one in the local church then what does? I hear some say the vote puts one into the church yet I have yet to find a Scripture stating that in God's Word. This can only be referring to water baptism because Ephesians' 4:5 states that there is only one kind of baptism and that's in water. How is the authority of baptism passed on, from one church to another church?

C. WEAKENS CHURCH

AUTHORITY IN DISCIPLINE

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:15-20).

I cannot believe that any Baptist church or pastor would use these verses to teach the self constitution of churches when in fact the context clearly states it's the authority of an already existing church in Jerusalem which our Lord started during His ministry and is the mother of all other churches are born (brought forth). Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the very midst. Those who believe in the self constitution theory use the Greek word for gathered together and state that all a group of people need to do is gather together and they are a church as long as they have scriptural baptism. I wonder if two Campbellites come together and claim self constituted status would they be a church? Or why

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Forbidden Scriptures #8

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma

Here is test #8. Read the verses, please, and try to remember if you ever heard a sermon on them. Probably you have not because they contradict popular ideas. Most preachers will not preach them, except to try to explain them away, assuring folks that they do not really mean what they say. Read on. Decide if you, your preacher and your church really believe **"all the counsel of God"** (Acts 20:27).



Jesus prayed thus to His Father: **"...As thou hast given him (Jesus) power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"** (John 17:2, 3).

Notice 3 things Jesus tells us here. He tells us who it is that gives eternal life; what eternal life is; and to whom eternal life is given. First of all we learn that it is the Son (Jesus) who gives eternal life. About His sheep Jesus said, **"I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish"** (John 10:28). Christ Jesus Himself gives eternal life! We also learn that eternal life is a matter of knowing God the Father (**"the only true God"**) and Jesus Christ. Jesus said, **"no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him"** (Luke 10:22). If Christ does not reveal the Father to you, you cannot know Him. Unless and until Christ reveals the Father to you, you do not have eternal life! Do not think you can go to God or Christ in a one-time prayer and come away knowing Him and His Son! When Paul wrote about his salvation experience he said, **"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me..."** (Gal. 1:15, 16). Paul had been set apart for salvation from before his birth. In time God called Paul by grace for the purpose of revealing His Son in him. True salvation is a supernatural experience brought about by a personal, supernatural revelation of Christ (not voices, visions, dreams, etc.) in the heart and life of the sinner. Has that happened to you?

A third thing we learn is to whom Christ gives eternal life. Jesus said that He gives eternal life **"to as many as thou (the Father) hast given him."** The Bible does

not teach that eternal life is dispensed indiscriminately, but rather is given to those whom God chose in eternity. The Bible is clear: **"For many are called, but few are chosen"** (Matt. 22:14). The Bible says, **"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world"** (Eph. 1:4). **"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth"** (II Thess. 2:13). God has chosen some to life. God also makes it clear that all are welcome to come to Christ. **"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it"** (Mark 8:34, 35). But apart from the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, sinners will not come. They are **"lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God"** (II Tim. 3:4). They do not want to deny themselves, bear a cross, and lose their lives as Jesus said they must. They are welcome to come, but they will not. Jesus said, **"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life"** (John 5:40). The flesh wants nothing to do with God or Christ!

That God's election or choosing is unto salvation is made clear by Paul's statement regarding his suffering. He wrote **"Therefore 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). God has His "elect" and they shall obtain salvation! In time God's elect are brought to repentance and faith in Christ. God has determined the means to bring them to Himself. Do you have Biblical evidence that you are one of God's elect? Do you have a desire to really follow Christ - to do God's will? **"It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"** (Phil. 2:13). Paul wrote, **"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God"** (I Thes. 1:4). Paul knew those people were the elect of God. He saw the evidence. Do you know that you are one of God's elect? Have you experienced godly sorrow over your sin? Has God worked in you **"repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Acts 20:21)?



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Church Authority

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not Hymenaeus and Alexander, notice I Timothy 1:19-20, **"Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme."** Why can't these two excluded church teachers just come together and organize themselves into a church? They had scriptural baptism as the epistles of Timothy describe order in the Lord's church (I Tim 3:15).

D. WEAKENS THE INTERPRETATION OF GOD'S WORD

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (II Pet. 1:20).

One of the things we condemn so enthusiastically in denominations and cults is the taking out of context verses to establish doctrine contrary to the main body of truth. Certainly we don't believe in people being baptized for the dead but that's what Mormons teach with I Corinthians 15:29, **"Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?"** Why are they then baptized for the dead? Certainly we don't teach baptismal regeneration but that's what the Church of Christ teaches with Acts 2:38! Then how can we have the audacity to pull Matthew 18:20 out of its context to teach church self-constitution of churches? Are we as Baptists any better than them in subverting truth for our own selfish point of view?

C. WEAKENS OUR CHURCH COVENANT AND DELCLARATION OF FAITH

Many Church Covenants usually include a paragraph that reads like this, we moreover engage that when we remove from this church, that we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church of like faith and order, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of GOD'S WORD. This is usually done by letter, or by statement of faith. Nowhere in the Bible are any members told to dismiss themselves from their local church to go out on their own. One cannot just ask for a letter from their church to the hope to be Baptist church down the road in no name city. How can a member carry out the spirit of this covenant (agreement)? **"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us (churches)"** (Luke 1:1). Beloved if you examine the majority of Baptist Confessions of faith you will find that very few of them will agree to self constitution of churches.



Who Is A God Like

(Continued from page 221) ♦

A pardon bought with Jesus' blood.

*O may this strange, this matchless grace,
This Godlike miracle of love,
Fill the whole earth with grateful praise,
And all th'angelic choirs above,
And all th'angelic choirs above.*

*Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?
Or who has grace so rich and free?*

I think that Samuel Davies had it right when he said, "But the fair glories of Thy grace more Godlike and unrivaled shine." Of all of the creation of God; of all of the works and words of God; of all that exists now - or ever will exist; I suppose that the grace of God, and the relationship of God with mankind, is the most wonderful and marvelous of all. And, if you want to see the "Great God of Wonders," then I suppose you can see Him best in the salvation of the souls of unworthy men.

FORGIVENESS

I suppose that any examination of the greatness and the uniqueness of our God, ought to begin with an exclamation (or question) like Micah's: **"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage"** (Micah 7:18). Is there any other god that has ever been imagined, that would be so full of forgiveness as our God? Is there any other entity---person, angel, god---that has ever lived, that would be able and willing to forgive on such a level as our God? We ought to pause and wonder and marvel at the "forgiveness" of our God!

We read about the forgiving powers (and nature) of God in the New Testament account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. **"And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up**

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Who Is A God Like

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before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day” (Luke 5:18-26). The Pharisees and the scribes had it right when they cried out, **“Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”** But, they had it wrong when they imagined that this Man was not the Christ and, in fact, God manifest in the flesh. Only God can forgive men of their sins---for our sins against God are what will condemn us to Hell. But, in regards to the greatness of our God, what god is there that has ever existed in the imaginations and hearts of men that could forgive men as our God has?

Consider the wonderful and magnificent “forgiveness” that God has granted unto us: **“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”** (Eph. 4:32). The fact that He has forgiven us, ought to inspire us to be forgiving unto others. We should imitate this God that is like no others! We should exhibit the characteristics and the nature of this God, for there is none like our God! He forgave us, now we should be willing to forgive others. I think that it is fair to say, that if our God is like no others; then, if we will imitate our God, and follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, and submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit; then, we will be like no others on earth. Our lives would shine as examples of those that have addicted themselves to the cause and the ways of Jesus Christ, and we would not be like other men---just as Jesus Christ is not like other gods.

MERCY

Let’s notice the second half of Micah 7:18, **“..he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.”** I know that we all recognize and admit that our God is a good God. And we all know that God is able to forgive sins as He sees fit. And we all rejoice in the fact that God is a forgiving God despite our own failures. As evidence of the forgiving and merciful nature of our God, we can remind ourselves of the time that King Hezekiah re-instituted the Passover in Israel. Remember that all Israel came to observe the Passover, but not all were properly cleansed: **“But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one That prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people”** (II Chron. 30:18-20). Oftentimes our God is merciful to

us beyond what even we can anticipate. In the case of these Israelites that came out of the northern lands, we realize that they did not fully understand how that they ought to prepare themselves for the participation in the Passover feast. But, they came with willing and fervent hearts. Therefore, God was willing to forgive and be merciful. He held them to the spirit of the Law rather than the letter of the Law. He showed them mercy when He could have justly punished them. What god is like our God? Who is merciful and forgiving like our God? Was Baal merciful like our God? Is Ashtaroth or Zeus or Molech merciful like our God? I tell you that no man-made god can be merciful like our God, because our God exhibits mercy that is beyond the understanding of mere mortal men.

In reality I think that the points which I am making are all closely related. I believe that the “forgiveness,” “mercy,” and “compassion” of God are all linked together, and I believe these all demonstrate the greatness and the goodness of our God. I think this kind of forgiveness (as seen in the time of Hezekiah) is evidence of the mercy of our God which we serve. Not only is God willing and able to forgive sinners and establish them as His people; but, He is also marvelously merciful unto His people, so that He continually pardons their sins, and continually turns their hearts unto Himself. Think about this: What do you deserve at the hands of God? Do you deserve health, riches, pleasures, gifts, and joy in the service of your God? Well, I think that we all would admit that the only claim we have upon the mercy of God is God Himself! He has ordained to be merciful unto us, and bind Himself to us in such a fashion that we can expect Him to always provide us with everything that we need in this life, maybe not always riches and health, but certainly everything necessary to serve Him – until such time as we take our last breath on this earth, and He will, inevitably, take us to be with Him in Heaven.

COMPASSION

The second verse of our text tells us, **“He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea”** (Micah 7:19). So, we marvel and are amazed at the “forgiveness” and the “mercy” of our God. Now, Micah goes on to remind Israel of the “compassion” of the great God that we serve.

We read the words of the Lord God in the book of Isaiah: **“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me”** (Isa. 49:15-16). The Lord has forgiven us for

our sins. The Lord has been merciful unto us and granted us life in His Son Jesus Christ. Now, behold the compassion of God! Who is like unto Him? Out of all of the false gods of this world, has there ever been a god that had compassion that would compare to the compassion that a mortal mother has for her child? I think not! The gods of this world are not typically compassionate, but rather very demanding and stern and unjust. But, our God is a God of compassion.

I think that this compassion that Micah speaks of, relates well to the love of God. In fact, I suppose that compassion as an attribute is part of the love of God. I believe that you could even argue that the “forgiveness” and the “mercy” that we have already spoken of are based upon the “compassion” and the “love” of God. Behold the compassion and the love that He has bestowed upon His people! Not only does His compassion and love exceed the compassion of any mere god; but, the compassion of God exceeds even the compassion and the love of all of the mortal mothers of all of the children that have ever existed! **“And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart”** (I Kings 8:22-23).

Consider the care and the compassion that God has condescended to demonstrate towards the children of men: **“Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD”** (Ps. 113:5-9). O, how marvelous is His care and “compassion” for us! Did you know that God “humbleth” Himself to even behold the things that are in Heaven? I know that we often think of Heaven as always being the dwelling place of God; but, remember, **“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”** (Gen. 1:1). It is only of the Lord’s will and purpose that even Heaven exists. Do you realize that even Heaven is, in a sense, “beneath” God? And yet, not only does He “behold” Heaven and the things in it, but He also beholds the things (and persons) in earth! Now, once He beholds these, how does He treat His people? Well, David tells us that God raises up the **“poor out of the dust;”** He lifts up the **“needy out of the dunghill;”** He makes the **“barren woman”** to be **“a joyful mother of children.”** Does this

sound like a cruel or unmerciful God, like so many of the false gods of the world? No, this sounds like a compassionate and merciful and forgiving God!

Consider all that you have; notice the many blessings that have been poured out upon you. Do you deserve these things? Are these things a product of your own efforts or your own inherent worth? Must we not admit that these are all the result of a compassionate and a loving God, a God that is great and wonderful and good? Do we not enjoy all that we have because He has ordained to love us and care for us? What other god would have been so compassionate and loving towards us? Surely, every other god that has ever been imagined would have demanded more from us than we could give. Or, every other god would have demanded punishment for every one of our failures---judgment even in this life. But, our God has demanded from us only what our Saviour has done on our behalf. And, our God has demonstrated compassion and love towards us, despite our own failures and weaknesses. What a great God He is!

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Finally, let’s notice the last verse of our text: **“Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old”** (Micah 7:20). Today, let us conclude with this blessed fact: Whatever God does, is (and must be) right and holy and perfect and pure. There is no evil in God, and this includes His relationship with mankind. We read in Psalms 71:19, **“Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!”** Now, we know that He will punish wickedness and the sinners. But, this does not make Him evil; His judgment and wrath only prove His distaste and aversion and utter condemnation of sin and wickedness. In fact, His judgment only proves His holiness. And, we know that we cannot save ourselves. This is why it is important to notice that Micah says that God will **“perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham.”** And, this is why David says, **“Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things.”** Our salvation and God’s “forgiveness,” “mercy,” and “compassion” rest upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ and His work that He has performed.

But, what I want us to realize is that every action, thought, perception, realization, word, deed, and performance of God is only righteous, holy, pure, true, and perfect. I mean, we must know and realize that God is the essence of holiness and righteousness. He does not just represent these noble attributes, He is these attributes. In other words, wherever there is truth, righteousness, purity, love, forgiveness, or any other noble and good

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Who Is A God Like

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thing, these must all emanate from God in some way. Now, when we consider Him as He is, doesn't this cause us to marvel and wonder even more especially when we consider ourselves, and who and what we are? Isn't it amazing that God can be righteous and holy and still love such abject sinners as ourselves?

Well, we know that this can only be through the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that He came to this world to procure a salvation for the people of God. We read in Matthew 1:21, **"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."** And, we know that Jesus came to satisfy the requirements of the justice of God, and atone for our sins so that God could behold us in mercy and love, rather than judgment and condemnation. We read in Romans 3:21-26, **"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."** Just as Micah said of God, there must be a "performance" of these things, in order that we might be saved, and in order that these blessed attributes of God could be poured out upon.

So, we see and we know and we believe that God (the righteous and Holy God that inhabits eternity) has manifested His love for us, and He has redeemed us and purchased us unto Himself to be His people. Surely these things prove the "forgiveness," the "mercy," and the "compassion" of our God! But, to get back to my final point, "Isn't it wonderful to know that our God is 'righteous' and true and perfect?" Since we are presently His people; and, since God has presently deigned to bless us and forgive us; and, since God has now presently reconciled us to Himself without violating His justice and righteousness---in fact, He has saved us by satisfying His justice; can we not now trust in that blessed "righteousness" of God? Can we not now trust that He Who is truth personified, will now forever be forgiving, merciful, and compassionate? Remember, Micah said, **"Thou wilt perform the truth**

to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Micah 7:20).

To me, this is the completion or the fulfillment of four observations concerning the greatness of our God. Who is a God like our God? Where else but in God can we hope for such continual and constant love and devotion and faithfulness? In the book of Malachi, we read these Words of God: **"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"** (Mal. 3:6). I don't want you to think that God has bound Himself to us, and now, even though it is against His desires, He will bless us and keep us just because He is God and He has promised to keep us. No, I want us to take comfort in the fact that God has always wanted to bless us and keep us. I want you and me to revel and rejoice in the certain truth of the unending and undying and invincible "Love of God!" I want us to recognize, and proclaim to others, that God is righteousness and God is truth and He will not forsake us! Remember, we are graven upon the hands of God Almighty! And, remember, He is "righteous" and will not lie or change or act in a manner that is inconsistent with His Holy Nature!

We read in Hebrews 13:5-6, **"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."** The Lord God is a righteous and true God. And, this same God is our God. There is none like Him! Since He has covenanted us to Himself; since He has set His love upon us; since Jesus Christ has died for our sins; since the Holy Spirit of God has come unto us and quickened us; we therefore know that we shall forever be His, and He will forever be ours. Who is a God like our God?



Sin of Selfishness

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nature.

The inner essence of moral good is love to God and man. The true import of love is the surrender of self. Man must come out of himself in order to love God. Selfishness makes love of the creature to usurp this love to God. The selfish man sets up in the place of God the idol of self. He makes self and self-satisfaction the highest aim of his life. To self his efforts ultimately tend, however the modes and directions of sin may vary. The innermost essence of sin, the ruling and penetrating principle in all its forms, is selfishness.

The blindness and suicidal selfishness of mankind causes so many not to pursue things desirable and so accessible. The selfish person lives as if the world was

made altogether for him, and not he for the world. He lives to take in everything and part with nothing. He is absorbed in the enjoyment and admiration of himself, and he never seems to remember that he is but one member of society and a creature who is accountable to God.

HOW IT MANIFESTS ITSELF

The vice of selfishness displays itself in a number of ways. First, it manifests itself in worldly affections: **"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"** (I John 2:15). A selfish man has an insatiable desire to gather worldly goods. He entangles himself in them and becomes hardened by them. He seeks to obtain the mastery over them and in reality they master him.

Second, selfishness display itself in pride: **"He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him"** (Prov. 18:17). Pride is the basest and most glaring form that selfishness can assume. It causes a person to be absorbed in the enjoyment and admiration of himself. Such a person is quite complete in himself and for himself. His own ego, his own will, must rule, and no one can bind him in any other fixed aim.

Third, it shows itself in uncharitableness: **"He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse"** (Prov. 28:27). **"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"** (I John 3:17). Selfishness takes from a man the feeling of sympathy for others, and it causes him to set up self as the one whose good is to be chiefly sought. It makes self the vortex instead of the fountain, so that instead of throwing out, he learns only to draw in.

Fourth, selfishness reveals itself in laziness: **"And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?"** (Num. 32:6). The children of Reuben and Gad were cattlemen. They wanted to settle on the east side of Jordan so as to escape the conquest of Canaan. In their selfishness they wanted some one else to do their fighting for them.

Fifth, it manifests little or no concern for the welfare of others: **"But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died"** (Rom. 14:15). Pity the man who thinks only of himself, for he thinks only of a fool. The code of selfish man is, "Every thing for me, nothing for others." The man who loves himself is loved by no one.

Sixth, selfishness often displays itself in injustice: **"He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor"** (Prov. 28:8). He who is ruled

by selfish impulses neglects the claims of justice toward his fellow men. Such a person sets himself up as if possessed of boundless liberty, while he regards others as having no rights which limits his own. Other people to him are mere things to be used to accomplish his selfish purposes. Indifference to the rights of others is one of the most repulsive forms of selfishness.

Seventh, selfishness may be seen in the form of destructive hatred. It may cause one to wish ill to his neighbor. Hatred is nothing more than selfishness aroused by the resistance of others to positive hostility against them. At first it springs into anger, quarrelsomeness, and vindictiveness. In its full growth it becomes malice and cruelty. In some cases it reaches beyond the hatred of men to hatred of God. Those who do not love God must hate Him!

THE ORIGIN OF SELFISHNESS

The original sin of Satan was prompted by selfishness. This sin made an angel into a devil. **"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High"** (Isa. 14:12-14). Five times he said: **"I will."** The rebellion of Lucifer grew out of his selfish desire to exalt himself. Self-love, self-fulfillment, and self-esteem originated with the Devil.

The original sin of Eve can be traced to her selfishness: **"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat"** (Gen. 3:6). The woman would not have been deceived by the Devil had she not desired to exalt herself and live in unrestrained independence of God. She had an unholy crave for self-advancement. In her selfishness, she violated the commandment of God and brought ruin to our race.

The final Antichrist shall take selfishness to its highest possible stage. Of the Man of Sin it is written: **"Who . . . exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God"** (II Thess. 2:4). Here we see the creature appropriates to himself unbound dignity and independence. He goes so far as to lay claim to the worship that belongs to God. The measure of human selfishness is rapidly approaching this standard.

THE EVIL OF SELFISHNESS

Selfishness hinders one's under-

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Sin of Selfishness

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standing of the gospel: **"For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's"** (Phil. 2:21). The true gospel does not flatter the pride of man, nor dies it feed his selfishness. It strikes down the assumptions and reserves of self-complacency. It tells man he is a totally depraved sinner who deserves the wrath of a holy God. The gospel demands earnest self-surrender, self-denial, and a humbling of man before a sovereign God. Knowing this, the selfish man feels an aversion to God and wishes there was no God to whom he was accountable.

The whole life of a selfish man is a delusion. He restlessly pursues an ever receding goal. He thinks to raise himself to perfect independence from God and man and to find rest solely in himself, but he discovers he is still dependent on both God and man. Selfishness holds out to a man a satisfaction which it can never really give, for there is no satisfaction in sin! All his selfish efforts become only self-consuming and tantalizing thirst. **"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool"** (Prov. 28:26).

When selfishness completely takes possession of the heart it deprives a man of many good things. Such a man passes to the grave without tasting of the sweets of friendship or the comforts of life. Striving for wealth that he may procure happiness, he sacrifices comforts and enjoyments of the world. He goes to the grave with many painful thoughts. Chances of doing good passes unimproved. In order that some personal advantage might be gained, kindly feelings are suppressed. He is so given over to his selfish passions that he has no time to think of God, of his immortal soul, or his final destiny. So he passes on to the other world ill prepared for the great change wrought by the hand of death.

Selfishness is spiritual folly. God is the only source of real happiness for a man. If a man separates himself from God in order to be his own master and to obtain satisfaction by living to himself, he loses himself amid the things of this world. When man wanders from God he makes the things of this world the object of all his efforts. He seeks the mastery over them and in reality they master him (John 8:34).

HUMAN SYSTEMS WHICH FOSTER SELFISHNESS

Secular humanism teaches that man is a self-centered, godlike person with unlimited goodness and potential if his environment is controlled to let his free spirit develop. To humanists, it is a terrible sin to restrict the liberty and freedom of another to express his own selfish interests. Humanists have written most of the textbooks used in our public schools. By reading these books you will

see that they stress self-actualization, self-sufficiency, and self-satisfaction. Such brainwashing of our youth has resulted in a generation of self-centered and selfish individuals. This is why modern youth seek to get, rather than give, lust, rather than love, demand, rather than contribute.

Psychology is nothing but a system of self-exaltation. The founders of modern psychology were anti-God and, in some cases, Satanists. Psychology is nothing more than an attempt to explain human behavior apart from God and the Bible. Psychological counseling is not science, but rather another gospel and another religion. So-called Christian psychology seeks to interpret Scripture on an atheistic philosophy which at best turns Christ into a heavenly psychiatrist!

Christian churches, schools, colleges, and seminaries now rely upon psychological answers to life's problems. Supposedly, the Bible is not enough any more. We are told the pastor, with an open Bible, is not sufficient. People who have problems must seek a professional psychological counselor. Such foolishness has destroyed Bible teaching and Bible churches. This practice of mixing a little Bible with a lot of atheistic psychology has greatly confused Christians and left them torn between God and the Devil.

So-called Christian psychology has moved many churches from self-denial to self-fulfillment. Many sermons and Sunday school lessons are on self-love, self-acceptance, self-esteem, and self-worth. The emphasis has shifted from God to self. According to modern religionists, the first and greatest commandment is, "Thou shalt love thyself." Such an idea is totally out of line with Biblical teaching. A true Christian is not self-centered; he is Christ-centered. Loving God above all else and loving others as much as we love ourselves are the primary injunctions of the Bible. The admonition to love oneself, or to esteem oneself, is missing.

The modern church does not have a pastor, but a psychologist. He delivers psychological sermons which are designed to secure psychological conversions. Pastoral counseling has become psychologized. The result is psychoheresy. First, it has given us a lack of faith in the sufficiency of the Bible. Second, it has distorted the Christian's relationship with God and retarded his sanctification. Third, it has robbed us of the Biblical teaching about self-denial. Fourth, it has caused our church members to be so given over to self-fulfillment that they care nothing for the souls of men and have no concern for the prosperity of the church. Fifth, it has given us another gospel and another Jesus. Most Christians are willingly ignorant of all of this.

THE BIBLE VERSUS THE SELF-WORTH SYSTEM

According to the Bible, self is the problem, not the potential paradise.

Rather than self-love being taught as a virtue in Scripture, it is placed among the diabolical works of the flesh: **"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves. . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away"** (II Tim. 3:1-2, 4-5). Paul describes the closing days of this present age by telling us that men will love themselves while professing a form of godliness. No one can doubt that he has described Christians in the twentieth century.

The Scriptures do not enjoin self-esteem, but self-denial. Jesus Christ declared: **"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"** (Matt. 16:24). A follower of Christ must be a self-denier. He must renounce the claim to himself and recognize the lordship of Christ over him. Instead of allowing life to be given over to selfishness, he must give himself to be used in God's service.

II Corinthians 5:15 is in direct conflict with modern thinking about self-esteem and self-fulfillment: **"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."** The great object of the Christian is not his own pleasure and profit; it is to promote the honor of Christ and advance His cause in the world. The true Christian lives to serve his heavenly Master, not his own selfish passions and propensities.

No where are we told to exalt our selves to the hurt and harm of others in the Bible. Instead, the Bible teaches us to be unselfish---to esteem others better than ourselves: **"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves"** (Phil. 2:3; cf. Rom. 12:10; 15:1-3; I Cor. 10:24, 33). Self is not to be foremost; we must not seek self-esteem. A truly humble man will wish that others be preferred in office and honor to himself. This strikes the death blow to all the selfish ambitions of the men of the world!

The Bible teaches that a man must find himself by losing himself in service to God and others in order to receive himself from God: **"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it"** (Mark 8:35). The alternative to self-love is not self-hate, but rather love of God and others. This is the secret of true happiness, here and hereafter.

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE

Jesus Christ was not a selfish person. Selfishness is the tap root of all sin, and Jesus Christ **"did no sin"** (I Pet. 2:22). Christ did not seek His own will: **"I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me"** (John 5:30). In the Garden of Gethsemane He

said: **". . . not as I will, but as thou wilt"** (Matt. 26:39). Our Lord did not seek His own glory: **"He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him"** (John 7:18). He said in John 8:50: **"I seek not mine own glory."** When the Apostle Paul points to Christ as our pattern, he declares: **"Christ pleased not himself"** (Rom. 15:3).

The Bible teaches that the power of selfishness must be crushed and broken if a man is to become a Christian. This can only come about by experiencing a new and spiritual birth. Apart from this new birth there is no way one can enter into God's spiritual kingdom. The evidence of the new birth is described as a man ceasing to live to himself and breaking off with his love of a worldly, selfish life. **"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. . ."** (Rom. 14:7-8). **". . . the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"** (Gal. 2:20; cf. Luke 14:26). Jesus Christ said: **"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal"** (John 12:25). The man who lives only to serve himself is not a Christian!

CONCLUSION

I come not to you with a message of the importance of self-esteem, self-acceptance, and self-fulfillment. I come to you not to magnify worldly security, but to tell you of your need of spiritual security. I dare not spread a thin layer of Bible teaching over self-ism and me-ism as some do in religious circles nowadays. By the authority of the Word of God, I come to tell you that selfishness is an awful sin against God and man; it is a sin that will damn your soul to Hell for all eternity. Self is all the evil that you have in you. As long as lord Self rules supreme in your life, Jesus Christ cannot be your Savior or Lord. Self must be dethroned and Christ must be enthroned, if you are to see God and enter into His kingdom. Only a saving knowledge of Christ can prevent human wickedness from being self-idolatry and hatred of God.

Churchill wrote:

*Explore the dark recesses of the mind,
In the soul's honest volume read
mankind,*

*And own, in wise and simple, great and
small,*

The same grand leading principle in all,

. . . and by whatever name we call,

The ruling tyrant, Self is all in all.

For too long self has been all in all. It is now time that Christ become your all in all and that you realize that without Him you are nothing at all!



The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Do you personally believe there is hope for this country or shall we **"drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture?"** - Mississippi

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I cannot presume to know for certain what lies ahead for the United States of America. From all outward indications and judging from the way in which God has dwelt with nations throughout history that have departed from Him it appears that His hand of judgment is already upon our beloved America. Psalms 9:17 declares: **"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."**

I fear that the judgments of Isaiah 5:20-25 are being manifested in America: **"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."**

Even though wickedness abounds in America, I do believe there is a ray of hope because of the promise contained in II Chronicles 7:14: **"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."** May God be pleased to raise up an army of men, women, boys, and girls to seek His face and call upon His name in humility and repentance. Oh, that there would be another Great Awakening where sinners are translated from darkness to light and

brought to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ! May God be pleased to revive His people in the midst of the years! The hope for America is a change of heart and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The hope for America is for people to follow the precepts and principles of the inspired Word of God in their everyday lives. As I am writing this the Lord may be stirring the heart of one of His children to dedicate themselves afresh and anew to the service of the living God. May a genuine spirit of revival sweep across our blessed land. This is America's only real hope. It's not in politicians, philosophies, or prosperity. The hope for America is in God and God alone.

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The context of this verse is Revelation 14:10 and is speaking of those living at the time of the Great Tribulation. As one that believes in the imminent, pre-tribulation Rapture of the saints of God, then my position on this verse is dependant upon the timing of the Rapture. If it were to occur today, then YES, this country would drink of the undiluted wrath of God that would be poured out upon the Gentile nations during that time of inestimable sorrow. In the words of Christ- **"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened"** (Matt. 24:21-22). Those days shall be **"shortened"**, or **"with measure or mixture"** because of the elect's sake.

Let's examine the parallel passage in Jeremiah 30:7 and 11, **"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. ...For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished."** Herein is prophesied the seventieth week of Daniel when God will make a full end of every Gentile nation. This does not

mean an extermination, for God has an elect reserved, **"..for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation"** (Rev. 5:9). God will **"snatch away"** His children before the time of this unmixed fury of judgment that will be unleashed upon those that take the mark of the beast during those awful seven years.

This chronology is shown clearly in our text chapter of Revelation 14:14-16, **"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped."** This is Jesus Christ, Himself, rapturing the Lord's churches and the current Kingdom of God. Then in verses 17-20, **"And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs."** This, of course, is unmistakably Armageddon.

If the Lord were to come back today, the longest that a lost person could conceivably live is 7 years. For all will perish at Armageddon. They will **"drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture."** Our only hope is to trust in the shed blood of Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins and repent of our sins that have separated us from the goodness of God! Selah! Think about it!

Is there hope for America? Yes, I find hope in Jonah 4:11, **"And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"** Nineveh was a very wicked nation that our beloved America has very little position left to throw rocks at. And yet, by the foolishness of preaching (I Cor. 1:18-21) God saved a multitude in Nineveh. So I know it is not beyond our sovereign God's power to save these United States of America.

But, will He? I think the best answer is the one given by Ezekiel as he gazed across

that valley of very dry bones, listening to the voice of God, **"And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest"** (Ezek. 37:3). It should be our prayer that God will revive this nation and give it a new heart to serve Him. He can call on us to prophesy to the dead men and women walking the streets of this ungodly nation; and again work the miracle of regeneration witnessed by Ezekiel in the remainder of the chapter. God can, but will He? If He doesn't we certainly are doomed as a nation. My personal prayer for this country is that God will send such a revival that when He raptures His American saints, such a large majority of this land will be gone that it will leave a devastating void that the few remaining population will not be a force to be reckoned with in the scene of prophesy. Because with the absence of any Western superpower in Bible prophecy, the only other option for America is total destruction---again a drinking **"of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture"**. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP

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The Scripture the questioner is referring to **"drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture"** is found in Revelation 14:10. But one would have to read the previous and following verses (vv. 9 & 11) to get the full understanding or meaning from verse 10.

"And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand. The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name" (Rev. 14:9-11).

My first Pastor, the late Oscar B. Mink taught me when ever in doubt about a verse always read the verse before and after to get the true meaning, it has been a good rule for me to follow. The same goes for chapters in the Bible.

Actually if you look at the punctuation in verses 9-11 it is all one verse and

◊ (Continued on page 232)

The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. What is the purpose of church baptism? – Internet

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The purpose of church baptism I believe is three fold. First, it is fulfilling the Great Commission in Matthew's Gospel, **"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen"** (Matt. 28:18-20).

Second, it is the entrance into the Lord's true church **"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"** (Acts 2:41-47). As seen by the verses above the only way a person can become a member is by baptism. It is in fact one of the two ordinances of the church, with the other being the Lord's Supper.

I will not take the time or the space for there are volumes written on this subject and I would encourage the questioner and reader to seek some of them out and read, for it is the main reason our Baptist forefathers lost their very lives.

Thirdly, it is to follow the example of our blessed Lord and Saviour **"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when**

he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:13-17). God said, He was well pleased, if baptism wasn't important then how could the Father be pleased with His Son?

Also, I believe it is an outward sign of an inward work, baptism shows our death, burial, and resurrection in Christ **"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection"** (Rom. 6:3-5).

In closing, I believe the true New Testament Baptist church is the only true church that has the authority to scripturally baptize today, according to Matthew 28:18-20. There is only one true church and that was the one our Lord instituted during His earthly ministry the true New Testament Baptist church. God Bless!

ROGER REED

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The primary purpose of church baptism is perpetuity. It is the doorway to church membership and without baptism, there would not be new members. The old members would die out and so would the church! Every baptism that the Big Creek Baptist Church authorizes and performs, adds to the body of Christ here in Wayne, West Virginia and thus perpetuates herself.

Church baptism is the ordinance of authority. **"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John"** (John 1:6). John came with authority to baptize **"...from God"**! So too, in Matthew 28:19 the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned His church with the authority to **"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy**

Ghost"!! This authority lies "only" in the churches of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul became the first Ana-baptist (re-baptizer) when he administered the ordinance of baptism authoritatively for the first time on those twelve men that Apollos had gotten wet (Acts 18:24-19:7). All of the Dark Ages echoed the question of "Where is your authority to baptize?" Martyr after martyr gave their lives because they would not recognize the baptism of the Roman whore or any of her harlot daughters in the Protestant ranks. Even the Pharisees knew to ask that question! **"And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men"** (Matt. 21:23-25)?

The key of the purpose of church baptism is that there is "only one body"! **"There is one body, and one Spirit... One Lord, one faith, one baptism"** (Eph. 4:4-5). Only "one" church was left on this earth with the authority to baptize and perpetuate herself, **"And I say also unto thee, ...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"** (Matt. 16:18). Jesus said it was "my" church and that it would prevail! One single, chain-linked succession of churches down through the last two millennia! One single, chain-linked succession of authority for two thousand years!

Scriptural baptism therefore must have 1) a proper administrator (with authority!) (Matt. 3:13; 2), be by proper mode (immersion, baptizo) (Matt.3:16); 3) have a proper candidate (regenerated, repentant believer) (Matt. 3:6; 4) for the proper purpose (Matt. 3:8).

This last point being the focus of the question, we will give more details here. Again, the primary purpose of church baptism is still the perpetuity of the institution via baptism's authoritative doorway into the local body of Christ. The proper purpose in submission to church baptism is because of the remission of sins, not to remit sins! **"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ FOR the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"** (Acts 2:38) (emph. TMS). Just as in Luke 5:14, **"And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer FOR thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them"** (emph. TMS). No more does the leprosy offering procure the already performed cleansing of the dreaded disease, than does the baptism procure the salvation and already performed

redemption by the blood of Christ! Not to "obtain" salvation, but "because" of the gifted salvation by grace... Another scriptural purpose of church baptism is found in 1 Peter 3:21, **"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."** Baptism is a pictorial witness to those round about that we have (like Christ in Romans 6:3-4) died out to the world and are buried in the waters of baptism and are resurrected to walk in newness of life! It's not to cleanse us from sin, but the answer of a good conscience! Selah! Think about it!

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I do not understand the question.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:1-11).

Baptism is an outward expression of your relationship with Christ before others. Baptism is to be performed by the Lord's churches only, and I say again only, for no other churches have the right or authority. If I have missed the point of the question, please feel free to email me at, landmarkbaptist@comcast.net I will be glad to clarify or answer further questions.

MIKE DEWITT

◊ (Continued on page 232)

Forum #1

(Continued from page 230) ♦

therefore really shouldn't be separated from one another, read it as all one verse and you'll get the fullness of what John saw.

I believe I know what is being asked here, 'Do you personally believe there is hope for this country or shall we' **"drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture?"** but I will answer it the way I believe. First, these three verses are talking about those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark, **"If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,"** they are the ones who will **"drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:"** Anyone who does as v. 9 states will be doomed for all eternity they will have no hope whatsoever to be saved, their place has been reserved in the Lake of Fire, **"he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."** Let me point out to the reader that I believe before this happens the Rapture will already had taken place, so those that are saved before the Rapture will already have been taken out.

So do I believe there is hope for this country? No, I do not believe so, that is to say, outside of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, again there is NO HOPE. If we as Baptist do not get the Gospel out and the Lord is not pleased to save the souls of those in this GREAT Country then their end will be as John saw in Revelation 14:9-11. I have read after many including one of the Brothers who also answers questions for the Forum, that stated in one of his books, "Surely we are living in the last days of the last days if Scripture means anything." I have also been at Bible Conferences where I have heard young preaches say they believe there is hope for America, and though I understand that many of them have young families and they want to believe things will get better, I can't share in their optimism. I have lived over 60 years now and I never dreamt as a child I would see such wickedness and evil that surrounds us today.

Just to be clear to the questioner and reader, my answer is No, I do not believe there is hope for this country and Yes, anyone who does not come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and **"If any**

man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand" will **"drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture."** God Bless!

ROGER REED



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I will not be present on earth, when this event you reference in the question happens, because I will be raptured out of this world. **"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ"** (I Thess. 5:9). With reference to "we," I take it to mean the saved, my answer is no.

Noting in the question you have written "this country" I assume you mean America, therefore my answer is yes because, Revelation 14:8 reads, **"And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."** Notice the word nations.

America is not exempt from the wrath of God, no nation is, but what separates Israel from all other nations is her turning to God to receive redemption.

MIKE DEWITT



Forum #2

(Continued from page 231) ♦



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Scriptural baptism as revealed in the New Testament has four essential components: 1) Proper authority in administration. Baptism must always be performed by the authority of the local Baptist church. 2) Proper subject. Only born again, justified, saved believers are to be subjects of baptism. 3) Proper reason. Baptism is a symbolic and public declaration of the believer's desire to serve and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism has no saving qualities or efficacy whatsoever. 4) Proper mode. Baptism is by immersion in water only.

Once a person is saved by the grace of God, baptism serves as the ordinance that initiates them into the membership of the local church. In answer of a good

conscience that has been purged by the blood of Jesus Christ in justifying faith, the believer has a desire to obey God and practice good works. Submitting to scriptural baptism is the next logical step.

Baptism by the authority of the Lord's church serves several purposes:

1. Baptism is a demonstration of obedience to Christ's commands and a declaration of loyalty to the Lord and to His church. It is an act of righteousness as revealed by the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17).

2. Baptism is a declaration that the believer is dead to his old way of life and has been raised to walk in the newness of life in Christ (Rom. 6:1-6). In essence baptism is a vow made by the new believer before God, the church, and the world that he is now dedicated to the service of Christ in and through His church.

3. Baptism is the ordinance that adds a new believer to the Lord's kind of church, the local Baptist body of Christ (Acts 2:42; I Cor. 12:13). God's elect are born into the family of God and the kingdom

of God through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. Believers are not born into the church, they are baptized into it.

4. Baptism is a definitive act that manifests the obedience of the Lord's church in carrying out the Great Commission (Matt. 28:17-20). Every time Baptist baptism is performed it is a declaration that the Lord's church is still earnestly contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

5. Baptism serves as a filtering ordinance. The requirements of scriptural baptism are very precise and orderly. Only one kind of baptism is to be recognized as scriptural (Eph. 4:4-6). Those who do not want to submit to the requirements of Baptist baptism are not received into the membership. Baptist baptism is a means of keeping harmful doctrines and unscriptural practices from ever entering the church. This is why Baptists must be firm in their rejection of alien immersion.

TOM ROSS



From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



Sin and Its Wages

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

There is no being in the universe who knows the full extent of sin and its consequence except God. On no subject has He spoken more frequently or more solemnly than on this. Sin and salvation from sin are the great themes of the Scriptures. All of the Bible's instructions and motives, promises and warnings, are directly or indirectly subservient to this end.

How unlike God puny man is. In the estimation of man sin is a mere trifle. **"Fools make a mock at sin"** (Prov. 14:9). They see sin as an innocent pleasure or something to joke about. They see very little in its nature and tendency to alarm their fears. The threatenings of the Bible about the practice of sinning does very little to dissuade them from committing acts of sin. Men are so blinded by sin that they have no desire to escape from its dominion and curse. They never seem to consider that **"the wages of sin is death."**

WHAT IS SIN?

The underlying idea of sin is that of a law and of a lawgiver. The lawgiver is God. Sin is everything contrary to the expressed will of God. I John 3:4 says: **"Whosoever committeth sin**

transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." I John 5:17 declares: **"All unrighteousness is sin."** The word "sin" literally means "missing the mark." One miss makes a sinner, and one offence makes one guilty of all. **"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all"** (James 2:10). He who yields to one sin casts contempt upon the authority that made the law, and on this account breaks all. One taste of the poison of sin pollutes the whole moral system of man.

The being and law of God are perfectly harmonious, **"God is love."** The sum of all the commandments likewise is love. Sin in its nature is egotism, and selfishness. Self is put in the place of God, and the sinner becomes a moral atheist. The Prophet Isaiah said: **"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way. . ."** (Isa. 53:6). Selfishness is at the bottom of all sinning, and it becomes hostility to God when it comes into collision with His law.

When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden his sin was immediately imputed to the whole human race. We are all made sinners by Adam's original transgression. **"Therefore as by the offence of one"**

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Sin and Its Wages

(Continued from page 232) ◊

judgment came upon all men to condemnation. . . . For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners. . . . (Rom. 5:18-19). Transmitted sin and its effects are manifest in a fallen nature, spiritual death, and depravity. They are received mediately from Adam through physical generation. **"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"** (Rom. 5:12).

SIN IS A MURDERER

Sin, like its originator, Satan, is a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). God told Adam what would be the effects of his disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit: **"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"** (Gen. 2:17). This was just another way of saying that **"the wages of sin is death."** Throughout the entire Bible the effects and consequence of sin are spoken of as being death. **" . . . the soul that sinneth, it shall die"** (Ezek. 18:4). **"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one. . ."** (Rom. 5:17) **"For to be carnally minded is death. . ."** (Rom. 8:6). **"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die. . ."** (Rom. 8:13). **"The sting of death is sin. . ."** (I Cor. 15:56).

Sin is a service or slavery, and its reward is death. Death is the just recompense of sin. Death is due to a sinner who has sinned as wages are due an employee when he has done his work. Death is the wages of the least sin that a sinner commits. Death is the only just and righteous demerit of sin. Its proper punishment and compensation is death. The sinner has earned it; he has labored for it; he must receive it. There can be no bankruptcy in his case to defraud or disappoint him. The wages of sin are never reduced because God's law never changes. The sinner shall surely die. This is what every sinner deserves, and a just God will certainly give the sinner his desserts. No sinner has any just ground of complaint against God for His punishment. A sinner merits Hell. No pain is inflicted on the sinner which he does not deserve. Sinners in Hell will be treated just as they deserve to be treated.

There is a connection between sin and death, so that the latter is the consequence of the former. Where the one is, the other will surely exist. If there is sin, there will certainly be death. It is its unailing offspring and production: **"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death"** (James 1:15). Wherever we see sin we may be infallibly assured that death will certainly follow. And wherever we see death, or

any of its harbingers, we can be perfectly sure there is sin. There is no connection between death and any thing in the universe but sin. Exclude sin and death will cease to exist.

THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF DEATH

Physical death is the wages of sin. We are doomed to die because we are all sinners. I Corinthians 15:22 says: **"For in Adam all die."** **" . . . bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days. . ."** (Ps. 55:23). **" . . . the years of the wicked shall be shortened"** (Prov. 10:27). Death is an evil inflicted in accordance with law and as a penalty. It is the natural and never failing consequence of it. It is an error to consider natural death as a mere misfortune, containing nothing of punishment in it. The Unitarians and Modernists are wrong in teaching that death comes as merely the results of natural law. Is excruciating pains, raging fevers, and the severest calamities proof and evidence of God's good will and favor to man? Surely not. But these are the harbingers and attendants of death.

Spiritual death is the wages of sin: **"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"** (Ezek. 18:4). **"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins"** (Eph. 2:1). Sin excludes the soul from the favor of God, which is the life and bliss of the soul (Eph. 4:18; Jude 19). Spiritual death consists in the loss of the moral image of God and of those holy principles and dispositions in which man was originally created. It is to be separated from God who has everlasting life.

Eternal death is the final and full wages of sin. This is only the continuance and completion of spiritual death. It is not any thing different in kind, but the end and consequence of it. Eternal death is being **"punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power"** (II Thess. 1:9). It is hearing Christ say: **"Depart from me, ye that work iniquity"** (Matt. 7:23). It is going **"away into everlasting punishment"** (Matt. 25:46). It is to **"drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of indignation"** and to **"be tormented with fire and brimstone"** (Rev. 14:10). It is to be cast into **"the lake of fire which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death"** (Rev. 21:8).

Do not be deceived by the Devil! There is a righteous retribution beyond the grave where the sinner, unreclaimed and unpardoned in this life, is to receive the wages of sin, which is eternal separation from God. In the lake of fire God will abandon the sinner to the dominion and misery of sin. This is the extinction of all spiritual life in the soul and consignment to all the evils of eternal estrangement from God. There the Holy One will execute upon the sinner the full penalty of His law and the awful threatenings of

His Word. There a terrible sense of wrath is impressed upon the soul. A perfect and absolute despair of any change in his condition will attend him!

WHY SIN'S WAGES IS DEATH

First, the wages of sin is death as it tends to perpetuate its existence in the soul. Under the government of God an intelligent moral being, who once casts off his allegiance to the Lawgiver, will never be recovered to God's favor except by a special interposition of sovereign grace in his behalf. No individual will ever return to obedience and God by self-impulse or the promptings of his own will. The tendency of sin in the heart is to form a fixedness of character in sin and bind the soul to its dominion and curse for ever. Having once departed from God, the sinner will always continue to depart from Him, unless reclaimed by the Holy Spirit. Sin taken control of the mind, enslaves the will, and prevents any desire to retrieve its lost position. Unless restored by sovereign grace, a lost soul will wander eternally in the regions of darkness and guilt.

Second, the wages of sin incapacitates and unfits the soul for the enjoyment of happiness and God. Sin arms the mind against itself--against its true well being and happiness. It destroys the balance of the affections and introduces disorder and collision among the faculties of the soul. Therefore, it unfits the soul for a happy existence both here and hereafter.

Someone may say, "Sin does not always produce the results which you have specified." But because judgment for sin lingers, we must not imagine that there is no great evil in sin. Just because sin does not make you miserable now is no guarantee it never will. A man may take poison in his system and infer he will never be hurt because it does not immediately kill him. However, let him wait until it has entered his blood stream, and he is a dead man. In this life the tendencies of sin are restrained; its natural effects cut short and its ultimate consequences lie concealed in eternity.

But how fearful to contemplate the death of the unrighteous! In death all restraints are removed and the principle of evil is left to act itself out. With nothing to control its operation, it must inevitably incapacitate the soul from all enjoyment and render it for ever miserable. The sinner will then be a disembodied spirit where the principle of evil will become entirely predominant. A spiritual being in a spiritual world, surrounded by unholy, selfish, lost beings like himself. There sin will become the elements of universal misrule and death.

Third, the wages of sin is death because it excludes the soul from the presence and favor of God. Sin is directly opposed to the pure and perfect nature of the Infinite Being. He cannot look upon it but with eternal abhorrence. The disposition of the sinner is at variance

with this all perfect God and with the law of His moral kingdom. It would be impossible for a sinful being to dwell in the presence of such a holy and just God. A sinner would be out of place before such a Being. He would be out of place among the holy and happy subjects of His kingdom. If a sinner could go to Heaven with all his sinful nature it would be Hell to him. Hence he must go out a miserable exile from God's presence to dwell for ever with beings like himself in feelings and character---hateful and hating one another!

THE EVIL OF ALL EVILS

How deadly and devastating have been the results of sin in the world! It was sin that made one of the highest angels into the Devil! It was sin that expelled the fallen angels from the world of light and confined them in chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. It was sin that excluded our first parents from the bliss of the first paradise and brought a curse upon this fair creation with all the sufferings that fall on our race. It was sin that destroyed the old world with a deluge of water and the cities of the plain with a storm from Heaven. It is sin that has overspread the earth with crime and woe. It is sin that has given the law its curse, to death its sting, and to eternity its terrors. If it is not restrained by God, sin will sweep from the universe every vestige of virtue and of good. Indeed, nothing else is evil in the sight of God but sin. Against sin God has arrayed His righteous authority and awful threatenings.

If God were to open the eyes of the strongest nerved sinner on earth to see what a terrible thing sin really is, it would prove too much for him. It would dissolve his mortal frame, unless supported by Divine aid in an extraordinary manner. If a man could see his sinful condition as God sees it, all the angels in Heaven could not give him peace were they united in their utmost efforts! The only man who has just begun to realize that the wages of sin is death is the disembodied sinner who presently is suffering for his sins in Hell beneath!

But sin is a meaningless word to many. It hardly enters their thoughts. They eat, drink and sleep and pursue their pleasures without the least reflection upon their condition before God. They daily commit the abominable things which God hates, His law condemns, and His justice will certainly revenge. The wise man said: **"Though hand joined, the wicked shall not be unpunished. . ."** (Prov. 11:21). Again he said: **"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil"** (Eccl. 8:11).

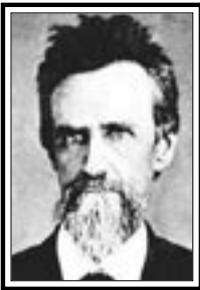
The soul that enters eternity in its sins is lost forever. Jesus declared: **"I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die"**

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The Word "Ghost" in Our English Version of the New Testament

by Mark P. Lowrey
(1828 - 1895)



The word Ghost is one which has often attracted my attention, as it is frequently used in the New Testament and often used unnecessarily by ministers of the gospel, when they mean Holy Spirit, not thinking one time of the misapplication of the word. We should use words in conformity to their usual or general meaning, and when used in an unusual sense, should be so modified as to direct the mind of the hearer to the idea intended to be conveyed, by its unusual use. The Greek word "pneuma agion" cannot properly be translated "Holy Ghost," according to the popular use and meaning of the term. The true reading of that Greek word is sacred or Holy Spirit, agreeably to the popular use of the English language of his age. I here enter my "caveat" and protest against God or His Spirit being called a "Ghost."

What is the popular meaning of the word? Confessedly spectre or apparition or apparition is the popular conception of the word. Webster's definition of the word is, "The soul of a deceased person; the soul or spirit separate from the body."

Ancient and modern scholars use the word in this sense. The Holy Spirit is called a Ghost, which conveys an idea so repugnant to the mind that in many cases King James translators, or rather revisers, themselves seem to have been sensible of its impropriety. They could not say if any man has not the Ghost of Christ he is none of His. In regard to this word there are some remarkable circumstances. The word in the original Greek, from which it is taken, is "pneuma," a term having no possible conception of a ghost.

In the New Testament it is translated in 159 instances "Spirit," and in 92 instances "Ghost." In the 159 instances where it is translated "Spirit," the word Ghost would not sound well, and the very attempt to substitute the word Ghost in these places would exhibit the erroneousness and palpable absurdity of the translation.

Let us examine a few of these and see how harsh they grate on the ear:

"And he came up by the Ghost into the temple."

"Jesus was led by the Ghost."

"They rebelled and vexed his Holy Ghost."

"They spake as the Ghost gave the utterance."

"God is a Ghost, and they that worship him must worship him in the Ghost and truth,"

"The Ghost itself beareth witness with our Ghost that we are the children of God."

The impropriety may be further demonstrated from the fact that no Christian invokes the Ghost in prayer. Who would not shrink from the impropriety of commencing supplication with such a phrase as "O thou eternal Ghost?"

The only reason why the impropriety and absurdity of the term applied to the Deity and its manifest error does not shock us, in the case in which it is used, is that our ears are familiar with the usage, and, therefore, the mind does not dwell on the erroneous idea conveyed by it.

A man now who would persist in calling plowing, earring, simply because it is so used in King James' revision of the Bible, would evidently be called an eccentric man. So the man who has given this subject (Ghost) due consideration, and then persists in calling God or His Spirit "Ghost," should be considered a little eccentric in his notion of philosophy. (*The Baptist*, June 21, 1873).



Sin and Its Wages

(Continued from page 233) ♦

in your sins; whither I go, ye cannot come. . . I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:21, 24). Woe to the soul which continues to be a despiser of God and a neglecter of salvation till we lose sight of him in the grace. At death he passes into the unseen world with the temper and character of sin upon him. There is not the slightest ground of hope that this dead sinner will ever be saved. There is not a verse in the Bible which speaks of his recovery. A soul entering eternity in its sin is lost for ever. **"The wages of sin is death."**

It is vain to speak of the reforming influences of the suffering of the wicked in Hell. The fires of Hell have no purifying effect upon sin. Suffering has had no effect on the fallen angels. Neither does it have any upon suffering sinners. If the sicknesses and sufferings that fall upon a wicked man in this life, if the commands and invitations of God, if the threatening of God's holy law, if all the prayers and efforts of good men fail to turn the sinner

from his way, what hope is there of his recovery when he shall be deprived of these means and mercies, and shall go as an outcast into a world of lost spirits, to spend eternity in the society of perfectly unholy and selfish beings like himself? The Holy Spirit does not convert sinners in Hell! The elect angels do not go there to comfort sinners. The ministers of the gospel do not go there. Therefore, the salvation of Christ comes not to those in this awful place. There sin reigns for ever, and it will for ever be visited with its appropriate wages which is death!

BE ALARMED AT YOUR CONDITION

The present condition of the sinner is far more alarming than he is prone to believe. Why is his situation so critical? He was created for eternity. He has entered upon an existence under the government of God which is never to end. Every man is entrusted with the care of his soul which is worth more than the whole world---a soul which must be either happy or miserable for ever, according to the character formed in this state of probation. Sin has so permeated the soul of the sinner that no human means can eradicate it. Except for Divine intervention, he will perish in endless darkness and despair.

Sin is a terrible thing! It demands and deserves death as its just wages. It has awful power to blind, deceive and destroy. Dream not, dear friend, that you shall escape the final results of sin, if it now has dominion over you. Sin will be your

ruin, if unrepented of and unforsaken. Guilty man carries the elements of his own perdition within him; the seeds of death are in his very sinful nature. By acts of sin he is gathering wood for his own everlasting bonfire!

Only the grace of God can do away with sin and raise the soul fallen under its deadly power to God and life again. **"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."** Please consider the last part of my text. Where sin abounds the grace of God super-abounds. This throws a cheering light over the otherwise hopeless condition of the sinner. There is hope in Christ. You can be saved from the dominion and curse of sin. The gospel of grace tells the sinner that there is help laid upon One who is mighty to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him. A full salvation is offered to every needy sinner within the sound of the gospel.

Oh, my hearer, sin is hastening you on to an eternity of torment and the second death. Disbelieve it, disregard it, forget it you may, but that will not alter the fact. **"The wages of sin is death."** The connection between the two can never be broken but by the power of God. Shake off worldliness that makes you unmindful of the danger of sin. Cast yourself on His mercy, and you shall be justified from sin by your faith in Him and have peace.



THE

BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

THE GEEZER GAP

(WNS)--It wasn't supposed to be like this. Until the late 19th century, most Americans who reached their sunset years expected to keep working until they dropped. Both private businesses and government offices had a small contingent of workers in their 70s and 80s, going about whatever tasks they were still capable of doing. The idea of retirement rode in with the after-effects of the industrial revolution and the burgeoning immigration that followed, when workers outnumbered jobs.

In 1905, a valedictory address by William Osler at Johns Hopkins University provoked a storm of protest when the doctor spoke of the "uselessness of men above 40" and recommended mandatory retirement. But it wasn't long before efficiency experts and employers were seconding Osler's proposal, and the institution of Social Security in

1940 reinforced the idea of retirement on a pension. By the end of that decade, with young men returning from World War II and flooding the job market, retirement began to be actively marketed among the grandparent set: a time of leisure to pursue those hobbies and read those books and travel to those places that a regular work schedule precluded.

Social Security is so deeply entrenched by now that no potential presidential candidate is supposed to say a word against it. Still, as we're being warned pretty much continually, the demographic is shifting: The older baby boomers who began retiring last year are likely to live at least 20 more years, consuming resources (especially medical care) that they no longer produce.

But here's another striking fact about what we used to call the generation gap: The

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difference between the average net worth of a household headed by seniors (65 and older), compared to a household headed by adults 35 or younger, has more than doubled in the last 25 years. A senior household worth \$120,457 in 1984 is now worth \$170,494 (adjusted for inflation). But the net worth of a junior household has shrunk, from \$11,521 to just \$3,662. Instead of a generation gap we're in the middle of a ballooning geezer gap.

The upper numbers aren't as troubling as the lower ones. Young people are clearly struggling, partly because of careless attitudes about amassing debt—such as college loans amounting to the cost of an average home even before they've earned any money. But also because of a teetering jobs market, with wages headed in the wrong direction. Whereas the soon-to-be geezers (I speak affectionately, as one of them) have reaped the benefit of low-interest loans and an expanding economy, their home values went down like everybody else's when real estate collapsed, but that doesn't hurt so much when the property is paid off.

Older Americans have another huge advantage over the youngsters: They vote. And, as a voting bloc, they show little willingness to give up any of their retirement perks. "I worked for this" is an argument that carries considerable weight, especially with them. They won't settle for raising the retirement age or lowering benefits without a fight.

When the prophet Isaiah told King Hezekiah that his royal house would fall and his sons yet-unborn would be eunuchs in the palace of Babylon, he muttered an Amen. "For he thought, 'Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?'" (2 Kings 20:19) He may not have been as callous or heartless as he sounds; perhaps he simply could not picture his glittering treasury ransacked and young men he didn't know dragged away to ignominious captivity. It's doubtful that today's retirees can picture such ruin either, or else they wish away worst-case scenarios.

"Peace and security in our days" could stand for the motto of any generation. But if trends continue, the motto of the tomorrow's youth may be a lot more bellicose. Race and class warfare is bad enough; generational warfare is truly ugly.

GAY OR STRAIGHT? CHECK YES OR NO

(WNS)--This year, Chicago's Elmhurst College became the first in the nation to add a question about sexual orientation to its 2012-13 admission application. The private college, affiliated with the United Church of Christ, a denomination that endorsed same-sex marriage in 2005, asks students, "Would you consider yourself a member of the L.G.B.T. (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community?" According to *The Chicago Sun-Times*, if students answer yes to the optional question they are eligible for a diversity scholarship totaling up to a third of the cost

of tuition.

ARIZONA LAW LEADS TO FEWER ABORTIONS

(WNS)--A newly enacted Arizona law appears to be having an immediate — and dramatic — effect on the number of abortions performed statewide. The Abortion Consent Act, passed by the Legislature in 2009, took effect shortly after the Arizona Court of Appeals ruled it constitutional in a 3-0 decision on Aug. 11. The law mandates that minors seeking abortions must provide a notarized parental signature; that women be provided with full, accurate information by a doctor in person at least 24 hours before the procedure takes place; that only doctors can perform surgical abortions; and that no medical professional can be forced to perform an abortion if doing so violates his or her religious or moral beliefs. The state reported that only 729 abortions were performed statewide in September — about 30 percent less than in August.

A GOOD SOCIETY TELLS THE TRUTH ABOUT MARRIAGE

(WNS)--There is always quite a bit of discussion concerning the poor. That's particularly true in difficult economic times like we're experiencing now. But in the discussions about how to reduce poverty in Georgia, particularly as it relates to children, one solution almost never gets mentioned.

It's marriage and it's a major determining factor in whether a child will live in poverty.

In Georgia, more than a third of all single parent homes are living in poverty. On the other hand, only seven percent of married two-parent homes live in poverty. Factored out, single parent homes are five times more likely to be living in poverty than married ones.

It turns out that out-of-wedlock childbearing is a huge reason for the rise in child poverty here in Georgia, according to research by our friend Robert Rector at The Heritage Foundation.

Rector points out that the number of children born to single moms has skyrocketed since the 1960s. Today, the percentage of children born out-of-wedlock in Georgia is 45 percent. As a result, there are scores of single women who don't benefit from the additional income of the father and who face bigger challenges getting more education to increase their odds of a higher paying job.

Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority (three quarters) of all poor families with children in Georgia are unmarried households.

The research also shows that the lower a woman's level of education the more likely she is to give birth outside of marriage. Nearly 60 percent of all births to women with only a high school diploma are out-of-wedlock. However, the number drops dramatically to 11 percent among women with a college degree. As Rector puts it, "The women most likely to have a child without being married are those who have the least ability to support a child on their own."

A comparison of married and single parent households with the same level of education is especially telling. At every level, whether high school dropouts or college graduates, married couples are much less likely to be living in poverty than their single parent peers. In fact, the poverty rate drops an average 79 percent among married families compared to single-parent families who have the same level of education.

These findings are just further confirmation of what social science research has shown us for years--- marriage has measurable benefits to individual families and society at large.

We've known for a while that married people are more likely to be healthy, happy and financially prosperous than their single counterparts. Children in married households are more likely to do better in school, stay out of legal trouble and be emotionally and physically healthier than kids who aren't. Certainly not every child from a single parent home will face these challenges, nor will a child from an intact family benefit in every way. But it's clear that marriage makes a measurable difference.

A good society tells the truth about marriage. We should hold it up as a positive standard that has benefits for individuals and society.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD LOSES MEMPHIS CONTRACT

(WNS)--On Mon., Oct 17, the Shelby County (Tenn.) Commission voted 9-4 to award Christ Community Health Services a \$397,000 family planning contract that previously had been spent on Planned Parenthood Greater Memphis Region. As

a result, Planned Parenthood is no longer receiving any federal Title X grant money from any county in the entire state of Tennessee---and that's without a law being passed. Christ Community Health Services is a non-denominational group that does not perform abortions or refer women to groups that do. Fowler said it is working with a pregnancy care center chain to install a clinic in-house to give women in crisis pregnancies easier access to counselors who can discuss adoption and other life-affirming options with them. Under state law, Title X family planning service grants are either performed by county health departments in-house, or bid out to third-party contractors.

NYC DEFENDS GRAPHIC MIDDLE SCHOOL SEX ED

(WNS)--At a news conference Oct. 24, New York City parents and a few elected officials protested a graphic new sex education curriculum that's being proposed for middle and high school students. Parents say they need to be allowed to opt their children out of more than just sections dealing with contraception. State law mandates that sex education be taught in all schools next year--but the proposed curriculum sends students to a website featuring details on extreme aspects of sexual behavior, such as bestiality and fetishism. Children are given homework assignments asking them to plan a route from school to a clinic providing birth control and disease testing, while writing down its confidentiality policy. As a result, parents of all stripes are lobbying for more control.



- A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS -

By Timothy Hille
of Ashland, Illinois

Chapter Nine – The Commencement of the Levitical Priesthood

This chapter records Aaron's first official acts as high priest, and the commencement of the levitical priesthood. In Aaron we have a type of Christ.

- He made atonement for the people, as the Lord commanded.
- He blessed the people.
- He went in unto the presence of God for them.
- The glory of God was revealed to the people in connection with his service.
- God accepted the sacrifice which he offered.

Aaron served as an example and shadow of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our great High Priest (Heb. 8:1-5). "The Aaronic priesthood, after they were consecrated, began ministering. They performed three main roles: (1) represent the nation before God – by sacrifices; (2) keep the reality of God before the people; and (3) speak God's Word to the people, making them know His will for them."¹

Chapter Outline

- i. Moses commands Aaron to offer for himself and the people: vs. 1-7
- ii. Aaron's sin offering: vs. 8-11
- iii. Aaron's burnt offering: vs. 12-14
- iv. Aaron offers for the people – a sin offering, a burnt offering, peace offerings, and a meal offering: vs. 15-21
- v. Aaron blesses the people and God's glory appears unto them: vs. 22-24

I. VERSES ONE AND TWO.

The consecration of Aaron and his sons had been completed (refer to Lev. 8:31-36), and Moses now instructs Aaron to offer for himself both a sin offering and a burnt offering. These offerings together speak of atonement (Lev. 1:4; 4:20). We have received the atonement through Jesus, who offered Himself wholly unto God and God's will (as pictured by the burnt offering) and who bore our sins in His own body on the tree of the cross (as pictured by the sin offering). This was now "the eighth day," the day following the seven days of consecration for Aaron and his sons. Now the people's worship of God would be inaugurated under the levitical order and in connection with the tabernacle, for which cause "the

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elders of Israel" were called. We know that this kind of worship was temporary and typical (John 4:21-24).

II. VERSES THREE AND FOUR.

Aaron was to instruct the children of Israel in their worship. After that Aaron had offered for himself, then he was to offer for them of that which they brought, **"a sin offering . . . a burnt offering . . . a peace offerings . . . and a meal offering."** The children of Israel were to provide these as instructed, and doubtless the elders of the congregation who had been called by Moses along with Aaron and his sons provided them. The basis of all true worship is the atoning and sanctifying work of Jesus Christ. None can truly worship God save those who are under the blood of God's Lamb, washed from their sins, justified through faith in Him, and thus at peace with and partakers together with God. These sacrifices together speak of the propitiatory offering of Christ and the spiritual blessings we have in and through His pure and sinless Person and work.

On the basis of these offerings the children of Israel would have this blessing, **"to day the LORD will appear unto you."** God would manifest Himself in a special and meaningful manner unto the children of Israel. Today God manifests Himself to those who come to Him by faith in the once-for-all offering of Jesus Christ for sinners upon the cross of Calvary (John 14:6-7). The only way in which you can know God and have fellowship with Him is by having your sins put away through the atoning blood of Jesus and coming to God by Him (John 17:3, I John 5:20).

III. VERSES FIVE THROUGH SEVEN.

"And they brought that which Moses commanded before that tabernacle of the congregation." Aaron brought that which he was to offer for himself, and the elders of the people brought that which should be offered for all Israel. **"And all the congregation drew near and stood before the LORD."** They all had an interest in the sacrifices being made and the mediatory office work into which Aaron was now installed and to which he was set apart. **"And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commanded that ye should do."** All was done according to divine arrangement and requirement. Christ indicated that in laying down His life for His sheep, He was obeying the commandment of His Heavenly Father (John 10:17-18). **"And the glory of the LORD shall appear unto you."** The people are now informed of that glorious token which accompanies the acceptable sacrifice for sin and true worship of God (II Cor. 4:6, 14-15).

Moses is here the divinely appointed

director in the institution of the first covenant, the law, and all that appertained unto it. He now instructs Aaron to **"go unto the altar,"** and there offer first his sin offering and burnt offering, and then **"the offering of the people."** He was first to make atonement for himself, and then to make an atonement for the people. This shows the character of the levitical priesthood and of the law which made men priests who had infirmity, or were themselves sinners (Heb. 5:1-3; 7:26-28). That order and that covenant were typical and temporary, pointing to the office and work of Christ, who Himself being without sin saves forever and to the uttermost all those who come unto God by Him. This also demonstrates the universal necessity for atonement. No one would be able to worship who first had not obtained forgiveness of sins through the blood and the offering that was offered upon the altar, and who was not represented there by a spotless Mediator (I Tim. 2:5-6).

IV. VERSES EIGHT THROUGH FOURTEEN.

Aaron now offers for himself, first the sin offering and then the burnt offering. **"Aaron therefore went unto the altar, and slew the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself."** The law brings in the mindfulness of sin. Every day, the priest had to offer for himself and then for the people (Rom. 8:3). Christ needed not to offer for Himself, being without sin (I John 3:5). The sin offering pictured atonement made through the shed blood and death of the sinless Substitute. **"And the sons of Aaron brought the blood unto him."** **"Without shedding of blood is no remission"**

(Heb. 9:22). Your sins could not be put away without the blood of Jesus being shed: **"for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"** (Matt. 26:28). **"The fat, and the kidneys, and the caul above the liver of the sin offering, he burnt upon the altar."** This speaks of Christ who made **"his soul an offering for sin,"** (Isa. 53:10). **"And the flesh and the hide he burnt with fire without the camp,"** speaking of Christ who, **"that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate"** (Heb. 13:12).

Aaron next offered the burnt offering, sprinkling the blood **"round about upon the altar,"** washing **"the inwards and the legs"** in water, and burning all **"on the altar."** This offering shows Christ who offered Himself without spot, wholly unto God, so that we might approach God through Him. We see Jesus as the only One able to bear our sins and sanctify us unto God. These offerings were offered according to God's commandments. Salvation is either the way God says, or there is no salvation (Isa. 45:22, Acts 4:12).

V. VERSES FIFTEEN THROUGH

TWENTY-ONE.

Aaron now brings **"the people's offering."** The order in which these were offered was, first the sin offering, then the burnt offering, the meal offering, and finally the peace offerings. Aaron now acted as the mediator for the people, offering and making atonement for them as a type of Christ. Jesus is the only Mediator between God and men. He maintains the righteousness and the justice of God toward men, and He represents and intercedes for men with God. The sin offering was first offered, upon the head of which the elders of the congregation, as representatives of the people, doubtless laid their hands (Lev. 4:13-15, 21). Aaron offered this **"for sin, as the first,"** or as the one which he first offered for himself. The doctrine of sin is everywhere taught in the Scriptures, and is central to the gospel (Rom. 3:23, Eccl. 7:20, I Kings 8:46, Rom. 5:12, Isa. 53:6). The gospel message is that Christ died for sinners (I Tim. 1:15, Mark 2:17, I Cor. 15:3). **"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"** (I John 1:8). **"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us"** (I John 1:10).

"And he brought the burnt offering, and offered it according to the manner." All that was done was done according to the commands of God. Following the burnt offering, which consisted of a calf and a lamb (refer to vs. 3), Aaron offered **"the meat offering,"** of flour mingled with oil (refer to vs. 4). This was offered **"beside the burnt sacrifice of the morning,"** which was offered every day continually. **"He slew also the bullock and the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings, which was for the people."** Peace with God is only had through faith in the blood of Jesus which was shed at Calvary (Col. 1:20-23). The blood of the peace offerings was sprinkled upon the altar, after which the fat of the bullock and the fat and rump of the ram were burnt upon the altar. **"And the breasts and the right shoulder Aaron waved for a wave offering before the LORD; as Moses commanded."** The divine instructions were followed concerning every part. They received the things which Moses communicated unto them as having come from God, which in truth they had (I Thess. 2:13).

VI. VERSE TWENTY-TWO.

"And Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and blessed them." After the offerings were offered which pictured Christ as the mediator and propitiation for the sins of His people, Aaron blessed the people. In this he is a type of Christ who secured the blessings of God toward us through His office work as our great High Priest, offering Himself for our sins (Eph. 1:3 Acts 3:26 Num. 6:23-27). If God does not bless us, then the blessing of man is vain. The blessing of God indicates His good

will and kindness being toward us, as in salvation (Ps. 32:1-2 Deut. 21:5). Jesus is the One whom God has appointed as the channel of all blessings to men, women, boys, and girls.

VII. VERSE TWENTY-THREE.

"And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation." Moses the mediator of the law and Aaron the high priest appointed by and under the law went in together into the tabernacle, into the holy place. Aaron may have now performed some part of service that was required inside the tabernacle, as the sprinkling of the blood of the sin offering before the vail; or he may have been instructed in the trimming of the lamps, or the ordering of the shewbread upon the table, or the offering of incense upon the golden altar. After that Christ offered Himself for our sins, He appeared in the presence of God for us to offer His blood upon the mercy seat in the heavenlies and open the way of access unto God for every believer.

Moses and Aaron then **"came out, and blessed the people."** They both together, having been before the place where God's immediate presence was manifest, conferred a blessing upon the people for whom the offerings had been offered. **"And the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people."** Some manifestation of God's glory, likely in the pillar of cloud which rested over the tabernacle, was seen (Ex. 40:34-38). This manifestation of God's glory was in connection with the offerings upon the altar, the ministering of the high priest, and the blessing of the high priest and the mediator. The glory of God is revealed to believers in and through the atoning and mediatory office work of Christ and His blessing.

VIII. VERSE TWENTY-FOUR.

"And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat." This declared God's acceptance and pleasure in the offering that was offered upon the altar. Nothing is so pleasing to God as the atoning work of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:2). Nothing else is acceptable to God for the putting away of sin and the reconciliation of the sinner. The fire speaks of God's judgment upon the altar and that which was on the altar rather than on the people.

"The fire may design the wrath of God as a consuming fire, which was very distressing to Christ, and brought him to the dust of death; yet, with respect to the persons for whom this sacrifice was offered, it denotes acceptance of it, that it was an offering by fire, and of a sweet smelling savour to God, his law and justice being satisfied, and having honour done them."²²

They received blessings rather than fiery judgment because they were represented at and on the altar. The

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(Continued from page 236) ♦

fire consumed that which was on the altar, but did not come near the people. Without being in Christ, you will surely perish. **"For our God is a consuming fire"** (Heb. 12:29).

"Which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces." They shouted, signifying joy; and they fell on their faces, signifying worship and reverence toward the most High God. True spiritual joy and true spiritual worship begin in the heart of a believer when he or she sees by faith that God has accepted the sacrifice of Christ for his or her sins and blessed that person with all spiritual blessings in Christ (I Pet. 1:8-9). Genuine worship is effected in the heart and life of those who have had their sins put away through Jesus' blood and have known God through faith in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son.

NOTES

1. Hille, Timothy B. "Notes on Leviticus" (adapted and edited).

2. Gill, John. *Exposition of the Old Testament* ("The Online Bible," Larry Pierce, 1994-95).



The Spiritual Condition of the Church - A Remedy

By A. Parnell

It will be readily perceived by every thinking Christian that the spiritual condition of the church in the present day is not what it should be. We have only to notice the daily conduct of the professors of religion to be convinced of this fact. Their conversation is often such as common refinement and good morals would forbid. It is marked by a want of reverence for God and for sacred things, and a frequent murmuring at the dispensations of His providence. The subject of religion, although of the most sacred character, is often spoken of with lightness, and frequently made the subject of ridicule. Church members likewise often speak evil of each other; they backbite and stir up strife, and endeavor to influence the world against each other to gratify some selfish propensity, or to secure some improper end. I need not

enlarge upon this thought, each can see it in everyday life.

But again: the want of true spirituality is seen and proved by the acts of men. Many professors study to take every advantage they can, if they can do it without being detected, and maintain a tolerable character. They misrepresent facts to secure the best end of the bargain. And they, too, often state absolute falsehoods to secure gain. Professors who have long maintained a character for honesty and true piety, and whose conduct has corresponded with that of the Christian, have suddenly, upon the presentation of some profitable speculation, sacrificed the esteem and confidence of the church, as well as given the strongest evidences of the want of vital godliness in the heart. These things are witnessed in almost every community, and in almost every church. They are lamentable, it is true; they are to be deprecated; yet they are true.

No less manifest is the want of genuine spirituality if we enter the sacred sanctuary. How often do we upon conference days, as well as the Sabbath, find many of the seats vacant? The minister travels perhaps several miles to meet the church at the house of God at the appointed hour, but, to his disappointment, he meets only a few of the most faithful of the members. The excuse generally rendered by those who are absent is, that business is oppressive, or the weather is too unfavorable, or some slight indisposition has kept them away. Many, indeed, it is too true, seem to be so regardless of their church obligation as to appoint special business for that day.

But again: neglect of financial contributions by the church members, and especially those which relate to ministerial support, testifies to the want of spirituality in the church. Few have failed to observe the reluctance with which many church members contribute to the support of the pastor, or rather pay their dues. Some, even after they have entered into a solemn obligation by placing their names to a subscription, will devise some means to evade its payment. They seem to think that because there is no legal means of collection, that they are at liberty to withhold what they thus justly owe, and often, if paid at all, it is after long delay, a delay which often bears with oppressive weight upon a pastor.

I might also allude, if space would permit, to the many and frequent calls through the public press for means to sustain home and foreign missions, as well as other Christian enterprises which have claims upon the church, but I have already said enough. Every one who will examine the subject will readily perceive the importance of more piety, of more charity, and more of all the elements which constitute vital Christianity. What then is to be done? Are we to stand still, or rather continue to retrograde? Certainly

not. The longer the church continues in this condition the harder it will be to throw off the chains of darkness, and the greater will be the evil. I propose next to consider some means for our spiritual improvement.

Previously I noticed some of the facts connected with the present spiritual state of the church, and in this I propose to examine some of the means to be employed for its improvement.

And to begin, church members require more of the grace of God in the heart. They need more love, more faith, more charity, and more of all the essential elements which constitute genuine Christianity. The fact is, we have lowered the standard of Christianity too much in order to meet the views and to accommodate the experiences of men. We have opened the doors of our churches too wide, and the result has been the reception of a large amount of unsanctified material, and by Christian association and church fellowship with these, the whole church has participated too much of this leaven. What then is to be done? Shall we continue to receive into our church communion and fellowship those by whom the church is corrupted? Certainly not. Let the church elevate its standard of piety; let them be more particular in the reception of members; let them have no scruple in rejecting those who may apply for church membership in whose regeneration and piety they have not the utmost confidence. How many have, and still continue to unite with the church who have never given the remotest evidence of a change of heart. We should guard against such things. The church is designed for the Christian, and should be kept as pure from every other class as possible.

But again: let each church rigidly enforce discipline. The church covenant and rules of decorum, as they are termed are generally found in each church book; let these be regulated in their requirements by the Scriptures, and then let them be frequently read in the conferences, so that each member may correctly understand his respective relation to the church, and then let each be required strictly to comply. How frequently do we find large numbers absent on conference days, as well as Sabbath. And although in direct violation of their church obligation, these delinquencies are passed over in silence until many of the members, no doubt, have forgotten, or perhaps never known that their church covenant requires prompt attendance. Let it be made the duty, by the church, of each thus absenting himself, to render his apology at his next conference, and it would doubtless have a happy effect.

But another great obstacle in the way of the spiritual progress and prosperity of the church is the want of some system of ministerial support. Ministers have to be supported; their family expenditures

must be provided for, and their financial obligations must be met. This must be done by the churches, or by their own secular employment. If it is to be done by the churches, it is necessary that we have some systematic plan. The custom in most of our country churches is to call a minister with a promise from the church to do what they can, and, in most cases, what they can turn out to be but very little, at least insufficient to meet the absolute expenditures of the minister. It would be far better, both for church and pastor, to have a stipulated salary. To this plan some object, but there can certainly be no impropriety in it. The church would then know the definite amount which they would have to pay, and what would meet the requirements of the pastor. He also would have something permanent on which he could rely for support, so that his mind would be at ease and his attention directed to the work in which he would be engaged.

But again: churches should be very careful in respect to the ordination of ministers. Much harm is often done by setting apart to this sacred calling improper men. No church should sanction the ordination of a minister until they have the utmost confidence in his piety, as well as his soundness in doctrine and qualifications for that sacred office. A very good test to determine his fitness for that office, might be for the church to satisfy themselves, all things being favorable, whether or not they would call and sustain him for their pastor. If they could do this, then they might safely set him apart and recommend him as a good minister of Jesus Christ.

But I would not close these remarks without alluding to a practice in our churches, in my judgment, detrimental to the cause of Christianity, namely: that of granting unlimited letters. A letter is granted by a church to a member, and for a period of five or more years he holds that letter. What is his relation to the church during that time? He certainly is not a member in the full sense of the term; he does not discharge the duties which the nature of a church relation requires. Let the churches adopt the practice of granting letters of limitation, and then members will be compelled to unite with some other church and lead a more active Christian life.

These thoughts have been hastily thrown together, but the conclusions have been the result of observations founded on practical ministerial life. And I would suggest to each church and preacher, about to enter the intimate relation of pastor and church, to adopt the suggestions embodied in this article. No great spiritual change can be hoped for so long as our church discipline is so loosely enforced. (*The Baptist*, February 14, & 21, 1874).



Gleanings on Perseverance

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

In the oldest book of the Bible it is written: **"The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger"** (Job 17:9). By strenuous effort a true believer holds on his way though there is much to discourage him and there are many evil powers to resist him. Many afflictions may befall him in his way, and men may cast many reproaches upon him as he travels in the way of righteousness, but he will hold out faithful until death. The person who does this has a clean hand and a clean heart washed in the blood of Jesus. Such a person will not only hold on his way, but will **"grow stronger and stronger."** An Arminian would have said that he would "grow weaker and weaker," for he denies the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. A righteous man will advance in strength of his attachment to God. He will become more confirmed in his religious principles.

"FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH"

In Psalm 84:7 it is written: **"They (the pilgrim of Zion) go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."** The literal Hebrew may read: "Going they increase in strength until they shall appear before God to Zion." If an Arminian had written the Bible, it would have read: "They go from strength to weakness, and very few of them shall appear in Zion." But the Bible says a saint goes **"from strength to strength."** Progress is the great law of life. Where there is life, there is progress. As we travel toward the heavenly Zion, we bear trials better; we overcome difficulties more easily; we walk more cheerfully and triumphantly. None of the pilgrim in the highway of holiness perish during the journey; they will all appear before God in the heavenly Zion (John 10:28; Heb. 2:13; Jude 24).

"SHINETH MORE AND MORE"

King Solomon wrote: **"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"** (Prov. 4:18). Those made alive unto God are lights **"in the Lord"** (Eph. 5:8), and they **"walk in the light, as he is in the light"** (I John 1:7). Their light shines before men (Matt. 5:16). They are not like a meteor or a candle which burns out, but like the sun which shines more and more (Ps. 19:4-5; Matt. 13:43). Arminians would write that the light of a believer shines "less and less," but the Bible says **"more and more."** This illustrates gradual growth and increases of the

saved in knowledge, holiness, and joy until they be perfected and swallowed up in glory. We shall never know perfection during our days on earth, but the Spirit of the everlasting covenant will bring us to a day without cloud, without night, without morning, without evening.

"GRACE FOR GRACE"

In John 1:16 it is written: **"And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."** The expression **"grace for grace"** means God gives us grace to receive more grace. There is always a constant, fresh, abundant supply of new grace to take the place of old grace. This unfailing supply of grace is continually filling up and supplying all our needs. The great principle of the kingdom of Heaven is: **"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given"** (Luke 8:18). Those saved by grace cannot live a life of disgrace because of the constant flow of grace from Christ who is **"full of grace"** (John 1:14). Thank God that **"of his fullness have all we received."** The Bible knows nothing of Christ exhausting His grace.

"FROM FAITH TO FAITH"

I read in Romans 1:17: **"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: The just shall live by faith."** The phrase **"from faith to faith"** is literally "out of faith into faith." The righteousness provided by God springs out of faith and is adapted to a life of faith. We go from a lower degree of faith to a higher degree of faith. We do not go from faith to unbelief as Arminians teach. Paul commended the Thessalonian church: **". . . because that your faith groweth exceedingly. . ."** (II Thess. 1:3).

"FROM GLORY TO GLORY"

II Corinthians 3:18 declares: **"But we all, with open face beholding as in a**

glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." True Christians behold the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in the written Word as revealed by the Holy Spirit. This view of the glory of Christ causes us to be transformed from one glorious stage of spiritual growth to another. We go from victory to victory (Rom. 8:37), from doctrine to doctrine, from virtue to virtue (II Peter 1:4-7). We go **"from glory to glory,"** not from glory to shame and Hell. The changing of the redeemed into the likeness of Christ is progressive.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Amazing Grace Baptist Church of Stockdale, Texas is in need of a pastor. The church believes in preaching and teaching the doctrines of grace and the Lord's church. Any interested brother my contact Bro. Alvin Schuetz at (830) 534-1918 or Bro. Keith Schuetz at (830) 789-2101.

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

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

The Bethel Bible Baptist Church, PO Box 85, Mansfield, LA is in need of a pastor. Any interested Elder should call Connie McMellon at 318-872-1647.

The Landmark Baptist Church of Collinsville, IL is in need of a pastor. Any interested Elders may call (618) 288-4236 for more information.

The Windsor Baptist Church at Windsor, IL is searching for a Sovereign Grace pastor. Any one interested may contact Larry Rawlings at (217) 665-3643, or cell (217) 620-4675, or by mail at PO Box 194, Bethany, IL 61914.

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

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Beginning Balance\$3,305.27

RECEIPTS:

Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY100.00
.....425.00
TOTAL3,730.27

EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time 680.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES\$680.00
..... \$3,050.27
Interest + .09
.....3,050.36
Less Corbin, KY des.-963.72
ENDING BALANCE\$2,086.64

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance\$1,123.72

RECEIPTS:

TOTAL 1,123.72

EXPENDITURES:

WCTT160.00
ENDING BALANCE\$963.72



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 10-1-2011 to 10-31-2011

Beginning Balance\$852.90

RECEIPTS:

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Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS200.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX 50.00
Bible Believer's B.C., Naples, ID 100.00
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Victory B. C., Courtland, VA25.00
Subscriptions42.00
Dividing checks150.00
Anonymous \$2,238.42
Sub Total\$4,567.87
TOTAL\$5,420.77

EXPENDITURES:

Printing 581.00
Postage 767.74
Wages 2,300.00
FICA 175.90
Dividing checks 150.00
Total Expenditures \$3,974.64
ENDING BALANCE \$1,446.13



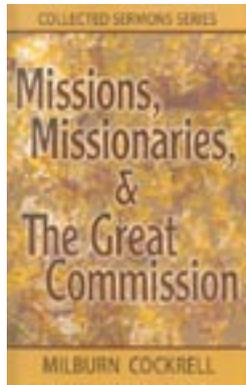


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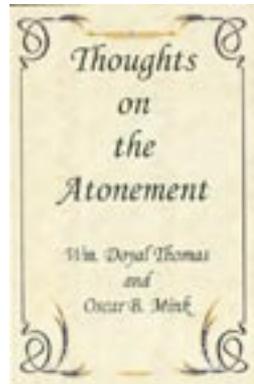
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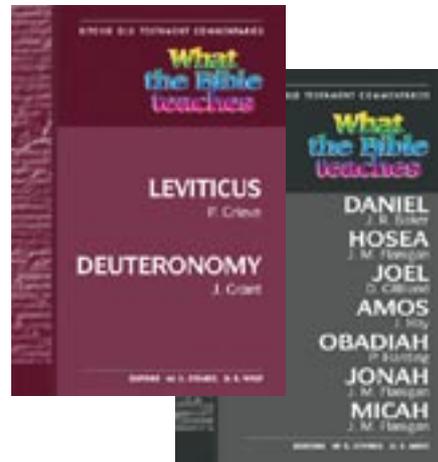
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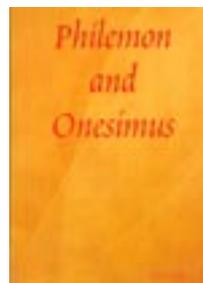
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What the Child of God Is To Do with Christ-Mass

By Nathaniel Hille of Caldwell, Kansas

We are approaching the time of year that many of God's people do not know what to do with. There are many who will abstain from any celebratory fashion on December 25th of which I have come unto this position also—believing that "Christmas" is not of the Lord. Several articles and sermons have declared this subject better than I. I would like to discuss: "What then should we do with "Christmas."

I am reminded of the text Acts 17:22-31, the Sermon on Mars' Hill. Paul preached to the men of Athens after having observed their "devotions" or objects of worship. Paul said that he had found an altar with the inscription "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" and that was Who he was going to preach unto them, Jesus Christ!

We, like Paul, are in a land where people worship what they know not. It is during this time of year that people's minds will be upon the subject of Christ and in particular His birth. Right, wrong, or indifferent—their minds will be upon the subject of Christ. I dare say that even you and I who do not celebrate "Christmas" that our minds will be upon the subject of the incarnation of Christ—for our society is so saturated with that topic.

We should not ridicule those who set up manger scenes, have "Christmas" trees, have light displays, etc. For Christ has not sent His church(es) into the world to ridicule them that are lost, but rather to declare unto them "THE UNKNOWN GOD" whom therefore they ignorantly worship (Acts 17:23). Christ did not ridicule anyone in His earthly ministry. We never read of that being done by any of the apostles, evangelists, ministers, fellow-laborers in the Lord in the entire book of Acts. Here was Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke, Simon Peter, Philip and many others going into places with "heathen customs and practices" and yet not one time do we read of them ridiculing or making fun of these folks; but rather they preached repentance unto a dead and dying world of lost sinners (Acts 17:30-31).

People's minds and perhaps even their hearts will be upon Christ and in particular the subject of His birth. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to declare unto them who are lost, and even to them who are saved, but need to be grounded and settled in truth (Col. 2:6-8). Jesus said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth"



(John 18:37). Jesus declared the purpose of His birth was to go to Calvary and bear the sins of His people. Why not take that plastic baby lying in the manger scene and say, "Him I declare unto you,

that he came into this world to seek and to save that which was lost. Repent and believe the gospel or ye shall perish." Perhaps a simple testimony will cause others to become Bereans and search the Scriptures daily concerning the Word of God. Perhaps there might be some lost souls, as there were at Mars' Hill who shall have "THE UNKNOWN GOD" revealed unto them and they shall be saved or perhaps there will be many who will mock. Either way, we are entering a time of year when minds are upon Christ, (right or wrong) they are upon Christ, and we should be going forth preaching the Gospel. AMEN!



Preaching Against Sin

by Milburn Cockrell

The Apostle Paul wrote to a young pastor named Timothy: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (I Tim. 5:20).

I am convinced that the average churchgoer does not know what sin

really is. The major reason for this is that modern-day preachers do not preach against sin. The Bible tells us that "sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). This is where the problem is. Preachers today do not preach the Ten Commandments. Brain-washed by Scofieldism and antinomianism, they spend most of their time telling the people Christ freed us from the law. It is little wonder that a church member sees nothing wrong with lying, adultery, stealing, and even murder in some cases. From the sermons he has heard in his pulpit he thinks that Christ came to free man from the law so he could do as he pleases. Many church members believe and practice this.

Christ did free us from the law of sin and death, but He did not free us from the moral law of God. The regenerated man delights in God's law (Rom. 7:22). The moral law is the rule of life for the believer. All of the Ten Commandments are quoted in the New Testament.

The law never saved so much as one lost sinner (Heb. 10:1-4). The moral law of the Old Testament was a standard of conduct for a redeemed people. It is the same in the New Testament. The moral law is a transcript of the nature of God (Rom. 7:12).

Pastor, when did you last preach on all the Ten Commandments, explaining each one of them to your church members? Have you ever? Have you omitted preaching them until there exists in your church gross ignorance as to what God requires of His people? Could it be you always preach against abortion and homosexuality as sins because you know your members are not guilty and will not be offended?

Many preachers are calling on sinners to repent and turn to Christ. This is well and good, but why does a person need to repent and turn to Christ? Because he is a sinner. But how can he know he is a sinner without some one preaching about the moral law of God? In truth he cannot, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). In many cases sinners are

not being given any reason to be saved. We need to return to the old paths of preaching the law and the gospel.

Let me suggest that you preach a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments, taking one at a time. If you explain them as you should, some of your members may quit the church and stop giving money to it. But are you merely preaching for numbers and money? Those who please men are not the servants of Christ (Ga. 1:10).

More so than at any other time in the history of the world, saints and sinners need to hear preaching about the Ten Commandments.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Sovereign Baptist Church of Cortland, Ohio and Elder Chester R. Powell have authorized a mission work in the Sand Point, Idaho area. Brother Richard Hammers will be the overseer. He will answer any questions regarding the mission work and ways one may assist by contacting him at: 6480 Upper Pack River Road, Sand Point, Idaho 83864 or by calling his home phone at (208) 265-5863 or his cell phone at (208) 597-6176.

The Citrus Missionary Baptist Church located at 6690 Turner Camp Road, Inverness, Florida and Pastor Troy Sheppard would like to announce their upcoming Bible Conference, February 17th thru 19th, 2012.

Service will be at 7:00 p.m. Friday, 10:00 a.m. and 1:45 p.m. Saturday, and at 10:00 a.m. Sunday. Meals will be provided by the church at 5:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday and at Noon on Saturday and Sunday.

For more information please contact Pastor Sheppard at (352) 464-1636 or email him at ourbaptisthome@yahoo.com.

Elder Ray W. Sexton would like to announce he has a new address. His new address is 146 Dunroven Road, Versailles, KY 40383. His new phone number is (859) 879-2400.

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

The Calvary Baptist Church of Piqua, Ohio is in need of a pastor. Any interested party may contact the church at 726 Wilson Avenue, Piqua, OH 45356, or call Terry Allen at (937) 773-9272.

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