

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

The Church of Choice

By Larry J. Killion
of Tacoma, Washington

Don't attend the church of your choice this weekend. Does that sound like a funny statement to you, coming from a Christian? Well, maybe it does but let's stop and think about it for a moment. I'm a born again Christian. I was saved by the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and I sincerely believe that a person should NOT attend the church of his choice on the Lord's Day. Why do I say that? I say that because it is our duty and responsibility to attend worship services in the church of God's choice and worship His way (John 4:20-24).

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh,



when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But

the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:20-24).

Now, having said that, we must ask ourselves the question, "What is the church of God's choice?" The answer to this question may take some effort to

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All Things New

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (Rev. 21:5).

We live in a world where new things are common. Every day we see new houses, cars, new roads, and new inventions. Some of these new inventions and discoveries are a blessing and a benefit to mankind while others are a blight and a burden. Even in religious circles there seems to be an ever-increasing stream of new doctrines and new practices. Some ministers, like the Athenians of old, spend **"their time in nothing else; but either to tell, or to hear some new thing"** (Acts 17:21). But in doctrinal matters what is true is not new, and what is new in most cases is untrue.

A new world order is announced in my text by Jesus Christ. The old order has



not been improved, but made new. The old earth with its vicissitudes, its temptations, its pains, and its death are no more. The former state of things where sin and death reigned will be changed, and this change will extend to **"all things."** Ever since sin entered the world the Creator has been busy re-creating the world in Christ Jesus. His eternal purpose is the regeneration of the old creation.

A NEW MAN

One of the first works of God in re-creating the world order is to make a new man to replace the old Adamic man. Those who are joined to Christ make up a new race of people. **"Therefore"**

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The Brand New Year

By Raymond Bennett
of Ithaca, New York

Exodus 12:2: **"This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."**

The last 400 years had gone from a rather glorious beginning to a time of misery. How they had fallen from the glory of Joseph, who was second only to Pharaoh and responsible for keeping the children of Israel alive and well in the midst of a seven year famine, having such favor and prestige with the people of Egypt.

Now they were slaves, burdened under merciless task masters, subject to a national law, a decree from Pharaoh that every male child be killed. Interestingly enough, as a part of the typology that National Israel is, this is a foreshadowing of Herod's attempt to kill the "King of the Jews" by killing all the boy babies under 2 years old. (Matt. 2:16)



But God thwarted the Devil's attempt to destroy the Messiah through Pharaoh and raised up a deliverer for the Children of Israel. And talk about irony---He used Pharaoh's

daughter to raise him up, and Pharaoh's courts to train the very deliverer he wanted to destroy.

Mark it down! You can go to the bank with it! Those who go all out to thwart the plan of God will find that God ends up using them to fulfill His purposes! That is what Jesus' prayer was driving at when He prayed, **"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"** (Luke 23:34). Those men nailing Him to the cross, those men who had been yelling "Crucify Him"

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Feel-Good Religion

By Curtis Pugh
of Bocsia, Romania

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

Religious leaders, especially Arminians of the modern sort, preach and their people have learned to expect a "feel-good" religion. Musical programs, pleasant lighting, theatrical programs, choreography, etc. all contribute to a tickling of the flesh. Pleasant positive words of encouragement constitute most Sunday morning sermons---a sort of religious pep rally to keep the people feeling good. But this is not limited to only the Arminian sects. All these kinds of things cater to the "feel-good" religion that fleshly men crave. Modern man, Americans especially, are geared to instant gratification and demand no less from their churches and religious experiences. The worldly saying, "If it feels good, do it" has been adapted by those involved in popular "Christianity."



The idea prevails that if what is said and done "in church" makes you feel good, it must be good and right.

While we deplore both such a religious attitude and its consequent actions, such things are to be expected from those who have only a form of religion. What is of greater concern is that this attitude has spilled over into the thinking of many who should know better---many who seem to have learned Christ in a true experience of free and sovereign grace.

The danger is that people are apt to judge both truth and spirituality based solely on whether or not they feel good about it. Shall we judge whether or not to sit at the feet of a pastor because his preaching or

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Know when you are well off.

One would think that this was a very elementary knowledge, and yet many are so given to change that they are never satisfied. They run under the spout to get out of the rain, and leave home to wander in the bush.

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

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Editor: Christopher Cockrell
Staff: Sheron Cockrell, Marsha Kiser, Virginia
Cockrell

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1. To honor God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To preach the gospel to lost sinners.
3. To spread the whole counsel of God's Word.
4. To encourage God's preachers and to 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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All Things New

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if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). **"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature"** (Gal. 6:15). In regeneration the old man is not remade. Man is born anew, not altered, or influenced, or reinvigorated, or reformed.

In salvation man receives a new birth, he is **"born from above"** (John 3:3) and becomes a **"new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"** (Eph. 4:24). He has new views of God, the Bible, prayer, and the church. He has new views of this world and the world to come. He has new views of truth and duty. He sees everything in a new aspect and with new feelings. Because of this new outlook on life the new man walks **"in newness of life"** (Rom. 6:4). He acts from new principles, by new rules, with new ends in mind. He chooses new paths to walk in and new companions to walk with.

The Milburn Cockrell who once lived in this body does not live here any more. The Milburn my old associates once knew has been crucified with Christ. In his place lives a new Milburn, a new man, a new creature of the Holy Spirit. The old Milburn was a servant of sin; the new Milburn is a servant of Christ. I must confess that I am not today what I want to be. I am not what I am going to be, but I thank God I am not what I used to be!

A NEW HEART

By the mysterious process we call regeneration the sinner receives a new heart. In Ezekiel 36:26 Jehovah declared: **"A new heart also will I give you."** This is a new disposition vastly different from what it was before. It is the Divine nature of which believers partake. This is a heart transplant done solely by the Great Physician. Converting grace removes the heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh---a soft and tender heart which is capable of spiritual exercises. Such a person is said to believe in Christ with all his heart (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10).

This great change is necessitated by the condition of man's heart by nature. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us: **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."** The problem with the lost sinner is stated in Acts 8:21: **"For thy heart is not right in the sight of God."** Our corrupt hearts are the factories of the Devil. **"...out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness"** (Mark 7:21-22). Even if the very gates of Hell

were shut up for a time, our evil nature would still be fertile and produce the fruit of Hell. This is the reason man must be given **"a new heart."**

A NEW SPIRIT

The unsaved man has a spirit, but this human spirit is dead because it is **"alienated from the life of God"** (Eph. 4:18). Jude 19 describes such persons as those **"having not the Spirit,"** meaning they have not **"the Spirit of life"** (Rom. 8:2). In relation to spiritual life the natural man is like a dead man to the objects around him (Eph. 2:1). A corpse sees not, feels not, and hears not. Even so of the unregenerate man. He has no interest in eternal realities. Apart from the grace of God all spiritual functions are impossible. Until his human spirit is joined to the Divine Spirit, he is void of spiritual life and actions.

In regeneration God gives a new spirit: **"A new spirit will I put within you"** (Ezek. 36:26). Such a person is a partaker of **"the Holy Spirit"** (Heb. 6:4). The Spirit of truth comes to indwell each believer as a teacher, guide, and sanctifier. The believer's body becomes **"the temple of the Holy Ghost"** (I Cor. 6:19). Even the unconverted man can see that the renewed man has **"another spirit with him"** (Num. 14:24). **"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"** (Rom. 8:9).

A NEW ROBE

Have you ever seen a poor person who had on clothes so dirty that you could have stood them in the corner if he had pulled them off? More than likely, I would say that you have seen such a person as this at some time in the course of your life. Man by nature is just like the street bum. He is **"clothed with filthy garments"** (Zech. 3:3). **"The old man"** is **"corrupt according to the deceitful lusts"** (Eph. 4:22). Even **"the garment spotted by the flesh"** (Jude 23) is only a fig-leaf apron (Gen. 3:7) to hide the spirit which is **"wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"** (Rev. 3:17). What an awful wretch fallen man is!

Just as the best robe was put upon the returning prodigal (Luke 15:22), even so God puts a new robe upon the repenting rebel. In Zechariah 3:3-4 we see what happens to the sinner in salvation: **"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."** The giving of a new robe causes the sinner to rejoice with joy unspeakable. Isaiah wrote: **"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom**

decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isa. 61:10).

A NEW NAME

It was not unusual for God to give a person a new name in Bible times. The name of Abram was changed to Abraham (Gen. 17:5). Sarai's name was changed to Sarah (Gen. 17:15). Jacob's name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28). There is a sense in which God changed the names of persons who are spiritually adopted. To regenerate Israel God promised a new name: **"Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name"** (Isa. 62:2).

In Revelation 3:12 Jesus promised the overcomer a new name: **"And I will write upon him my new name."** It is foolish to speculate as to what this name is, for the Savior says it is **"a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it"** (Rev. 2:17). This new name is a secret between Christ and the believer. While there is much we cannot know about it, we can be certain it is a name of honor and happiness, a promotion and a glory to the bearer for ever. No man or fallen angel can ever deprive a saint of this name, or take it from him.

A NEW SONG

We hear lots of singing today. Most of this singing appeals to the flesh. The songs we hear come from the mouth, not the heart. Worldly songs are filled with brutality, sexual impurity, and riotous living. Even religious singing tends to gratify the Adamic man more than it infuses grace into the new man. So-called religious songs are sung to a worldly tune and consist of unscriptural words. Just about all modern singing, religious or otherwise, is what the Bible calls **"the song of fools"** (Eccl. 7:5). Godless men sin against God and sing to the glory of Satan as they walk down the broad road which leads to destruction.

When God makes all things new in a man he **"puts a new song in his mouth, even praise unto our God"** (Ps. 40:3). This is a song of praise from the heart, not the head. A new-born babe yearns to engage in **"psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in"** his **"heart to the Lord"** (Col. 3:16). His testimony is: **"The LORD is my strength and song"** (Ex. 15:2).

Bless God for a salvation which brings us into a new world and puts a new song of praise in our mouth. How sweet to sing the old songs of Zion with tear-filled eyes unto our Redeemer! But even our best praise on earth is imperfect and tainted by sin. Because of doubts and fears we are made at times to cry out: **"How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?"** (Ps. 137:4). How can we sing filled with sorrow because of indwelling sin? How can we sing so far from our heavenly home? But sing we must to

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the God of glory. Yet one day before too long we shall sing the melodious songs of the Blessed (Rev. 5:9). "When this poor lisping, stammering tongue. . . Lies silent in the grave. . . Then in a nobler, sweeter song. . . I'll sing Thy power to save."

A NEW COMMANDMENT

While on earth Jesus Christ gave to His disciples a new commandment: **"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"** (John 13:34-35).

This is not called a new commandment because there had never existed before a commandment which required love for our fellowman. The law in Leviticus 19:18 said we were to love our neighbor as ourselves. What Christ gave was a renewed commandment which had existed from the beginning (I John 2:7). It was the second great commandment of the Law of Moses, yet because it is also one of the great commandments of the New Testament, it is called a new commandment. It is like an old book in a new edition corrected and enlarged.

The commandment of Christ in John 13:34-35 is a new commandment since never before had any body of men been known and distinguished by brotherly love, a love which was to be like the love of Christ for us. Christians are to be known, not by the distinction of wealth, or fame, or learning, but by a tender and loving affection for each other. This brotherly love is to surmount all distinctions of color, country, and creed.

A NEW HOME

The born-again man is in this world but not of it. In this old low land of sin and sorrow he is a pilgrim and a stranger (I Pet. 2:11). He seeks the Celestial City in the Better Country. He longs for the Father's house of many mansions which Jesus promised (John 14:1-3). He desires to depart and to be with Christ and the spirits of just men made perfect. He sighs for the golden streets and the jasper walls of the New Jerusalem.

He cares not for earthly wealth and fame. His earthly house means very little to him in comparison to his future heavenly abode. John B. Summers said:

"A tent or a cottage why should I care?

They're building a palace for me over there;

Though exiled from home, yet still I may sing:

All glory to God, I'm a child of the King."

Still another expressed it in this manner:

"I need no mansion here below,

For Jesus said, "That I could go

To a home beyond the clouds not made with hands."

As of yet I have never seen my new home in the Father's house. I am sure that

its radiance out shines the sun at high-noon! I am confident nothing on earth could compare with its beauty! At death I shall leave my old earthly dwelling place to go to my heavenly home. Oh, God, please hasten the day when I shall move higher up!

A NEW BODY

Mortal man dwells at present in "a house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust" (Job 4:19). One day this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved (II Cor. 5:1). This old body that we spent so much time feeding and caring for in this life will return to the dust from whence it was taken (Eccl 12:7). This corruptible body, this body of sin, is destined to become food for the skin worms (Job 19:26; Acts 12:23). Truly, I may say **"to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister"** (Job 17:14). The body is a borrowed house for the temporary residence of the soul. Daily the soul looks for the Master to come and call it away.

We are not always going to have these old vile bodies. One day God will make us a new body to take the place of this old decaying body. When Christ comes at the Rapture He **"shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body"** (Phil. 3:21). **"As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"** (I Cor. 15:49). Oh, hasten the time when **"death is swallowed up in victory"** (I Cor. 15:54), and we are completely **"conformed to the image of his Son"** (Rom. 8:29).

CONCLUSION

John tells us of Christ: **"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made"** (John 1:3). Mark the words **"All things."** This means rocks, rivers, mountains, stars, moons, seas, men, animals, forests, and plains were made by the Creator. All were originally made by Him, and they still bear some trace of His power and Godhead. At first all things were made **"very good."** But sin entered the world and death by sin. Since the fall sin has marred and mutilated the face of all things. There remains but a few fragments which show how beautiful the earth once was.

The Creator did not purpose to leave the earth and its inhabitants in a state of ruin. No! The Creator came forth as a Regenerator. He rose up to re-make it all anew. His eternal purpose is to harmonize all its discords and to remove the foul blot which sin dropped upon Eden. He is presently in the process of making a new race of people to live in a new world. His work will not be finished until He **"create new heavens and a new earth"** (Isa. 65:17).

Oh, blessed time when all things originally made are made new! Then the dewdrop on every acre of grass shall sparkle with His love and goodness. The

earth itself shall be the bright jewel on which His name is engraven. The tree of life shall show whatever beauty it can borrow from His smile. All animate and inanimate nature shall lift up its voice in ceaseless praise. The sun shall have no spot, the sky no cloud, the year no autumn, and the earth no graves. Then we shall see the evidence of the fulfillment of these words: **"Behold, I make all things new."**

Sinner, Jesus Christ has made **"a new and living way"** (Heb. 10:20) back to the tree of life (Rev. 22:2). This is the last way that will ever be opened to sinners. The person who refuses to enter this way is for ever excluded from the new creation. And it is death to attempt to come to God in your own way. The life-giving Redeemer is the **"new and living way."** Have you entered this way?



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were actually fulfilling the determinate counsel of God.

Eighty years later, after Moses' forty years in Pharaoh's court and then forty years on the "back side of the desert," the Children of Israel found themselves crying out to God for mercy and deliverance. There is good reason for this in God's ultimate plan. Up until this point, even though there had been a universal knowledge of God and, especially through the line of Abraham and much personal contact with God, there had been little to no realization of depravity, and God was not known of a "personal" basis.

At this point in time, the typology of Israel has only pictured the eternal foreknowledge (ie: personal acquaintance) in eternity past (Ephesians 1:4: **According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love;**) the covenant promise to and through Abraham (**"I am the God of Abraham and..."**), and the "pre-salvation" state of depravity, that is to say bondage in

slavery to sin.

The very term "redemption" carries with it the concept of previous ownership and a lost, helpless position of the one to be redeemed. This is where Israel was. But God sent a deliverer/redeemer in Moses and in the Passover Lamb.

The Passover Lamb pictures the sacrificial, vicarious substitute of an innocent redeemer, laying down His life in the place of the one who should die (**"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father"** [John 10:18]) and the resultant claim the redeemer has upon the redeemed by virtue of purchase. For example, during the years of slave ownership in our country, it was not unusual for someone to buy a slave, thus having the right to do as he pleased with the slave, and then deliberately set him free. Nevertheless, the freed slave forever owed a debt of gratitude to whoever had redeemed him.

Perhaps an even better illustration is that of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz was the "kinsman redeemer" for Ruth. There was another possible redeemer before Boaz to whom Boaz offered the chance to redeem Ruth, but that redeemer would not do so because he would have also become responsible for Ruth. He feared losing his earthly inheritance. Boaz desired and took full responsibility for Ruth.

There is a reverse lesson here, too. How many men and women reject the redemption by Christ because they prefer their earthly inheritance?

The Exodus experience, Moses' encounters with Pharaoh, the Passover, and the exodus from Egypt all picture the change from bondage to new life. Things are different now! The instant pursuit by Pharaoh pictures for us the instant counter attempts by the world, the flesh and the devil to gain back what they have lost. There is an indefinite period between salvation and baptism, a period in which the candidate must demonstrate a credible evidence of salvation, during which time he will also encounter some serious obstacles, challenging his newly obtained faith. This period varies in length according to various cultures and situations.

The children of Israel had to demonstrate their faith and commitment by obeying the commands of God, through Moses, and by following the pillar of fire/smoke through the wilderness to the shores of the Red Sea. Those who feared the yet uncertain future, or who preferred the **"leeks, and the onions, and the garlic"** of Egypt (i.e.: the world), despite the slavery, were free to remain in Egypt or turn back.

Those who came to John the Baptist had to show the fruit of repentance before

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John would baptize them. **“Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham”** (Luke 3:8).

During the early years of the church there was very little doubt about true repentance and belief, because to confess Christ would automatically put the believer in a position to be severely persecuted, even to being thrown to the lions or used as Nero’s street lights. Pre-baptism examination was rarely an issue. We have lost that feature today, in part because our baptisms are not the “public testimony” affairs they once were. We no longer baptize in the creek, but rather in the baptistry built into our chapel. Rarely does the candidate invite friends and family to the baptismal service. Modern baptismal services are more of a private affair within the church membership.

After the popularization of Christianity by Constantine (313 AD) it became necessary for some serious examination before baptism. During the so-called “dark ages” (313 AD to well after the Reformation), and even into the 19th century in this country, scriptural baptism and entrance into one of the Lord’s true churches still required pre-baptism examination, but to present oneself for baptism was also a pretty good sign of real belief because of the persecution by Rome, and even by the reformers. Most of the time scriptural baptism necessitated re-baptism because, then and now, the baptism of an unauthorized or apostate church was invalid. To be re-baptized would be seen as an insult to the church that had originally baptized the candidate. For a pastor or deacon board to accept unauthorized or seriously questionable baptism only means a switch in church attendance without requiring the necessary confession and commitment.

This is what incited the persecution by Rome and the Reformers, and this is what stands in the way of a lot of people who might otherwise believe today. It takes a tremendous amount of grace, humility and submission to admit that the baptism one has received, or even administered in some cases, is invalid because the church authorizing the baptism is either itself unauthorized or has lost its authority through apostasy.

Unfortunately, many of even our Baptist brethren have forgotten the struggles of our forefathers and neglected this important fact. They accept baptism from most anywhere as long as the candidate has been immersed in a pond somewhere by someone, neglecting to

be sure of the scriptural validity. The consequences are far reaching! For instance, I can put on a policeman’s uniform, act like a policeman, and patrol the streets, even make arrests. But any arrests that I would make would be invalidated by virtue of my lack of authority. If that lack of authority was not discovered, and a number of people had been fined or jailed, whenever my lack of authority was discovered it would invalidate all those sentences, the people would be free, and the courts liable to extensive law suits. Have we done this in many of our churches?

This brings us back to Israel at the Red Sea. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 Paul likens the crossing of the Red Sea to baptism. **“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”**

From this point on, Israel was a new and distinct nation. Figuratively, they had been cleansed and freed of the old life and now embarked on a new life. **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”** (II Cor. 5:17). They were making a new start. The Lord assigned this event to be the beginning of the year for them, a “New Year” if you please.

The New Year is traditionally celebrated as a “new start”, a time to make “New Year’s resolutions”, vowing to “do better” next year.

He came to my desk with a quivering lip, the lesson was done,

“Have you a new sheet for me, dear teacher? I’ve spoiled this one.”

I took his sheet, all soiled and blotted, and gave him a new one all unspotted.

And into his tired heart I cried, “Do better now, my child.”

I went to the throne with a trembling heart, the day was done.

“Have you a new day for me, dear Master? I’ve spoiled this one.”

He took my day, all soiled and blotted, and gave me a new one all unspotted.

And into my tired heart he cried, “Do better now, my child.”

— (One of many versions of a poem by Kathleen Wheeler.)

Paul relates to this in Romans 6: 4: **“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.”**

Baptism or New Year, we are making a fresh start. Let us, therefore, like Paul, release the past while not forgetting the lessons learned. Let us release the past, not resting on our laurels and past achievements. Let us release the past, not clinging to hurts, sins and grievances that have been (or should have been) long since forgotten and forgiven.

As an illustration, if one gets close enough to me and examines my face, he might still see two scars inflicted by past injuries. I actually grew a mustache for a while to hide one of them. The scars will always be there, and to a limited extent the pain and memories are still there. But the scars have long since faded. Anyone must deliberately and diligently search to find them. There is no need to do so! They do not impede my life or ministry in any way. How I got those scars is unimportant! Those persons or events that inflicted those scars have long since passed away, been forgiven or been forgotten.

Likewise, the sins of my past, those of serious nature and those of ignorance, have long since been forgiven and forgotten. God has forgiven them, any person that needed to know of them has forgiven them and no one else has the authority, or any business trying to bring them up again--Including Satan!

Let us therefore go forth into this new year like David of old, or like Peter, repentant (which includes the commitment to “sin no more”), forgiven, and walking in newness of life, unimpeded by the unforgiving hearts of self-righteous believers who prefer to cling to pseudo hurts of the past, or who feel that their judgment is better than God’s. Oh how we, especially Baptists, restrict and reject men who would be of great service in our churches except that we still hold against them what God has forgiven and forgotten.

Let us go forth like David and Peter, having made our contrite confession, having shed our bitter tears, now unimpeded by our own unbelieving failure to accept God’s forgiveness or to forgive ourselves. As David and Peter were still used to be mighty in the service of God, as Paul was forgiven of his great sin and used as a mighty servant of God, let us go on. Perchance God will be pleased to use us as mighty servants of God in the spheres in which we live and serve.

Many who read this message today cannot start from the point of David or Peter or Paul. They must go all the way back to Israel in bondage and slavery to sin in Egypt. Are you one of them? You must first come through the “Passover Lamb”, Jesus Christ. Just as those in the time of the Passover were required to apply the blood of the lamb to the doorposts of their houses---and stay inside the house that night---you must apply, by faith, the blood of Jesus Christ, **“For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”** to your life.

Those believers made a commitment, a commitment that, even though they often wandered from it, still controlled their lives from then on. Will you make that commitment now?



Feel-Good Religion

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his personality or his demeanor causes us to feel good about him? Certainly a pastor ought to be trustworthy and the members of his church ought to feel secure about him---in a certain measure---but is the feeling he engenders in us the scales on which he should be judged? And shall we judge whether or not to attend this church or that church based on whether or not the program and activities cause us to feel good? It is not commonplace after Sunday morning meeting to see and hear members congratulating each other, as well as those who had a part in the musical performances and their pastors on “a beautiful service?” How long since members have left the meetinghouse with tear-filled eyes and hearts broken over their own or the spiritual condition of others?

Even greater is the danger of accepting or rejecting a doctrine or practice based on whether or not we feel good about it. Certainly attendance can be enlarged if the services are well programmed and pleasing to the eye, the ear, etc., in such a way as to make the attendees feel good. But the teaching of the Word of God, i.e. doctrine, is not designed to make people feel good! And woe to us when we so engineer the things taught and preached--and those not taught or preached--so as to make the congregation feel good!

Our Lord was a man of sorrows and His immediate followers were also acquainted with grief. Do we dare to think that we have found a better way than that way in which He and His immediate disciples walked? God help us if we have.

The Scripture quoted at the beginning of this brief article teaches us that outward thing--- including the size and popularity of our church, etc.---are not the criteria by which either our actions or our beliefs are to be judged. Judgment must be based on truth and truth is to be found in the Word of God, taken in context, and allowed to say what it says---period.

In my youth we sang a chorus that said in part, “There is more to life than fun, there are victories to be won, Give me power, every hour, to be true.” I don’t suppose that is sung today. It is too out of step with “feel good” religion.

Is your estimation of truth and religion based on “fun” and whether or not you “feel good” about it? You may be on the “feel good” path that leads to eventual eternal separation from God. Think about it.

Must Jesus bear the cross alone,

And all the world go free?

No, there’s a cross for every one,

And there’s a cross for me.

The lowly and despised Son of God said, **“..come take up the cross, and follow me”** (Mark 10:21).



CELLBLOCK TO CELLBLOCK

By David G. Hoffman

Encouragement and thoughts from a prisoner to other prisoners and readers.

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried" (Rev. 2:10).



East to West

Greetings, grace, and peace to you, dear reader. I hope all is well with each of you.

As for me, I'm still working in the kitchen---although on the first shift again. I never really liked the second shift, I kind of felt like an outsider. So the first shot I got at getting back on the first shift I jumped at it. The first shift feels like "home." I don't know what it is; it's just a better fit for me.

My old co-worker on first shift is about to be moved to the Officer's Dining Room (ODR) in a few weeks. When he is moved I'll be taking his place on the Cook's Floor. Going right back to what I was doing before I jumped ship to second shift.

Until then I'm helping out in the bakery. Baking is fun and I enjoy it. Truth be told, if I hadn't already given my word on going back to the cook's floor I'd just stay in the bakery full-time. The head baker just got a parole date and will be going home soon.

The college semester has ended and I won't be registering for the next one. I'll be sitting out a semester or two while I wait for the Culinary Arts course, again.

If you've been reading this column for a while you know I was removed from the culinary class roster because I was in college academic classes. So I must sit out on academics until I go to the culinary vocational class.

My dream is to be a chef. I can't explain the passion I have for cooking. I've loved to cook since I was a kid and my mom tried to get me to go to culinary school back then but I wasn't trying to hear it. Then all these years later an overheard conversation in a prison dorm reignited the spark and the Lord has allowed it to flourish.

Now I eat, sleep, and breathe cooking. I read cooking books like other prisoners read novels. *The Professional Chef*, from the Culinary Institute of America; *The Fundamental Techniques of Classic Cuisine*, from The French Culinary Institute; *Professional Cooking*, *Professional Baking*, and *Le Cordon Bleu Complete Techniques*, from Le Cordon Bleu---L'Art Culinaire all reside in my locker box and are all well read, studied, highlighted, bookmarked, and generally feasted upon in every spare moment.

Yes, my dream is to be a chef.

Please continue to pray for me, dear reader, as I study my cooking books, try to be the best cook/baker I can be in here, and continue down this path they call prison.

The New Year is upon us and it's traditional (dare I say, superstitious?) to vow to change some aspect of our lives in the beginning of the year. How many of us have vowed to diet, stop a bad habit, or get "right" with the Lord as part of a New Year's resolution?

Okay, everyone put your hands down. I know we've all done it. But those of us who are in God's grace should know---I say "should" because a lot of us don't realize or forget---that we can change our bad habits (sin) any minute of any day of the year. We don't have to wait for New Year's Eve to make a vow that is forgotten by the end of the month. We all sin: **“. . . I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I”** (Rom. 7:14-15).

Who wrote that? the Apostle Paul. And if he was **"sold under sin,"** then the rest of us ought to be ashamed to look in the mirror. Our sin is so transparent.

There is a song on Christian radio by Casting Crowns, *East to West*, that has the following line in it:

"I feel like I'm just one mistake away from You leaving me this WAY. . ."

Have you ever felt that way? I sure have, more often than I care to recall. But I know that as long as I stay in this human body that I'm going to sin---it's a part of my human side. I'm not saying that being human gives us a license to sin, but it is unavoidable: **"O wretched man that I am!"** (Rom. 7:24).

However, there is some relief from this human malady that Adam cast upon us: **"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"** (Rom. 7:24).

There is not a pill, or potion, or therapy that can cure us of this sin sickness. But there is a Physician Who can wipe away all the cancerous blight: **"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord"** (Rom. 7:25).

I thank God that when I do sin He is there by my side to convict me of it, pick me up from where I've fallen, and put my feet back on solid ground. I don't have to worry that I'm just one mistake away from Him leaving me that way.

"The LORD is my rock, and my

fortress, and my deliverer: my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler (shield) and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (Ps. 18:2).

And when I find myself face down in the hog pen of the world eating husks, instead of the fatted calf; He gently guides me back to His righteousness through His grace. (See Luke 15:11-23)

The most beautiful aspect about this thing of grace is that we don't have to wait for a certain day to claim this sin cleansing grace. We who are the saved only have to: **"(Go) boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"** (Heb. 4:16).

It is my prayer for you, dear reader, that you keep in mind that anytime you need mercy and grace in the new year, no matter what day it is, that you take heed to go boldly unto the throne of grace---for there, and there only, are mercy and grace to be found, every day of the year.

Krystal Ruthann, congratulations on your marriage. May the Lord bless you and your new husband's life together. I love you with all my heart and miss you dearly!

Bro. Jeff & family, y'all are in my thoughts and prayers daily. I love you guys very much; you continue to be an answer to my prayers.



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discern. First of all we must go to God's Holy Word, the Bible, and study the characteristics of the churches described therein. As we study the New Testament we notice that it has reference to various local assemblies such as the church at Corinth, Rome, Thessalonica, Philippi, those in the region of Galatia and so on. Acts 15:41 says, **"And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches"** (plural).

Since the Bible is inspired by God, let us rest assured that the epistles or letters written to and about these churches are true and that God was pleased to recognize them as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. Along with that is also the fact that the Apostle's instruction to them in regard to church administration is sound doctrine. What Paul wrote regarding the churches of the New Testament in other words, is in accord with the perfect will of God. **"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"** (II Tim. 3:16-17).

One of the first things we notice about the churches of the New Testament is

that their members were all baptized believers. By this we mean that they believed that Christ was and is the eternal Son of God and God the Son. He was born of a virgin and lived a perfect and sinless life on this earth. He then willingly went to the cross of Calvary and laid down His life as a sacrificial Lamb to pay the sin debt of undeserving sinners. After His death on the cross He was buried and three days and three nights later, just like He said He would do, He got up alive again from the dead. He arose victorious over the grave and then ascended up to heaven and is now with God the Father interceding for those for whom He died. **"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls"** (Acts 2:41). **"And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing"** (Acts 8:36-39).

After receiving the gospel and claiming Christ as their Savior, New Testament believers were immersed in water as an act of faith and thereby they became members of the local assembly that authorized their baptism. Since baptism is a church ordinance we are reminded of the importance of church authority and being in the church of God's choice. Where did these churches in the New Testament come from and where did they get the "church Authority" of which we speak? Who gave them this authority? From where did it come? To answer these questions, please try and understand carefully the following line of reasoning.

There was a man sent from God who's name was John. **"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John"** (John 1:6). God sent him to baptize and to prepare the way of the Lord. **"He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God"** (John 1:23, 33-34).

The Lord called him John "The Baptist" because that is what he did. **"John**

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America's Oldest African American Church

By Thomas Ray

The founding of the First African Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia, in 1788, is a story stranger than fiction. George Liele, the famous black preacher and missionary to Jamaica, had managed to gather a small group of converted slaves in the Savannah area. When Liele departed to Jamaica in 1783, he left his little congregation under the care of one of his converts, Andrew Bryan. Bryan's owner was in sympathy with his ministry and allowed him to build a small house of worship on his property.

However, there were certain white people in Savannah who, fearing the preaching of the gospel would lead to an uprising, were opposed to the assembling of black people without the presence of a white person. Their hostility to Bryan and his congregation resulted in many members being inhumanely beaten, whipped, and imprisoned. Andrew Bryan and his brother, Sampson, a deacon, were so cruelly cut and their backs so lacerated that their blood ran down. Andrew lifted up his hands to heaven and declared to his persecutors that he rejoiced not only to be whipped, but also to freely suffer death for the cause of Jesus Christ.

Several sympathetic whites informed Bryan that if he could persuade a white Baptist minister to officially organize his church and ordain him to the Baptist ministry, it would help legitimize him and his church. Bryan enlisted the assistance of his fellow black preacher, Jessie Peter, who explained to Abraham Marshall that blacks in Savannah were suffering for their faith. Marshall, a renowned evangelist and pastor, was always fearless in his Master's cause. Not fearing the wrath of man, he traveled by horseback 165 miles from Kiokee, Georgia, to Savannah and met with Andrew Bryan.

After examining the candidates, and assisted by Jessie Peter, he baptized 45 persons of color and formed them and others previously baptized into a church, with the newly ordained Andrew Bryan as their pastor. Marshall gave the church two certificates. The first certificate constituted the little plantation mission as an official Christian church and the



second was the ordination of Andrew Bryan as a minister of the gospel. This remarkable event was made even more remarkable by the fact that Andrew Bryan was between 65 and 70

years of age at the time of his ordination. In 1790, Bryan was able to purchase his freedom and eventually purchase the freedom of his wife and only daughter. The same year, Andrew also purchased property in Savannah and, through the sacrificial efforts of these humble Baptist slaves, they erected a meetinghouse.

Beginning with 67 members in 1788, the church increased to 250 by 1790, and by the year 1800, the church could boast over 800 members. The growth of this slave church is phenomenal. However, when you consider that all the church members, including the pastor and deacons, were required to have written permission in order to attend the church services, their growth was truly miraculous.

Bryan's personal evangelism and the training of co-laborers to minister

to the slaves' spiritual needs was the primary reason for the church's growth. Bryan's faithfulness and Christian character gained him the support of many who had been violently opposed to his ministry. In 1800, Bryan wrote Dr. John Rippon, "We enjoy the rights of conscience to a valuable extent, worshipping in our families and preaching three times every Lord's Day, baptizing frequently from 10 to 20 at a time in the Savannah (River), and administering the sacred Supper; not only without molestation, but in the presence, and with the approbation and encouragement of many of the white people."

On October 1, 1812, around 90 plus years of age, this grand old champion of the faith rested from his labors. It is estimated that over 5,000 attended his funeral. (*Baptist Bible Tribune*, Jan. 2009, Vol. 59, No. 5).



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answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing" (John 1:26-28).

No one else on earth had this heaven sent authority to baptize but him. John only baptized those who gave evidence of repentance and even reluctantly baptized the Lord Jesus after the Lord instructed him to do so in order to fulfill all righteousness. "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." He reprimands the Pharisees, and baptizes Jesus in Jordan. "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:5-8). "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade 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 fulfil 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).

John pointed the people to Christ as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). John told his followers, speaking of Christ, He must increase and I must decrease. "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:27-30). John was beheaded because he would not compromise his message or make it politically correct and after his death Jesus and His disciples (baptized by John) continued to baptize even more repentant believers than did John. "But

when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6:16-18). "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee" (John 4:1-3).

Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). According to the New Testament record, that is exactly what He did. "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 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" (Matt. 16:13-18).

During His earthly ministry He took the material that was prepared by John the Baptist and of them He called unto Him whom He would and He set some in the church, first, the Apostles "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (I Cor. 12:28). The charter members of this first New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ are listed for us in Luke 6:12-20, "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;

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And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God"

This is where Jesus preached the organizational charge to His church in the Sermon on the Mount. It is this institution to whom Christ gave the threefold commission in Matthew 28:18-20, **"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."**

This is known as The Great Commission and in it we see the promise of perpetuity that Christ gave His church promising that she would remain here on earth with the comfort of the Holy Spirit until His return from His Father's house where He was going to prepare a place for her as His Bride. **"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"** (John 14:1-3).

The promise of perpetuity to His church in The Great Commission and other places is one of the reasons why we believe there is still a church of God's choice in this world. The Lord's first church was in Jerusalem at the time of the ascension but before He ascended He commanded them to go and get folks saved, baptize them that are saved, and teach the baptized believers all things that He had taught. There it is my friend; it is Christ who established the origin and authority of the church of God's choice. Don't make the mistake of choosing a church based on the comfort or convenience of their facilities, or what they offer the children, or how eloquent the speaker is, or any other such thing. The heart of the matter is this question, "Is my choice in accord with God's choice?" **"And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth"** (Luke 11:2).

Who started the church that meets nearest your home? Could it have been Constantine, Martin Luther, John

Knox, Henry VIII, Charles Wesley, Alexander Campbell, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, or some other man or woman? If so, it cannot possibly be the church of God's choice. These men and women had no heavenly authority what so ever to copy in some way some aspect of the church that Jesus built during His earthly ministry. You may choose them if you will but they are not God's choice.

Seeking a sound church is an important decision for a Christian and a difficult one in a sense, due to the many false prophets and counterfeits that are in the world today. **"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves"** (Matt. 7:15). The Bible warns us about these phonies and assures us that they would deceive God's very elect if it were possible. **"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect"** (Matt. 24:24).

One false Cult goes around teaching that Christ already came back in 1914 for His saints according to their Watch Tower Society. If that were so, there is no longer any true New Testament church on the earth. They describe themselves as the 144,000 that are mentioned in the book of Revelation. Another group says that the church of Christ failed and died out and their prophet re-established the church of Latter Day Saints, blah, blah, and blah.

At any rate, let me say that if we can find a church that claims to be started by the Lord Jesus and that He is their Head and Founder, and they only receive members that are Scripturally baptized with the one baptism that Jesus and His disciples had, the next thing we must do is compare its doctrine with that taught in the Bible. **"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"** (Acts 17:10-11).

Do they teach and preach; the sovereignty of God, the total depravity of man, the unconditional elective love of God, the particular redemption of all who rely on the all sufficient atonement of Christ, the effectual working power of the Holy Spirit in irresistible grace, and the responsibility of man regarding perseverance in the eternal security of preserving grace. These are things to look for when you are looking for a church to attend. When you find a church like that, you have found the church of God's choice. **"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest**

to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Do not misunderstand me if you are not a recipient of God's grace in salvation or if you are presently attending a religious organization that is not the church of God's choice. If you are not a Christian and are unsaved, I am not condemning anyone, no matter what organization they are with, who preaches the truth concerning salvation. There is only one way of salvation and that is for you to recognize your need of a Savior and repent of your sins and by faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. You must rely completely on His shed blood to wash away your sins and that is the one and only way to be saved. It is the only real remedy for our sin problem. **"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"** (Acts 4:12).

It is my prayer that if you recognize that you are lost and without hope regarding salvation from your sins, oh, listen to the gospel message because faith comes by hearing the Word of God. If someday for some unexplainable reason you change your mind and acknowledge God's plan of salvation as described herein, I hope you will remember reading these few feeble words and seek to worship in the church of God's choice. **"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed"** (Acts 13:48).

If you are a believer and are not attending church anywhere or have been attending services in an organization that you are not quite sure about, you are invited to visit and investigate the church where the writer is a member. For that matter, even those who are yet unsaved are welcome also to attend our services, if the Lord should allow it in His providence. For instructions on how to get there and when to be there please visit our church website at <http://thelordsbaptistchurch.com> or call my cell phone at 253-537-0129. Yours, in the old landmarks, by sovereign grace.



Wait, I Say on the Lord

By Raymond Bennett
of Ithaca, New York

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins" (Isa. 40:1-2).

"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isa. 40:6-11).

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" (Ps. 27:14).

Waiting is probably the hardest thing a man is asked to do. In our day of instant gratification waiting is even harder. There used to be a big lapel pin that some people wore as a joke that read, "Lord, give me patience - NOW!"

Our nation is in an unsettled time right now. It doesn't matter which side of the political or economical fence you are on, we are nervously waiting for whatever the New Year will bring. Will it bring the economic assistance that is promised to

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Tune in to the Berea Baptist Broadcast

STATION	TIME	DIAL	WATTS
WFTA, Tupelo, MS.....	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.....	101.9.....	3,000 FM
WCNA, Myrtle, MS.....	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.....	95.9.....	3,000 FM
WCTT, Corbin, KY.....	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.....	680.....	5,000 AM
KARI, Blaine, WA.....	Saturday 10:30 - 11:00 a.m.....	550.....	5,000 AM
DXUM, Davao City, Philippines.....	Sunday 4:00 - 4:30 p.m.....	819 Khz.....	10,000 AM
DXDS, Digos City, Philippines....	Sunday 12:00 - 12:30 p.m.....	1161 Khz.....	1,000 AM

Wait, I Say on the

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the nation's poor? Will it bring us down to an economic depression? Will it bring greater restrictions on our freedom to openly worship? Will it bring increased persecution, especially on those who have the spiritual fortitude to proclaim, "Thus saith the Lord?"

Isaiah is prophesying at the time of Israel's final fall, some 135 years before Jerusalem is taken into captivity. That captivity served as punishment on the nation for three categories of sin: 1) idolatry, 2) social injustices, and 3) failure to give the land the sabbatical rest which God had commanded them. "This" country has turned from God to idols; not idols of wood and brass but idols of money, pleasure and self conceived images of God patterned after our own humanistic morality. Despite all the social welfare system, there are tremendous social injustices but our society seeks to handle them by denying the justice of God and replacing it with toleration of sin in the name of "civil rights." (Civil rights has come to mean freedom to sin, freedom to shout blasphemy and vulgarity, but forbidding the right to preach against those things.)

Judah had been warned time and time again. "This" country has been warned time and time again. They have had brief periods of reprieve from the "warning" events at the hand of God, both from military attack and from natural disasters, but as a nation neither Judah nor this country has given them any lasting heed.

There were those in Judah, as there are in this country, who decried the path the nation was taking, but they were constantly becoming a smaller and smaller minority. But praise the Lord for the faithfulness of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in proclaiming God's Word, for the courage of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and especially for the protective grace which God showered upon them.

Although none of those men were alive to hear Isaiah preach these words, it is to them and their un-named colleagues that this chapter is directed. It may be that this chapter is directed to their twenty-first century colleagues as well.

There is an end in sight! God has promised that He will always have a remnant and that that remnant will be vindicated and glorified. There is comfort here to the whole nation! There is comfort here for all repentant sinners who have had to share in God's earthly dealings with an un-repentant nation. **"Her warfare is accomplished," she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins**". The nation has received full punishment. The Lord's wrath is satisfied. The prophecy looks ahead to the completion of the seventy-year captivity but it also has a strong hope for us in this day, knowing that God's judgment will come but that

it will also come to an end for those who have humbly submitted to and responded to the Lord's chastisement. There is no unjust punishment or double jeopardy in God's justice!

"Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand... He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." The human element that has been against God's people will pass away like withered grass and "The Good Shepherd" will gather His scattered flock and bring them to the "green pastures beside still waters" that Psalm 23 speaks of.

We may not experience this in our lifetime. Abraham never saw, in the flesh, the fulfillment of the promise given to him that his seed would possess the land. Indeed, that promise still awaits its ultimate completion. Daniel, as far as we know, never saw the rebuilt Temple or the rebuilt Jerusalem. But this I know! There will be a day of vindication, glorification and reward for those who have faithfully maintained their God given faith and served the Lord--even in Ahab or Belshazzar's palace.

Perhaps we are looking at our own last warning. I make no prophecies, but I wonder how long God will show us patience. Perhaps those of us who faithfully cling to the "Word of God," as opposed to denominational, traditional, man pleasing or glorifying practices, will find ourselves forced to worship in twenty-first century catacombs, or hide in the jungle like our brethren are doing now in parts of India. Or perhaps God will be pleased to open up the hearts and minds of our national and religious leaders and they will see the "Law of God" that Hilkiah found in the Temple. Perhaps in the merciful providence of God our people, as a nation or at least as a church, will "rend our garments" as did Josiah. But we must remember the Scriptural admonition, **"And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil"** (Joel 2:13).

In the meantime, wait, wait patiently, and wait trustingly. **"Wait on the LORD...wait, I say, on the LORD."** Wait is "piel imperative"! That is an emphatic command! It implies a long wait, and it requires that we wait on the Lord, not trying to run ahead of Him or do things our way.

The eagle does not fly away from the storm but he flies into the storm, rising above the storm, where he safely rides the storm out, using the very energy of the storm to be the "wind under his wings." **"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."**

May God give us the grace to be eagles!



Your Conduct As A Christian and Church Member

By Roy Mason
(1894-1978)

"Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1).

YOUR CONVERSATION

"Let your speech be always seasoned with grace" (Col. 4:6).

COMPANIONS

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Prov. 13:20).

BUSINESS DEALINGS

"Avoiding this, that no man should blame us. . .providing for honest things not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (II Cor. 8:20-21).

TRUTHFULNESS

"Lie not against the truth" (Jas. 3:14). **"Speaking the truth in love"** (Eph. 4:15).

HONESTY

"Let us walk honestly" (Rom. 13:13). **"In all things willing to live honestly"** (Heb. 13:18).

Should there be any difference discernable between the life of one who is a Christian and church member, and the lives of those who do not belong to a church or make any profession of religion at all? I do not think that there is any one but that would immediately answer yes. But sad to say, all too often there is not the difference discernable in the outward life that there ought to be. People profess conversion, and take upon themselves the solemn and holy obligations of church membership, and then live and walk like those who are of the world. The word translated "church" in our language, in the original, signifies an assembly of "called out people." **"Come ye out from among them; be ye separate,"** is the call of God to every regenerate person. It ought not to be any difficult matter to distinguish a Christian and church member from others who belong to the world. Their mode and manner of life should be so different, their attitude and outlook so distinctive that they would be readily distinguished as followers of the Lord Jesus.

When we unite with a church, we covenant and pledge ourselves in the sight of God and before our brethren, to walk worthy of the name Christian, and to so conduct ourselves as to not bring reproach upon the church and the cause of our Lord. A sinful, unworthy church member, can do a world of harm to a church and to the cause of religion in any community. A community will pay more attention to one bad member, than it will to a dozen good ones who try to live right. Paul describes a church in one of his epistles as resembling the human



body, composed of different members all joined together. He tells us that if one member of the body is hurt, all of the others suffer. For illustration, if one gets an arm cut off, the whole body is maimed and its appearance marred. Now the same is true of the church, he says, if one member suffers, all of the others suffer, too. How many times has a church been made to suffer because of the sinful, disgraceful conduct of one of its members! We indeed incur a very great responsibility when we unite with a church. It is a serious thing for a church member to so live that the unsaved lose confidence in the church. It would be an awful thing for you or me, after claiming salvation and uniting with the church to so live that sinners would have to stumble over us in order to get into the Kingdom of God!

The world watches very closely those who profess to be Christians. The Christian has been very aptly termed, "The Fifth Gospel," and it is true that your friends, acquaintances, and those with whom you come in contact will read your life much more closely than they do Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. To slightly change a verse that I once read:

*"The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
Are but sparingly read, though they're
thought to be true,
But the world reads one gospel never
missing a line,
And that is the gospel according to you!"*

The best argument for the religion of the Lord Jesus is not a printed page, however beautifully worded; it is a transformed life that is lived in obedience to God's will. There is no way for even a bitter enemy of Christianity to refute the argument of a changed life. Since Christianity is judged by the fruits that it produces in our lives, how important that our outer life and appearances conform to our profession!

As a Christian you are obligated to **"Walkworthyofthevocationwherewith ye are called"** (Eph. 4:1). In every department of your life you should live, act, think, and do as is befitting one who has been called out of sin and darkness into the Kingdom of the Redeemer. It is impossible in this space to enumerate and call to mind all of the things involved in right Christian conduct. I shall but take the time to mention a few, as being typical of the rest.

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Your Conduct As A

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Let us first think of YOUR CONVERSION AS A CHRISTIAN. As you meet and come in contact with people, you are largely judged by your speech. **"Let your conversation be as cometh the gospel"** (Phil. 1:27, is the teaching of the New Testament. Carelessness and irreverence in conversation robs many a Christian of their influence for good. Nothing so jars upon the sensibilities of any right thinking person as to hear a professing Christian dealing lightly, flippantly, and irreverently with things that ought to be held in sacredness by them. And then it is sometimes the case that persons, who claim to be Christian and have allied themselves with the church, are guilty of using profanity. Personally, I am at a loss to understand how that any saved person can descend to that point of disrespect and irreverence where they would take the name of their God and Savior in vain. Nothing will more quickly brand a person as of the world than swearing. Profanity is so incompatible with religion, so characteristic of the godless, that one is immediately classed with the Devil's crowd the moment they are heard using it. The profane swearer does not have to go into detail to explain that he is not a Christian to those among whom he associates. They have already classified him as not belonging among Christians. Profanity brands a man or woman in the eyes of the world, as belonging to the devil just as truly as a branding iron marks cattle as belonging to a certain ranch.

Any careless, thoughtless, use of God's name is wrong, and is unbecoming to a Christian. Many who do not swear are accustomed to use language that is coarse and degrading. Many delight to tell stories and jokes, some of which are tainted with vulgarity. Shun this practice, Christian, if you have any regard for your own character or your standing as a follower of Christ. To those who had but lately become Christians, we find Paul writing these words, **"Put off all... filthy communication out of your mouth"** (Col. 3:8). Without being sanctimonious or appearing to use cant, you can be chaste, clean and wholesome in your conversation and speech, remembering that you are every moment of your life in the presence of God, and using no language that you would be ashamed to use if Christ in bodily presence were standing before you.

Again, let us think of THE COMPANY THAT YOU AS A CHRISTIAN SHOULD KEEP. Sometimes it is the case that before one becomes a Christian they have been accustomed to associate with irreligious, godless companions. These persons are not at all in sympathy with the ideals of the new life that stretches out

before the converted person. To persist in keeping up a close association with the same godless persons is to become a backslider, and is to live an unworthy life. Now of course there is no call to offend or insult those with whom one has formerly associated, but a Christian should make it clear that there has been a change in his life, and in his outlook. He should kindly but firmly tell his friends of the old sinful days, that he can no longer participate with them in the wrong things that were formerly engaged in. Let him try to win his friends to Christ, but let him clearly understand that he can never do this by going their gaits with them.

To live the right kind of a Christian life you need the companionship, the friendship, the help and the encouragement of other Christian people. With out the right associations, you will find it well nigh impossible to maintain a vigorous, happy Christian life. To run with a crowd that is godless and that holds religion in light esteem, to have as bosom friends and intimate associates those who are known for their wickedness, is to immediately compromise your own character, and lay yourself liable to suspicion.

I have a friend, who at the time of his conversion was a saloon keeper, and the owner of six saloons. After his conversion, did he keep on with the same business? Did he frequent the same places, and fun with the same gang? Certainly not! He closed the saloons, and it soon became evident to those with whom he had been associated, that his way and theirs was entirely different, and that they need not expect him to participate longer with them in their sins.

I have seen young people who claimed to be Christians, begin to keep company with those who rather held religion in contempt. Soon they began to sit back in the rear of the church with these companions. A little later they quit coming to church almost entirely, and still a bit later they were going to the same places and were doing the same things that their irreligious friends had been accustomed to do. Their lives outwardly assumed the same complexion as the lives of those who made no profession of religion at all. In this way they dishonored their church, and brought reproach upon the name of their Lord.

Yet again, let us think of YOUR BUSINESS DEALINGS AS A CHRISTIAN. The way in which you conduct your business affairs as a follower of Christ, and as a member of a church, will have much to do with the confidence that people repose in you. You cannot lay aside your religion on Sunday evening as you would a garment, and go out to lie, cheat and steal during the other days of the week, and fool others into thinking that you are a Christian. You must conduct yourself as a Christian every day. Every bit of business dealings that

you have with anyone must be strictly on the square. A business, in which you cannot ask God to be a partner, is not a legitimate business. To live at your place of daily work so that Christ may be read in your actions, means that there will be nothing fraudulent, nothing dishonest, nothing that is not open and above board, about your business dealings. I remember to have heard a certain man who was accustomed to work in company with another man, a Christian, make this remark about him, "I believe in that man. I have worked with him for months, and I have never heard him say, or known him to do, anything that was not in strict accord with his religion."

One more thing needs to be mentioned in this connection, and that is, TRUTHFULNESS. To live as a Christian and conduct yourself in a way that is worthy of that name, you must be truthful. Honesty and truthfulness are twin brothers, and they walk hand in hand. It is easy to be careless about our promises, and little by little to become untruthful. We must remember that lying is a thing that is abominable in the sight of the Lord. One of the things we are expressly told that God hates is a lying tongue. Lying is one of the sins that we are particularly counseled against in the New Testament. **"Lie not one to the other, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds."** It is amazing how easily many church members break their promises, and deal untruthfully with their church and their brethren. I have known people to definitely pledge a certain amount to their church; perhaps they even signed a pledge, yet they never paid their pledge, although perfectly able to do so. I dare say almost every church has had money pledged both to local expenses and for missionary purposes that over a period of years was

never collected. Is it not a combination of untruthfulness and dishonesty that prompts persons to break their word in this way?

Then in smaller matters untruthfulness is often observed. For instance, I have seen the leader of a Baptist Young People's Union give out parts on the program to different persons with the question, "Will you prepare this and be present at our next meeting?" "Yes, I'll prepare it. Certainly I'll be there," came the reply. Sunday evening came, and not more than half of those who solemnly promised to take part on the program showed up, and part of those who came had not prepared themselves on the topics assigned them. Was not that untruthfulness manifested on the part of those who failed to keep their promises? Breaking one's promise in a matter like that leads to the breaking of a promise in something else, and this practice continued, eventually leads to habitual lying. Young Christian, at the very outset of your Christian life, make up your mind that you will scrupulously tell the truth. You cannot conduct yourself so as to have the confidence of those who are scrutinizing your life, you cannot live a life that honors God, you cannot walk worthy of Him Who called you into His Kingdom, and be a liar. And remember, there are no "white lies" in the sight of God. All lies are black---as black as the door that leads down into the bottomless pit where they originated.

As one who has vowed allegiance to Christ; as one who represents Him among men; as one who must influence others, either for Christ or against Him; let your conduct before the world be such that in you, it may see Christ.

"Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called!"



From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



Stillness Before God

"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth" (Ps. 46:10).

The words of my text are the words of Almighty God. In these words He requires stillness of mind of the children of men. This is the first step in knowing anything about God. Here God Himself demands silent and adoring attention and submission from all creatures on earth. All should acknowledge and submit to His universal, everlasting and absolute rule. Only those who bow down and worship Him shall escape His awful

vengeance.

GOD IS GOD

According to the Bible, God is an absolutely and infinitely perfect Being. Jesus said: **"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"** (Matt. 5:48). No perfection of deity is wanting in Him. Every attribute is perfectly consistent with His nature and being. He is omniscient or all-knowing. He has perfect knowledge of Himself and all things He has created (Job 37:16). He is perfectly immutable, for there

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Have most modern day churches (Sovereign Grace Churches included) lost sight of the purpose that they spread the gospel? - Mississippi

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

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



I cannot make a sweeping judgment on the Lord's churches. However, it is quite possible that many in our day have neglected the great responsibility we have to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). I fear that there is not the burden for souls that characterized the early churches (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1; II Tim. 2:10). May the fires of a Holy Spirit sent revival begin to burn within the hearts of the Lord's people so that we will be more concerned for the unsaved round about us. May God grant us the grace to have a passion for preaching the Gospel to all within our sphere of influence. Each and every saved person in the Lord's church has the responsibility to tell the old, old story of the Gospel of the grace of God. Oh, that we would be found witnessing, praying, and sowing the good seed of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to everyone. May the Lord burden our hearts to support missionaries who are willing to go where we can't to spread the Gospel. What would happen if each one of us took the command to witness seriously and began to share the Gospel with someone every day? Psalm 126:5-6 declares: **"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."**

TOM ROSS

Mike DeWitt Sr.
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477

Pastor
Parkway Landmark
Baptist Church
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477



I sincerely believe that only the Lord's Churches that have descended from the first Church in Jerusalem have the right gospel to spread. Modern day Churches that have an originator other than Jesus Christ Himself has not the true gospel or has the authority to operate like one of the Lord's Churches.

No, the Lord's Churches have not lost sight of the purpose to spread the gospel, if they did, they would not be one of the

Lord's Churches.

MIKE DEWITT

Raymond F. Bennett
Berach Baptist Mission
271 Gray Road
Ithaca, NY 14850-8761

Missionary of
Berea
Baptist Church
PO Box 39
Mantachie, MS 38855



In a word, yes! This pastor/missionary has long been distressed at the absence of evangelical feeling and activity on the part of our Sovereign Grace Churches. Many of our Sovereign Grace Brethren make a lot about overseas missions but seem to care very little about home missions. They talk freely, and give freely, to "overseas" or "foreign" missions, often bragging about how well those missions are doing, but refuse to use the same methods for evangelism that their missionaries use.

This seems to be the same attitude of the Baptists in England in the late 18th century who told William Carey, "Young man, sit down. When the Lord chooses to save the heathen He will do so without any help from you or me." Perhaps this was contributory to Charles Spurgeon's disillusionment with the Baptist Union in the next century.

I have just finished scanning a book entitled "The Church in the Fields," by the late Arthur Stone. This book is the history of a Baptist church in Bradfield, England from its inception in 1834 to 1990. It is noteworthy that this church took the denominational name of "Particular Baptists" and in 1866 thought it best to sever ties with the Baptist Union, perhaps in part for the same reason. Their history records a steady flow of new believers and periods of revival, demonstrating that the doctrines of grace and evangelistic fervor are very compatible, working well together for the Lord's glory.

Right doctrine, evangelism, and the blessing of God are so intertwined that you can't have one without the other. Evangelism cannot be done rightly without right doctrine and right doctrine in no way impedes evangelism. Sound doctrine issues in sound deportment but there are a lot of brethren seem to boast about their "right doctrine" but who are sadly lacking in "right deportment". The lack of evangelism is one of those areas.

The cults and Armenians have about destroyed the effectiveness of door to door visitation, along with the lackadaisical apathy of the average church member

and the teaching from so many Sovereign Grace Pulpits that such methods constitute a "salvation by works."

The Armenian and Charismatic long, drawn out, emotional altar calls have made us afraid to give invitations.

We fear "special meetings" and "special speakers", partly because we (or they) are numbers conscious and we are afraid we won't be able to draw a crowd. We fear "activities", charging that they are "entertaining".

Jesus said, **"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest"** (Luke 10:2). Just before leaving that first little church to tarry in the upper room until the Holy Spirit empowered them Jesus said. **"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."** (Acts 1:8) It must be noted that the action of Acts 1:8 is *simultaneous* action, not chronological action.

We do not give invitations for fear of inciting "false" decisions, but I would remind you of two important facts. 1) An invitation *properly* given will not imply that response to the invitation is a "work unto salvation." 2) Jesus said, **"No man can come to Me unless the Father who hath sent Me draw him; and I will raise him up at the Last Day."** (John 6:44, emphasis mine) We invite. We don't browbeat.

We fear evangelistic activity and invitations because we may be accused of "leaving the camp of Sovereign Grace Baptists." I fear that perhaps we have over emphasized "sovereign" at the expense of "grace."

RAY BENNETT



Stillness Before God

(Continued from page 29) ◊

is **"no variability, neither shadow of turning"** in Him (Jas. 1:17). He is omnipotent, or all-powerful. Nothing is impossible to Him (Luke 1:37) or too hard (Jer. 32:17). He is perfect in holiness, for in Him is light and **"no darkness at all"** (I John 1:5).

Not only is God perfect in His person and attributes, but He is also perfect in all His works. Deuteronomy 32:4 says: **"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."** The psalmist declared: **"As for God, his way is perfect"** (Ps. 18:30). If God is perfect and all His works are perfect, verily God Himself is the only perfect being in the universe. Often we hear the cry: Let God be God. This is a very foolish statement. God is God whether

men recognize it or not. No man nor angel can deprive the Supreme Being of His eternal power and Godhead.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN

Quite often those of us who believe in the doctrines of grace speak of the sovereignty of God. The plain truth is that if God is God His sovereignty must be presupposed. God is the only absolutely sovereign being in the universe. At times we speak about the sovereignty of the church, or the sovereignty of the state, but we are using the word sovereignty in a limited sense. There is in the absolute sense no sovereign church or state; God only is sovereign.

In that He is God He is qualified to be the sovereign over all things. In that He is God, He will be sovereign and will act as such. In Psalm 115:3 we are told: **"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."** Again in the Psalms we are told: **"Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places"** (Ps. 135:6). Jehovah says in Isaiah 46:9-11: **"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."**

In Daniel 4:35 it is written: **"And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"** The Sovereign Being has disposal of the whole universe and of all the creatures in it. He has a sovereign right to do what He wills with His own. His will is irresistible and His purpose unalterable (Isa. 14:27). Therefore, it behooves us to be still and to know that He is God!

KNOWING GOD

God is so great that He is infinitely above all human comprehension. Zophar said to Job: **"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea"** (Job 11:7-9). All the investigations which have been made of God have fallen short of their goal. God cannot be put under a microscope, or in some test tube in a laboratory. The knowledge of God is higher than the distant skies and deeper than Sheol.

Puny man is a shortsighted worm of the earth that is but of yesterday and

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Is it right for Christians to be in financial debt to others? - Mississippi

Raymond F. Bennett
Beracah Baptist Mission
271 Gray Road
Ithaca, NY 14850-8761

Missionary of
Berea
Baptist Church
PO Box 39
Mantachie, MS 38855



Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. (Romans 13:8)

This verse is frequently used to mean that financial indebtedness is sin, but we need to look at it a little more closely in its context.

“Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:7-10).

The Apostle is not talking about finances except as they are included in “moral” indebtedness. The list of things we owe to one another covers the full scope of the commandments of God. To “owe”, in the context of this passage is to be “in default of payment”. Hence, to be lacking in moral fidelity either physically or spiritually, to be guilty of murder either physically (including abortion) or spiritually (See Matthew chapter 5), to steal either by taking or withholding something from another, to have lied about someone, or to covet what they have is to “owe those people” a debt which, more often than not, we can not make right. To be short on the love of the brethren becomes a major spiritual debt. This is the indebtedness that Rom. 13:8 forbids.

The Bible certainly warns against financial indebtedness. **“The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender”** (Pro. 22:7). It would be an exercise in futility to attempt listing all the places in Scripture that deal with those in serious financial debt but yet does not condemn them for being in debt. Certainly, indebtedness is often a necessary evil, more so I fear in our day than in Bible days.

Financial indebtedness assumes an agreement – and obligation to “repay”

that debt. That also has more scriptural backing than we could begin to list here. The only way this verse applies to financial debt is the moral necessity of making the agreed upon payments.

However, the Bible *does* give careful instructions for the *creditor*. For instance: **“Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury”** (Deut. 23:19) **“Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow’s raiment to pledge”** (Deut. 24:17).

RAY BENNETT

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

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



It is definitely in the best interest of every Christian to pursue a course of debt free living in the financial realm. Proverbs 22:7 states: **“The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”** Until a debt is completely paid the borrower is under a burden of obligation to the lender. One of the ways that God promised to bless Israel for obedience is recorded in Deuteronomy 15:6: **“For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.”** Those who lend tend to have a measure of control over those that borrow.

In today’s society it would be extremely difficult to purchase a new car or a house without taking out a loan. Most people are not able to pay for such high priced items with cash. I look at buying a house as a good debt because in most cases you are able to build equity instead of paying rent which can never be recovered. Until recently, real estate holdings have historically been classified as an appreciable asset. This means that you are assured of at least getting back what you put in to the house or more when you sell it.

Our country is on the brink of financial and economic collapse because so many people are defaulting on loan agreements that they promised to pay back. It is a sin to go into debt and default on a loan. So many people are presuming upon the future and buying things on

credit that they have no intention of paying off. This is wickedness and it is destroying the financial soul of our nation. Christians should never buy anything they can’t afford. If you can’t pay for it don’t buy it. Its that simple. Many young couples get into a cycle of debt because they think they need everything right now that took their parents a lifetime to accumulate.

My advice is for believers to start paying off their debts right now. Determine to be debt free so you are not constantly under financial pressure. People who have overwhelming debt usually are desperate and make poor financial decisions. Debt free living requires financial planning, discipline, and hard work. May God grant us the grace to follow the admonition and enjoy the freedom of Romans 13:8: **“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.”**

TOM ROSS

Mike DeWitt Sr.
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477

Pastor
Parkway Landmark
Baptist Church
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477



“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (James 2:8). Love is the fulfilling of the law. **“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law”** (Rom. 13:10).

We sometimes equate this verse with money and lose the real meaning of this truth. Think about it, can you live your life in this world owing no person or company any debt? If you own your house and stop payment on your taxes or insurance will you keep your house? What about if you rent? The birth of a child is a great expense, will you owe the hospital? Etc. etc. etc.

If you owe money to someone who works for you pay them. Taxes are due... pay them. Paying your debt until the debt is paid is the child of God’s responsibility and not forsaking that responsibility is paramount.

The one debt that we are never to begin to think is paid off is the debt of love we owe for what Jesus did for us. Love for others, because of the love of our Christ, is to be predominate in all our actions and speech. **“Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it”** (Prov. 3:27).

May God teach us to love others, and that others may see Christ thru us.

MIKE DEWITT

Stillness Before God

(Continued from page 30) ◊

who knows in part. We may apprehend God, but we cannot comprehend Him. We may know that He exists, but we cannot know all that He is. We cannot number His eternity, nor measure His immensity. We cannot fathom the depth of His wisdom, nor can we conceive the greatness of His power. We cannot describe the brightness of His glory, nor reckon up the treasures of His grace. Well did the psalmist write: **“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it”** (Ps. 139:6). It is not in man’s ability to understand God’s eternal purpose or the proceedings of His providence (Eccl. 3:11; Rom. 11:33-35).

It is an expressible privilege to know anything of God. In the text we are commanded to know God to be God. While we cannot know all about God, we can know He is God. Daniel 11:32 speaks of **“. . .the people that do know their God. . .”** The main business of a man in this world is to know God. **“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD”** (Jer. 9:23-24). Nothing gives God more pleasure than for His creatures to know Him: **“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings”** (Hos. 6:6; cf. Jer. 22:16).

God is so completely incomprehensible that we can know nothing of Him apart from His gracious revelation. Due to natural depravity, man knows not God (II Thess. 1:8). Only those who have their minds opened by the Holy Spirit truly know God (Ga. 4:6-9; Eph. 1:17-18). To know God is to possess eternal life: **“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”** (John 17:3; I John 5:20).

The only reason why any person knows God is because he was foreknown of God. **“And the LORD said unto Moses. . .for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. . .”** (Ex. 33:17). To Jeremiah the Lord said: **“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee. . .”** (Jer. 1:5). Jesus Christ said: **“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. . .I know them, and they follow me”** (John 10:14, 27). I know God because God knew me before I ever knew Him. Paul expressed it in Galatians 4:9 thusly: **“But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are**

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Stillness Before God

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known of God. . . ."

One time an Arminian evangelist asked an old sovereign-grace woman if she knew the Lord. The old lady replied: "Yes, I know the Lord, but I can tell you something better than that. The Lord knows me."

MURMURING AGAINST GOD

Sometimes God's providential dealings cross and conflict with our plans and programs. But my text forbids quarrelling and murmuring against God. It is a dreadful thing to quarrel with the Almighty (Jude 16). The children of Israel murmured against God and paid a high price for their sin (Ex. 16; Num. 14, 21). We must not draw rash conclusions about God's governmental dealings with us, for **"He giveth not account of any of his matters"** (Job 33:13). We read in Isaiah 45:9-10: **"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?"** It is wrong to ask God: **"What doest thou"** (Dan. 4:35). Such a question is an insurrection against Divine sovereignty!

Even if at no other time, we are prone to murmur against God when He corrects us for our errors. This is wrong. We ought to humble ourselves "under his mighty hand" (I Pet. 5:6). We ought to **"hear. . . the rod, and who hath appointed it"** (Micah 6:9). We ought to be ready to cry: **"...shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. . . . That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more"** (Job 10:2; 34:32). Jeremiah well said: **"Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD"** (Lam. 3:39-40). Micah declared: **"I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me. . ."** (Micah 7:9).

We must be still as to words. We must not speak against His sovereign providence by complaining of it. We must not darken counsel without knowledge, or attempt to justify our quarrellings by speaking great swelling words of vanity. When Aaron's sons were destroyed by the fire of God he **"held his peace"** (Lev. 10:2). Concerning the dispensations of God's providence the psalmist wrote: **"I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it"** (Ps. 39:9). Job lost both his family and his estate, but **"in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly"** (Job 1:22; 2:10; cf. Lam. 3:28-29).

SUBMISSION TO GOD

It is the duty of a born-again believer not only to be still in our outward actions under God's providential dealings but we are also to be still as to the inward frame of our hearts. We must cultivate a calm and quiet submission of soul to the pleasure and the purpose of our Sovereign.

When young Samuel told the aged Eli that the Lord would destroy his family, the old man said: **"It is the LORD; let him do what seemeth him good"** (I Sam. 3:18). The prophet Isaiah told Hezekiah, the king of Judah, that his sons would be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon (Isa. 39:7). Hezekiah then said: **"Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken"** (Isa. 39:8). The prophet Agabus warned Paul that if he went to Jerusalem the Jews would bind him and give him to the Romans (Acts 21:10-12). Paul quickly replied: **"...for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus"** (Acts 21:13). Paul's friends then said: **"The will of the Lord be done"** (Acts 21:14). This is the kind of submission we need to God's will.

As Christians our wills must be swallowed up in the will of God. We are to have no will of our own which is not God's will. Christ was our great example in the midst of His agonies in the garden of Gethsemane: **"Not as I will, but as thou wilt"** (Matt. 26:39). Our Savior's life was a life of total submission to His Father's will (John 5:30; 6:38). So great was this submission that He was **"obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"** (Phil. 2:8).

In our text the Lord commanded us to be still and quiet before Him. This does not mean to be still like a stone or a dead man insensible to the circumstances of life, for we are commanded to become conscious of the Divine Presence in the same verse. We are to be sensible of the hand of God in all that happens to us in this world. Know that He is God and own His hand in all these things (Job 23:14). The words **"be still"** in my text suggests composure of mind, a calm and quiet submission under the hand of God at all times. Our language must be: **"If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that"** (Jas. 4:15; cf. I Cor. 4:19).

ALONE WITH GOD

In this computerized age we spend our days in restlessness and swiftness of action. There are the ceaseless excitements and the ever-increasing responsibilities of life. Man and the works of man come between the consciousness of God's presence and works. Enslaved to the senses, it seems to us there is nothing in the universe except these human projects and interests. Hence the need of the injunction: **"Be still, and know that I am God."**

How we need to recall the examples of the Biblical characters. The prophet Elijah sought his brook (I Kings 17:3-7)

and cave (I Kings 19:9-15). Isaac went out into the fields at eventide to meditate (Gen. 24:63). Jesus Christ found on the solitary summit of the mountain a place where He might be alone to pray (Matt. 14:23). We need more than the patriarchs and prophets of old to meditate and to seek in the quietness of the heart the presence of God. Psalms 4:4 says: **"Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."**

The text makes it crystal clear that stillness of mind and retirement are necessary to appreciation of spiritual truth. God's Word is always most clear and vivid in the stillness of mind. In calmness the soul feels and knows the presence of God. In retired hours the Divine Presence is nearest and immortal truths are revealed to mortal eyes. Stillness of mind is the first step to knowing anything about the God of the Bible.

LEARN FROM NATURE

While we are engaged in the stir and struggle of our daily business, how hard to think on anything beyond! Man is too near. The sounds of the streets and the factories are in our ears. Man and the things of man fill our eyes and thoughts, and they all but exclude any thought of God. If we were always in a crowd we would be prone to become atheists!

Let us leave man and all his works. Let us go into the heart of the natural world and learn some of its lessons. In the retreat of nature there is stillness and new sounds. We are introduced into a new world of sights and sounds. The birds of the trees sing and the wind whistles in our ears. As the mind pauses silently before such a scene, it does not reason or question, it feels and knows that there is a God. The visible creation declares the existence and presence of the invisible Creator (Rom. 1:19-25).

In the world of nature is a world of happiness. Songs begin with the morning and continue into the night. All the variety of sounds in nature are musical sounds of a happy existence. All is bright and beautiful. Though animate creation's life is short, it has little or no pangs and pains---no dreadful forelooking of a hereafter. The voice of weeping and wailing comes only from human houses where sinful men and women live.

The countless forms of animal life cannot provide for themselves, yet God takes care of them from birth till death. As I look upon such a scene, I am reminded of our Savior's words (Matt. 6:25-34). Not a lily blossom, not a hair of the head, not a sparrow falls to the ground without God's notice. How much more then will He care for us! Come you doubters of God's goodness! See in nature the reality of His providence! It shines in the light, it flows in the bubbling streams, it bathes the forest in beauty, it proclaims in the motions and sounds of animal life, the existence and goodness of God! From

the shifting and shining clouds, from the depths of the blue sky, comes the cry: **"Be still, and know that I am God."**

THE COMFORT OF THIS

There is comfort in the belief that there is a Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The heavens are a symbol of His presence (Ps. 19:1-3). The air and the rain are but the present manifestations of His eternal power and Godhead. He is the actual Ruler and Disposer of all things. Let us not murmur at trials, nor seek to make our wills sovereign. When everything seems to go wrong, may these events not make us despond and despair. Let us believe in the reality of God and His providence. Our true good does not depend on worldly success or outward circumstances. It depends on knowing God and realizing these things come not by accident.

In this changing world, amidst the crumbling pillars of human pride, and the blight of human policy, and the wreck of human hope, God remains a refuge and a helper for man. **"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"** (Ps. 46:1). Be still, thou sorrowful heart, and know that it is God Who sends sorrow as He sends joy. Be still, trembling and timid soul, and put your trust in God. His everlasting arms shall bear you up as you walk over the waves of the stormy sea. Be still, fretful spirit, who despairs by the delay of good and the seeming triumph of evil, and fear not. Be patient and wait, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns on high over all events and creatures on earth. Be still, guilty conscience, and when sin tempts you, remember there is a God Who is judge of the living and the dead.



Peace In Christ

By Rosco Brong
(1908 - 1985)

**REAL AND LASTING PEACE
WITH GOD CAN BE
FOUND ONLY IN THE PRINCE OF
PEACE**

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Even as these lines are being written, clouds of war and destruction circle the earth, nations are rising against nations, and weapons of unprecedented and unimaginable power are in the hands of the greedy, conscienceless dictators



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THE BIBLE NEWS PAPER

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.

MONTANA JUDGE APPEARS TO IGNORE STATE LAW, AUTHORIZES ASSISTED SUICIDE

(EP News)--A judge in Montana ruled late Dec. 12 that doctors can prescribe a lethal dose of medication for terminally ill patients, The New York Times reported. Judge Dorothy McCarter's ruling came in response to a lawsuit filed by a Billings man with terminal cancer. The state has argued the Legislature — not the courts — should decide the issue, and outgoing Attorney General Mike McGrath said he expects the state to appeal the ruling. Dr. Charmaine Yoest, president and CEO of Americans United for Life, said: "This ruling begins the descent toward euthanasia and even a duty to die in Montana. Assisting someone in committing suicide is never a compassionate choice." In November, Washington state voted to become the second state to legalize assisted suicide. Oregon began the practice in 1997.

DOCTORS TAKE PLEDGE AGAINST ASSISTED SUICIDE

(EP News)--With Washington and Montana recently approving assisted-suicide, many health care professionals are signing a pledge to "do no harm" and stand against physician-assisted suicide. Alex Schadenberg, spokesman for the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, said it's important for pro-life doctors to have support. "Some of the physicians in Oregon opposed assisted suicide," he said, "but after it was legalized, some of them changed their position to neutral and have stopped opposing assisted suicide." Dr. Kenneth Stevens, vice president of Physicians for Compassionate Care, said the pledge simply reinforces the Hippocratic oath, which includes the line: "I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect."

MAINE APPEARS HEADED TOWARD SAME-SEX "MARRIAGE"

(EP News)--The definition of marriage would change under a bill introduced Jan. 13 in the Maine Senate. Democratic state Sen. Dennis Damon claimed his legislation would "affirm religious freedom," but family advocates said voters should have the "freedom" to decide this issue for themselves. Michael Heath, executive director of the Maine Family Policy Council, said: "Maine will be next in line (for) gay 'marriage' unless the people respond and stop the Legislature, which is perhaps the most liberal Legislature Maine has ever had." Damon's bill would

repeal the Maine Defense of Marriage Act, which passed in 1997 and defines marriage as the union between one man and one woman.

MOST WYOMING VOTERS SUPPORT MARRIAGE

(EP News)--More than eight in 10 Wyoming voters want marriage to remain as the union of one man and one woman, according to a poll by WyWatch, a state lobbying group. Three-quarters said they would vote in favor of a constitutional marriage-protection amendment — which they could see in 2010. Thirty states have allowed voters to decide how marriage is defined.

INDIANA LAWMAKER CALLS FOR PLANNED PARENTHOOD INVESTIGATION

(EP News)--An Indiana lawmaker is calling for an investigation of two Planned Parenthood clinics after a pro-life group released two videos that show employees apparently covering up statutory rape. The videos show a woman posing as a 13-year-old girl impregnated by a 31-year-old man. Clinic workers say they don't want to know the age of the man. In one of the videos, they suggest the girl go out of state for an abortion to avoid Indiana's parental-consent law. Indiana law requires anyone learning of sexual acts between an adult and a child younger than 14 to report them. Rep. Jackie Walorski, R-Lakeville, has asked the state attorney general and Marion County prosecutor to get involved. "We're dealing with a public safety issue with minors," Walorski said. "We have laws in Indiana that are there to protect minors from things like felony crime like statutory rape." Walorski said she's also concerned about Medicaid fraud.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD EMPLOYEE RESIGNS AFTER ABORTION-RAPE COVERUP VIDEO

(EP News)--A staffer at an Indianapolis Planned Parenthood abortion business has resigned after a video showed her covering up an apparent case of statutory rape. The resignation comes on the heels of the firing of a staff member at a Bloomington, Ind., Planned Parenthood following a similar expose' video. In total, three videos have appeared in recent weeks showing the nation's largest abortion business failing to protect young girls in cases of sexual abuse. In this most recent case, two Planned Parenthood employees say they "don't care" about the age difference between

a 31-year-old man and the 13-year-old girl he was reported to have impregnated. Planned Parenthood of Indiana spokeswoman Kate Shepherd has recently confirmed one of the two employees resigned. She also released a statement saying the abortion business is committed to following state law, which requires the reporting of any suspicions that an underage person has been a victim of sexual abuse.

N.Y. LISTS TWO MOMS, TWO DADS ON BIRTH CERTIFICATES

(EP News)--New York Gov. David Paterson has ordered state workers to accommodate same-sex couples by listing two moms or two dads on birth certificates. Duane Motley, founder and president of New Yorker's Family Research Foundation, said the executive order follows a familiar pattern. "He has already — through executive order — required that the state give benefits to homosexual couples who are legally 'married' in other jurisdictions," he said, referring to Paterson's order issued in May. Gay activists are "moving ahead by inches and soon they're going to have just about everything they need except the marriage certificate," Motley said. The Alliance Defense Fund is suing the state of New York over the governor's recent actions.

ALLEGED FRAUD BRINGS DOWN ONE CHURCH AND MAY SPREAD TO OTHERS

(EP News)--David Talbot seemed like a trustworthy Christian businessman to the members of New Horizon Fellowship, a new church starting up in Wyckoff, N.J. He "talked the talk" of an evangelical Christian, according to Bill Werner, one of the elders at New Horizon. But according to Werner, and now according to the Attorney General of the State of New Jersey, he may have "talked the talk," but he didn't "walk the walk." That is, if you don't count a "perp walk": Talbot has been sued by New Jersey because he "operated a fraud" by selling over \$500-thousand in unregistered securities "which promised high yield returns." The complaint, filed in the Superior Court of Bergen County on Aug. 8, further alleges that Talbot and two co-defendants "appealed to investors' religious beliefs because some investors were told a percentage of the profits were going to charitable purposes, including to purchase a church." Werner believes other churches in the Chicago area and throughout the Midwest may have been victims of similar frauds.

RELIGIOUS HOSTILITY ON DISPLAY AT U.S. CAPITOL

(EP News)--On Dec. 2, the U.S. Capitol unveiled what one congressman has called a "\$600 million godless pit," a palatial underground visitors' center which is at the heart of an ongoing debate over the place of America's religious heritage in the nation's capital. Not only does the basement of the House and Senate's home have new galleries, theaters, and gift shops, but, as 108

congressmen rightly argue, it should also include an honest and complete portrayal of America's religious roots. Rep. Randy Forbes (R-Va.) and Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) have been vocal opponents of this spiritual "whitewashing" of America's most recognizable symbol. A last-minute plaster job tries, poorly, to hide the inaccurate reference to "E Pluribus Unum" as our national motto. "In God We Trust" was established by Congress as the national motto in 1956.

WASHINGTON, D.C., POURS MONEY INTO BROKEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

(EP News)--The Washington, D.C., public schools are among the worst in the country, according to a study from the National Assessment of Education Progress, even though they spend more money on each student than schools in 48 states. The study found that only one in seven D.C. fourth-graders ranked at grade level in reading and math. Among eighth-graders, just one in eight was proficient in reading and one in 12 at grade level in math. The district spends about \$13,700 per student, well above the national average of \$9,150.

IN DANGEROUS TREND, MORE WOMEN SELL THEIR EGGS

(EP News)--Some fertility clinics are reporting a surge in the number of women applying to donate eggs or serve as surrogates, The Wall Street Journal reported. The rate for a surrogate is about \$25,000. Egg donors receive \$3,000 to \$8,000. "Whenever the employment rate is down, we get more calls," Robin von Halle, president of Alternative Reproductive Resources in Chicago, told the newspaper. "We're even getting men offering up their wives. It's pretty scary."

UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO MESSAGE TO CHRISTIAN EMPLOYEES: SHUT UP

(EP News)--"A despicable double standard." That's what Thomas More Law Center President, Richard Thompson said as he blasted the University of Toledo's response justifying its firing of Crystal Dixon from her post as Associate VP for Human Resources. Thompson was reacting to a press statement released by the University that claimed Dixon's firing was about her ability to perform her sensitive job as associate vice president for human resources because of her statements in the Toledo Free Press. Those statements said she believed that homosexuality was wrong. Dixon's past job performance at the University — spanning six years and all in Human Resources — has always been outstanding. Her last job evaluation was excellent. In July 2007, Dixon was promoted to Interim Associate VP for Human Resources over all UT campuses. Thomas More Law Center is defending Dixon in an attempt to recover her career and financial damages.

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GALLUP: AMERICANS BELIEVE RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE IN DECLINE

(EP News)—According to a new Gallup survey, two-thirds of Americans think religion is losing its influence on U.S. life. Sixty-seven percent of Americans think religious influence is waning while just 27 percent say it is increasing. That perspective demonstrates a continuing downward trend, Gallup said. But the 27 percent figure is still higher than the record low, set in a 1970 poll, when just 14 percent of Americans thought religion was increasing in influence.

ANOTHER STATE MOVES TOWARD SAME-SEX "MARRIAGE"

(EP News)—When New Jersey passed its civil-union law two years ago, a commission was created to evaluate the new policy. In its final report, the Civil Union Review Commission has concluded the civil union law is insufficient and is calling on the Legislature to legalize same-sex "marriage." New Jersey would be the first state to legislate gay "marriage." Connecticut and Massachusetts allow same-sex "marriage," thanks to orders from their highest courts. Thirty states have amended their constitutions to protect marriage from redefinition by the courts and their legislatures. In November, California, Arizona and Florida voted to support marriage as between one man and one woman.

MARRIAGE ADVOCATES STAND STRONG

(EP News)—Those who supported California's marriage-protection amendment — including the Mormon Church — have faced violence and intimidation following its passage. But marriage advocates are standing strong. No Mob Veto, a project of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, ran a full-page ad in *The New York Times* last week, calling for an end to the acts of intolerance by opponents of Prop. 8. It was signed by more than a dozen religious leaders, including Chuck Colson. The National Organization for Marriage (NOM) launched a new Web site to help Californians facing threats to their livelihoods over their support for Prop 8. In addition, NOM will be launching radio ads across California to rally support for the targeted businesses.

ABORTION ACTIVISTS SEND WISH LIST TO OBAMA

(EP News)—Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice America and more than 50 of their pro-abortion allies have laid out their priorities for the incoming president in a 55-page memo. They reportedly were not happy when President-elect Barack Obama made the memo public on his Web site. The document covers everything from suggested executive orders and presidential memorandums to legislative changes and

regulatory initiatives. The memo also calls for the slashing of abstinence funding and an aggressive abortion-friendly foreign policy.

ILLINOIS PHARMACISTS CAN CHALLENGE DISCRIMINATORY RULE

(EP News)—The Illinois Supreme Court ruled in December that pharmacists and pharmacy owners have the right to challenge a state rule requiring them to dispense the morning-after pill, which contains a high dose of birth control. In issuing the 2005 emergency order, Gov. Rod Blagojevich said pharmacists should either dispense the controversial drug — regardless of their religious, moral or conscientious beliefs — or leave the profession. Two lower courts had ruled the pharmacists did not have legal standing to challenge the rule. Following the ruling by the state's highest court, the case will return to trial court.

MARRIED PARENTS, CHURCH ATTENDANCE SPELL SUCCESS FOR KIDS

(EP News)—Children have fewer problems at school and home when they live with their biological parents and frequently attend religious services, according to a study released today by the Family Research Council's Mapping America Project. Drs. Nicholas Zill and Philip Fletcher analyzed data from the National Survey of Children's Health and found the benefits hold up even after controlling for family income and poverty, low parent education levels, and race and ethnicity. Among their findings: children in this group are five times less likely to repeat a grade, less likely to have behavior problems at home and school, and are more likely to be cooperative and understanding of others' feelings. Parents of these children report less stress, healthier parent-child relationships and fewer concerns about their children's achievement.

REGULATIONS PROTECT DOCTORS' FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

(EP News)—Life advocates are praising the timing of new government rules that protect health care providers' freedom of conscience. The Department of Health and Human Services put the regulations in place last week to reinforce rules that protect doctors from being forced to participate in abortion and other anti-life practices. "By releasing them now, they will be in the federal register for 30 days before the Obama administration takes office," said Denise Burke, vice president and legal director for Americans United for Life. "For that reason, the Obama administration cannot simply erase these rules." Instead, several steps would be needed to overturn the regulations.

STUDY CONFIRMS IMPORTANCE OF MOM AND DAD

(EP News)—Relationships with both parents are great for kids and put them on a path to success, according to a study from

The Journal of Communication and Religion. In other words, girls need their dad and boys need their mom. Janice Crouse, senior fellow at Concerned Women for America, said it's nice when the research backs up what we already know. "The bottom line is that girls need a dad and boys need a mom," she said. "It's certainly common sense. "The study also pointed out that when you have a lot of interaction in a family, and they talk about religion, and the children are involved in religious activities, they have much higher quality of relationships."

POLL: AMERICANS WANT MOST ABORTIONS ILLEGAL

(EP News)—A new Harris Poll finds a plurality of Americans want all or most abortions to be illegal and overwhelming majorities of Americans want more abortion limits in law. The nationwide poll showed just 9 percent said abortion should be legal for any reason at any time during pregnancy. It found 82 percent of Americans said abortion should either be illegal under all circumstances or would limit its legality. More specifically, 49 percent of those polled took a pro-life position wanting all abortions made illegal (11 percent) or wanting almost all abortions illegal except for very rare cases of saving the mother's life or in rape or incest (38 percent).

OBAMA WOULD END "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL"

(EP News)—On Jan. 14, President-elect Barack Obama's press secretary Robert Gibbs said the president is committed to ending the ban on open homosexuality in the U.S. military. Responding to a questioner who asked if President-elect Obama will end the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, Obama Press Secretary Robert Gibbs gave a proud and unequivocal "Yes."

Pro-family activists responded immediately. Former presidential candidate Gary Bauer said, "With the tremendous economic challenges confronting this nation and a war against Islamofascists in Gaza and Afghanistan, why is pandering to a small minority such a priority for the new administration?"

President-elect Obama may think a change in policy is a good idea, but members of the military have a different view. A recent survey conducted by the *Military Times* found that 58 percent of active duty members oppose lifting the ban on open homosexuality. The survey also found that nearly a quarter would consider leaving the service if the ban were repealed.

"I have to wonder why any commander-in-chief would do anything in the middle of a war that would significantly undermine morale and lead to a mass exodus of experienced personnel when we need them most," Bauer said. "Sadly, the primary concern here does not appear to be the best interests of our men and women in uniform, but pushing the radical agenda of a militant movement at all costs."

LOUISIANA SCHOOLS ALLOWED TO DISCUSS CRITICISMS OF EVOLUTION

(EP News)—The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approved rules Tuesday that will allow public-school teachers to debate and discuss origin-of-life theories and criticisms of Darwinian evolution. Gene Mills, president of Louisiana Family Forum Action, said students will benefit from the Science Education Act. "The board acted appropriately, and as a result, academic freedom and inquiry are alive and well in Louisiana," he said.

CONGRESSMAN INTRODUCES PRO-LIFE LEGISLATION

(EP News)—Rep. Paul Broun, R-Ga. has introduced legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives to define life as beginning at fertilization. The bill lays the foundation for further legislation protecting the unborn. "It says this is a human being, and that human being has all the protections under the law," Broun said. "It gives that one-cell human being the constitutional protections all of us have." The bill has 51 co-sponsors, but, with Democrats in charge, faces a daunting climb out of committee. Broun said he's not discouraged and will introduce the same bill during every session of Congress until it passes or he retires.

OBAMA SUPPORTED GAY "MARRIAGE" BEFORE HE OPPOSED IT

(EP News)—A gay-activist newspaper in Chicago has discovered that President-elect Barack Obama supported same-sex "marriage" during his run for the Illinois Senate in 1996. Conservatives and liberals alike seem irritated by the flip-flop. In 1996, "Outlines" newspaper surveyed candidates for all levels of elected office. Obama's answer was very clear: "I favor legalizing same-sex marriages, and would fight efforts to prohibit such marriages." Obama has since dropped his support for gay "marriage" in favor of civil unions. More recently, he has said marriage is a religious issue and a state issue. Obama's transition team has had no comment on the report.

TEEN BIRTH RATE SOARS IN 26 STATES

(EP News)—The teen birth rate is up significantly in 26 states, according to government data released in early January and reported by USA Today. The highest rates in 2006 were in the South and Southwest; Mississippi led the way, with 68.4 births per 1,000 15- to 19-year-old girls. The lowest rates were in the Northeast. Janice Shaw Crouse, the head of Concerned Women for America, says that the increase was primarily in the 18- to 19-year-old group. To her, that means the pressure to have sex in college -- where most teens are in environments dominated by sex, drugs and alcohol -- is significantly high. Though Crouse is happy that abortions are on the decline, she hopes teen birthrates will

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decline, too. "The reality is that unmarried teen pregnancy is a sad event," Crouse concludes. "Sarah Palin poignantly wrote of her daughter's situation: Pregnancy makes a teen grow up too fast; the road ahead for a pregnant teen is a very difficult and hard path."

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

LONDON HANDS OUT THE PILL TO TEENS WITHOUT PRESCRIPTION

(EP News)—In January, women in London will be able to get birth-control pills without a prescription in an effort to reduce the number of teen pregnancies, The Telegraph reported. Women as young as 16 can obtain the pill in the two areas of London that report some of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the country: Southwark and Lambeth. Officials say the initiative then may be implemented throughout England.

AMSTERDAM TO CLOSE BROTHELS, GAMBLING PARLORS

(EP News)—Amsterdam has unveiled a comprehensive plan to close up to half of its businesses that "generate criminality," including brothels, gambling parlors and marijuana cafes. Saturday's announcement also includes offering help for those who lose their jobs as a result of the plan. Amsterdam legalized prostitution in 2000. "It appears that the most liberal city in the world has reached the end of 'tolerance,'" said Daniel Weiss, senior analyst for media and sexuality at Focus on the Family Action. "They have stretched the bonds of so-called human freedom and found that it becomes violent, criminal and abusive — a detriment to society. "Cultures, such as our own, ought to be wise by not allowing society to head toward such licentiousness."

DUTCH GAY GROUP CREATES FESTIVAL WITH TWO JOSEPHS, TWO MARYS

(EP News)—A Dutch gay group has announced plans for a 10-day "Pink Christmas" festival featuring a manger scene with two Josephs and two Marys. The group's spokesperson said the display was not intended to be offensive. Dr. Michael Brown, director of the Coalition of Conscience and a speaker at Focus on the Family's Love Won Out conferences, said, "It's important that whenever this happens, we raise our voice to speak the truth," he told Family News in Focus. "Christians (need to) take this time to celebrate the fact God sent His Son into the world — that's what it's about."

VATICAN REITERATES PRO-LIFE STANCE ON BIOETHICS ISSUES

(EP News)—The Vatican, in its first authoritative statement on reproductive science in more than 20 years, condemned human cloning, designer babies and embryonic stem-cell research, The Washington Post

reported. The 32-page document, which has the approval of Pope Benedict, warns about the moral dangers of a variety of procedures, including the genetic testing of embryos to identify those with defects. "It makes very clear that the Church is very closely watching scientific progress and favors that progress but wants ethics to be part of that," Richard Doerflinger, deputy director of pro-life activities at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, told The Post. "The whole subject of misuse of technology to demean human dignity is a major concern." Perhaps most importantly, the Church says life begins at fertilization, and anything that results in the destruction of an embryo is immoral.

MEDICAL GROUP SUGGESTS DELAYING PUBERTY IN GENDER-CONFUSED YOUTHS

(EP News)—The Endocrine Society suggests young people with gender-identity concerns be given drugs to block puberty, the BBC reported. The organization — which claims 14,000 members in more than 100 countries — says the drugs would give adolescents time to decide which gender they prefer. The treatment was tested in the Netherlands on kids as young as 11; clinics in Canada, Australia, Germany and the U.S. have started prescribing the drugs.



Peace In Christ

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determined on domination or destruction of the world. Our nation's president urges our citizens to build bomb or fallout shelters, while a former president is quoted as saying that he would prefer to die with his kindred and friends.

THE END---NOT YET

Surely men's hearts are "failing them for fear, and for looking after these things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:26). Dictators and slaves, statesmen, generals and common citizens, are alike fearful and uncertain of the future.

The one certainty seemingly agreed upon by all is that the bloodshed and desolation of previous wars are as nothing when compared with the world-wide devastation that may come upon us at any moment: such are the fearful expectations of men.

Our Lord warned of such times when He said: "And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but, the end shall not be yet" (Mark 13:7).

So the warnings of God's word confirm the opinions of men that the end is not yet.

ORIGIN OF WARS

However, when we inquire as to the reasons and sources of the wars and other conflicts among men and nations, God reveals the truth men generally refuse to face: "From whence come wars and

fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not" (James 4:1-2).

Politicians, generals, and historians may speak and write words without end in attempted explanation of rivalry and strife between men and nations, but the simple truth is that fights begin when one man lusts for what is rightfully another's; and wars are the result of the overwhelming desire of a nation or a nation's rulers to grab the possessions of other nations.

This simple tale of lust let loose is nothing new in the world's history. But it has come upon us on a larger scale and with greater potentialities for destruction than ever before.

WAR AGAINST GOD

Continuing the quotation from James, "ye fight and war, yet ye have not because ye ask not."

That is to say, fights and wars arise because sinful man is at enmity with his Creator to the extent that instead of asking God for needed blessings, he tries to snatch the blessings of the Creator from his fellow creatures.

Back of all enmity between men is the enmity of man against God. Paul had reference to this fact in Romans 5:10, where we are told that even those who are now God's people, reconciled to Him by the death of His Son, were formerly His enemies. Again in Ephesians 2:3, we are told that we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

The Bible plainly teaches that the settled disposition of mankind is a disposition of enmity against God.

If we are frightened by the prospect of attack by human enemies with weapons of human invention, how much more do we need to fear the judgment of God, the all-wise, all-mighty, eternal Creator, as He carries out the promise of His word to crush His enemies under His feet. Surely "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."

PEACE WITH GOD

Yet God has provided for the making of peace in the person of His Son. "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14). This peace with God which transcends all earthly strife is obtained by faith: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

PEACE OF GOD

Not only do believers in Jesus Christ have peace with God, having turned from rebellion against God, but as children of God, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7).

The true child of God can enjoy a peace of mind, heart, and conscience which no disturbance or strife of this world can touch.

NOT AS THE WORLD

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27).

So the peace we are talking about is not the sort of troubled peace, the sort of armed truce, a mere time of preparation for greater conflict, such as this world knows. Real peace requires the removal of the causes of conflict, and this kind of peace a world of wicked, greedy men cannot attain.

NOT PACIFISM

The peace we have in Christ is far from the hypocritical pacifism of "conscientious objectors." It is not obtained by pretending a peace that does not exist or by ignoring principles of truth and justice. The Christian's peace with God, far from teaching him to submit to wickedness, will make him so much the bolder in defense of the liberties and safety of his loved ones even as he learns to avenge not himself.

NOT COMPROMISE

As our peace with God in Christ is not attained by compromise but by surrendering all that is evil in our lives, in exchange for all that is good in the life of Christ given to us, so the expression of this peace in our earthly relations is not to be found in a spirit of compromise with the ways or with the powers of this world.

Compromise is never an end of strife. It settles nothing; it provides only an interlude wherein one or the other if not both of the conflicting parties may prepare for a more decisive conflict.

THROUGH VICTORY

As it is true of any enduring peace on an earthly plane that compromise settles nothing, but a decisive victory in war settles the question of which is the stronger power, at least for the time being, so the peace that is ours in Christ is the result of His overwhelming and eternal victory over all the powers of evil.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

In the world's history, a mighty nation may defeat all opponents in one war only to be defeated in turn in later years. But in the conflict between God and Satan, the victory of our Lord is for ever.

LASTING PEACE

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:7).

Whatever troubled peace we may experience for a few days or a few years in this present evil world, the people of God, according to His promises, await the second coming of the Prince of Peace, Who will rule the nations with a rod of iron and "maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth" (Ps. 46:9).



The Preeminence of Patience

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 -2002)

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb. 10:36).

My text points out the Christian's dire need of the grace of patience. There is never a time in our Christian life when patience is not needed. Patience is preeminent over all other graces because it beautifies and adorns all others. Every saved sinner needs to constantly exercise this virtue, for there is in his old nature a disposition to murmur and repine. The old Adamic man is liable to sink under protracted sufferings and persecutions unless it is subdued by the new nature.

PATIENCE DEFINED

The word “patience” means “the ability to bear suffering, provocation and delay with calmness and self-control.” It is the ability to endure trials without complaint; the virtue of persevering in the performance of a task against great opposition. It may be called the courage of virtue, the principle which enables a person to lessen the pains of his mind and body. It is an emotion which does not so much add to the number of his joys as it tends to diminish the number of his sufferings. Precious patience! which enables a person to grin and bear up under the most trying and testing ordeal!

Happy is the man who abounds in this most excellent grace. Blessed indeed is the man who can maintain a steady and unbroken mind amidst all the shocks of adversity, for nothing demonstrated a sterling Christian character better. Without such endurance prosperity will be continually disturbed and adversity will be clouded with double darkness. Nothing annoys our fellow man any more than a fretful spirit, and nothing enhances Christian character any more than the Heaven-born virtue of patience.

INPATIENCE IS A SIN

Patience is not an optional grace. II Peter 1:6 commands us to add patience to our other Christian graces. Failure to do this is a breach of the command of Christ. It retards Christian growth and lessens our usefulness for Christ. Christ was patient at all times and an example to us in submission to the will of the Father even though it involved suffering and death (I Pet. 2:20-23). We cannot be His disciples unless we have a patient spirit within us as He did while on earth. Isaiah 28:16 declares: **“He that believeth shall not make haste.”**

In all evils which admit a remedy impatience should be avoided, because it wastes time in complaints that, if properly applied, might remove the cause.

In cases that admit no remedy it is worse than useless to give way to impatience because of the utter uselessness of so doing. Time spent complaining would be better spent in the furtherance of some useful designs. Impatience accomplishes nothing that is of any value. Rather, it divides our efforts, frustrates our plans, and generally succeeds in making our lives miserable not only to ourselves but to all around us.

THE WORTH OF PATIENCE

The twentieth century is an age of impatience. The tendency of our time is to be in a rush even when there is no place to go. One of the hardest lessons to be learned in this impatient world is how to wait. Many Christians have never learned to labor and wait. Yes, I said labor and wait! What a world of meaning is in these words. How few possess the moral courage to live under the peaceful reign of King Patience. Truly the need of patience is great in these times of uncertainty and unrest.

In the business world men are not content with slow gain by adding dollars to dollars by hard work. The mass of business men despise laborious means to secure wealth. They rush headlong into schemes for a quick million. Young people frown upon a long courtship before marriage which would allow real love to develop. They jump into marriage one day and, in all too many cases, they jump out the next day. Wrecked cars are seen along the highway due to the mad rush of motorists to speedily arrive at their desired destination. Preachers resort to unscriptural means to build up their churches because they are too impatient to wait upon the Lord to give the increase.

Patience is worth something because it attracts the attention of Jesus Christ. Christ commended His churches in Asia Minor for exercising the grace of patience (Rev. 2:2-3, 19; 3:10). This shows that the Savior delights in church people who have the spirit of firm endurance amidst the many attempts of Satan to draw them away from the truth. If patience honors Christ and causes Him to commend us, then let us gladly bear the injuries of men. Let us endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Another reason that we know patience is a worthy virtue is because it is commended as a desired grace in man. Ecclesiastes 7:8 says: **“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.”** Here is something of great price in the sight of both man and God. Few things will ever be denied to the man who has a patient spirit. No road is too long for him and no mountain too high. To know how to wait is the great

secret of success.

The value of patience can be seen from the fact that it makes a person happy and comfortable inside. It enables a man to be able to live with himself. Jesus Christ said: **“In your patience possess ye your souls”** (Luke 21:19). An impatient man cannot enjoy the mercies of God nor any thing he has. He is always restless and uneasy. He is void of peace of mind and conscience.

THE SOURCE OF PATIENCE

Patience is not a product of the old nature. Rather, it is a grace for which special grace must be given by God. Without a portion of such grace from God man is the helpless subject of King Impatience. Those who possess patience have been granted it from **“the God of patience.”** The term, **“The God of patience”** found in Romans 15:5, shows this virtue must come from the Holy One. We must be strengthened **“with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness”** (Col. 1:11). We cannot bear evil times without Divine help. In times of tears and trouble, we can only look to God for patience to bear what He may see good to lay upon us.

Every born-again soul is a citizen **“in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ”** (Rev. 1:9). In regeneration God set up in the believer a kingdom of patience. The Spirit of Christ subdues fears in him and causes him to triumph over all his troubles. **“Nay, in all these things we are more than conqueror through him”** (Rom. 8:37). In the believer patience reigns and triumphs over all enemies. Through Christ he can march into the battlefield having nothing but the shield of patience and by bearing the blows gain the victory. The citizen of the kingdom of patience knows no defeat or disgrace.

THE INSTRUMENTAL MEANS OF IT

Truly patience is a Divinely-wrought grace in the heart of one of God's elect. Nevertheless, God is pleased to convey this grace to the regenerated man by the Bible as an instrumental cause. **“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope”** (Rom. 15:4). By a study of the Scriptures a man is encouraged to exercise patience. The Bible furnishes some sound arguments for it and gives some good examples of it. Those who search the Scriptures will be caused to **“follow after. . .patience”** (I Tim. 6:11).

The grace of patience is often learned in the school of suffering for Christ and gearing His reproaches. James tells us that the trial of our faith produces patience: **“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience”** (Jas. 1:3). In Romans 5:3 the Apostle Paul wrote: **“Knowing that tribulation**

worketh patience.” The more often faith is tried the easier it becomes to endure. We would have never read in the Bible of **“the patience of Job”** (Jas. 5:11) had it not been for the awful trials of his faith. Don't ever ask God to give you patience unless you are willing to have your faith sorely tried.

The nearness of the coming of Christ is used by God to stir us to patience. In a little while Christ will come and will not tarry. **“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh”** (Jas. 5:7-8). When James wanted to give a special inducement to patience, he held up the expectation of the Lord's coming.

James uses the example of the farmer to illustrate patience. The farmer must first work the soil and sow the seeds. Then he must trust God for a bountiful harvest. What good would it do him to fret about the rain and the cold? Would such fretting avail him anything? Would his impatience alter the state of the ground or change the weather? Would it make his harvest come early? No! His impatience can do him no good, but his patience can. He can only await the appointed season, sleeping and rising, while the crop is growing.

Men have preached the second coming of Christ since the first century of the Christian era. Thousands have died in faith without living until the time of this stupendous event. Are we to fret because Christ has not already come? Are we to cease our labor of preaching this glorious event because liberals say Christ is gone for ever? Certainly not! Like the farmer, we must keep on looking for the blessed hope of Christ's coming. While we live in expectation of this grand event, let us keep on doing what God has commanded to prevent us from being ashamed before Him at His coming. Patience is necessary until the coming of the Lord actually occurs.

PATIENT IN TRIBULATION

God calls His people to suffer tribulation in this world. They must even sometimes suffer from well-doing. Peter tells: **“For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps”** (I Peter 2:19-21).

Observe four facts stated here by Peter: First, Christians are called upon

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Patience

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to suffer for Christ and must expect it. Second, believers often suffer wrongfully for conscience sake. Third, they must be patient under such sufferings for it honors God. Fourth, in suffering for the Lord's sake they follow the example of Christ.

In Romans 12:12 Paul told the Roman Church: **"Patient in tribulation."** True piety is to suffer tribulation with an eye to God's glory. Tribulations work to our future glory. **"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"** (II Cor. 4:18). **"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"** (Rom. 8:18). **"The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ"** (I Pet. 1:7).

On account of remaining sin, tribulation is our portion while we abide in this earthly tabernacle. Many of the Lord's saints are at this present time lying upon beds of affliction. Others are rotting in cold jail cells for their faith in Christ. Still others are burdened down with a heavy cross to carry. Dear Christian pilgrim, do not despair nor be despondent. Before long your suffering will end, and you will exchange that old rough cross for a starry crown. So take fresh courage and endure to the end, for **"here is the patience and faith of the saints"** (Rev. 13:10; 14:12). Don't fret or fear pain. These things are killed by enduring them. In a little while you will leave these mortal realms with all their troubles and forget in the first hour in Paradise the things of earth.

PATIENCE IN THE CHRISTIAN RACE

The writer of Hebrews says: **"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us"** (Heb. 12:1). As a Christian I have a race of suffering and service to run. This race is set before me in the Word of God and by the examples of the faithful servants of God. Patience and perseverance is needed because of the difficulties that lie in the race track. We cannot be successful in this contest unless we in patient endurance run the race.

Perhaps you grieve over your present ignorance of the Bible, although you have constantly searched the Scriptures. Maybe you feel that others have out run you to a large degree. Or you may lament the lack of success in witnessing for

Christ. Have others out run you in this respect? Perhaps you have prayed time after time without receiving the answer. Then you may be weary from the many struggles with the Evil One. Don't you dare quit! Don't think about ceasing to struggle in the race. Keep on keeping on. Psalm 37:7 says: **"Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."**

I Thessalonians 5:14 commands us: **"Be patient toward all men."** Never a day passes in the course of human affairs, which does not call for the exercise of this grace. Patience is needed in the home circle. Let parents be patient with their children. They are weak, and we are strong. They have scarcely begun the journey of life. Experience has not taught them to speak carefully and to go softly. What if their play and amusements grate upon our nerves? Be patient with them. Time will soon enough check their childish impulses.

Be patient with your friends. They are neither omniscient nor omnipotent. They cannot see the motives of your heart, and, therefore, they may misunderstand you. They do not know what is always best for you and may select what is worst. Sometimes their actions may lack the purity of purpose, but do you not also lack the same in some cases? So be patient with your friends. Endure them, and in enduring them you will conquer them; and if not them, then at least yourself. Those who bear with their friends are **"sound. . . in patience"** (Tit. 2:2).

Pastors, be patient with your church members. We should be for patience is one of the qualifications of a pastor (I Tim. 3:3; II Cor. 6:4; II Tim. 2:24-25). Preacher brethren, do you have some parishioners who do not live up to your expectations? Are you uneasy about the actions of your young converts? Are you perplexed over the Biblical ignorance of the membership? Then work hard to change this situation for the glory of Christ, but don't forget to be patient with the flock of God. Please remember that they---like yourself---are but sinners saved by the grace of God.

James said: **"But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing"** (Jas. 1:4). In order for patience to have its perfect work, we need to cultivate it. We can overcome impatience by constantly exercising patience. Let us endure and continue to the end. When the work of patience is complete, it will furnish us with all that is necessary for our Christian race. Finally, its perfect work will end and be crowned with glory: **"To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life"** (Rom. 2:7).

CONCLUSION

The Christian must learn contentment

in every state and be thankful for each mercy. The Christian life is not a flowery bed of ease. The soldier who goes to war cannot expect to be at peace with his enemy. The captain of a ship cannot expect all the sea voyage to be fair and calm weather. Likewise, the Christian will find all kinds of weather in His journey to Heaven. Many a storm will overtake him before he comes to his journey's end. Only those who **"patiently endure"** are permitted to **"inherit the promises"** (Heb. 6:12, 15).

Oh, how needful is this grace of patience! The great works of human power have all been achieved by the exercise of this virtue. Patience is the best chemist, for out of course earth she can draw pure gold, out of trouble peace, out of sorrow joy, out of persecution profit, out of affliction comfort. She is liberty to the prisoner who sits in a narrow cell. She makes poor beggars rich.

All the miseries of the world cannot make a patient man sick, for patience keeps him healthy and vigorous. The patient man kisses the cross he must be crucified upon. The unjust frowns of the world are to him flattering smiles. His tormentors are weary of him. The stair to the scaffold of his martyrdom he views as stepping stones up to glory. All men wonder at him. He seems below all men, below himself, yet he is above nature. By

God's grace he has so overcome himself that none can conquer him.

The psalmist wrote: **"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD"** (Ps. 27:14). May be never murmur over an apparent delay in Divine Providence. God does defer, but His deferring is not without purpose. Abraham was an old man before he enjoyed his son of promise. Joseph stayed a long time in prison before he was exalted. So cheer up, Christian brother! A dark morning is followed by a bright day, a weary week is followed by a Sabbath, and after a fight a victory is enjoyed. God's time is best; therefore, resolve upon waiting His leisure (Rom. 8:25).

I cannot close this message without a word to lost sinners. The Bible says Christ died to save sinners. It also says that a believing sinner is saved by the atonement of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:25). All that a poor lost sinner can do is to look at Jesus Christ and **"both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord"** (Lam. 3:25). May this message fall upon **"an honest and good heart"** who **"having heard the word"** and received its teaching may **"bring forth fruit with patience"** (Luke 8:15).



Holiness of God in the Gospel

By Alexnader Carson
(1776 - 1844)

The holiness of Jehovah is exhibited in Scripture in the most august and awful language. Hardened must be the mind which it does not affect with reverence and fear. The heathens spoke of their deities as being holy; they had holy places and holy things. But of the purity of the Divine nature they had no adequate conception. Their holiness was not inconsistent with sin and spiritual pollution.

The Scriptures employ peculiar forms of expression to impress us more deeply with this attribute of the Divine nature. The impossibility of adequately expressing the idea of Divine holiness, in the ordinary forms of language, has led to the adoption of a superlative of a very peculiar nature, in which the object in contrast with God, though possessing the quality in the most perfect degree, is asserted not to possess it at all, or even to possess the contrary quality. This form of speech, though rare, is founded in human nature, and might be exemplified among men. But it is in the eloquence of Heaven that it has its peculiar place. Here it has scope without any appearance of extravagance or affection. **"Yea,"** says Job, **"the heavens are not clean in his sight."** The heavens are the work of the holy God. They must be perfectly clean. If there is comparative purity in the works of the holy

God, the heavens must possess the highest degree of the quality. Why, then, are they said not to be clean? It is by comparison only. It is only in his sight, and not in their own nature, that they are asserted not to be clean. Though in themselves they are altogether free of impurity, yet, in contrast with the purity of God, their purity is not only as nothing, but even as impurity. We can form no conception of the perfection of this awful attribute of Deity; but here we have data by which we can determine that it is infinite beyond any degree of the quality, even in God's own most glorious works. How dreadful must this Divine attribute be! Angels may veil their faces when they come before God. How blind must be the mind of that man who can venture into the presence of God relying on his own holiness? If the very heavens are not clean in his sight, how filthy must sinners appear before him? Arrogance! why speakest thou of thine own righteousness? Why doest thou boast of the holiness of thy life and heart? With juster pretensions may the swine boast of the cleanliness of its nature and habits. Why does vile man presume to be fit for the society of Him in whose sight the very heavens are not clean? Before this God no son of Adam is in himself fit to appear. It must be condescension in Him to admit angels into His presence. Vile sinner! dare not to come near Him in thine own

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Vessels of Mercy

By Tom Ross
of South Point, Ohio

“And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory” (Rom. 9:23).

Romans chapter 9 is one of the most forceful declarations in all of Scripture of the sovereignty of God in salvation illustrated by the work of a Sovereign Potter. God is the Sovereign Potter who chooses the elect out of the corrupt mass of depraved mankind according to His own purpose and grace, then fashions them for His glory. They are called vessels of mercy because they are the objects of God’s love and affection which moves Him to change them in regeneration and cleanse them in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The vessels of mercy are here contrasted from the vessels of wrath who are said to be fitted for destruction. They are left in their original miserable state to perish in their sins. If God has been pleased to choose and prepare you as a vessel of mercy your heart should be bursting with love and gratitude because you are by nature no better than the vessels of wrath.

Let us go to the house of the Sovereign Potter and examine the way in which He makes the vessels of mercy, and what uses they are designed for.

THE NATURE OF A VESSEL

1. In Bible times all vessels were originally made out of the clay of the earth. There is no natural beauty in clay. So it with God’s elect. By nature we are not beautiful, but rather repulsive and sinful in the eyes of God. There was nothing in anyone of us that attracted the holy eye of God. In fact He saw us in our sins, filled with impurity and iniquity, defiled with depravity, unfit and unacceptable in His sight (Ps. 14:2-3; Isa. 1:6; 64:6).

2. Clay in its original form is dead, lifeless, and without form. This adequately describes our original nature. We were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). We were ruined by sin, without spiritual form, and good for nothing (John 6:63; Rom. 7:18).

3. Clay cannot mold itself into a vessel that is pleasing to the Potter. Likewise, no man can so overcome his depraved nature as to mold himself as an object of God’s mercy and grace. Just as it is impossible for clay to make itself into a beautiful vessel, it is just as impossible for depraved mankind to perform so many good works as to beautify themselves with righteousness sufficient to make them acceptable to God (Rom. 8:7-8). Salvation is not earned by the works of men, it is freely given by the grace of God.

4. Vessels are originally made empty. When vessels are first formed they possess nothing until filled by the owner. We were all once filled with self-righteousness, self-



trust, false hopes, and faulty religious notions. But when God began the work of grace in our hearts He emptied us of all that so that the only thing that we could receive was the righteousness of Christ. God’s elect were once vessels filled up with themselves, but praise God, He has emptied us and filled us with trust in Jesus Christ alone. All we are, all we have, we owe to God’s grace. Paul asked the following question of the Corinthians: **“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”** (I Cor. 4:7)? He answers the question in I Corinthians 15:10 by stating **“But by the grace of God I am what I am. . .”** We are merely vessels who have received of His mercy, goodness, and love. If we run with gratitude and praise, it is only because God has been pleased to fill us with His grace. If we do anything that is honoring to God or pleasing in His sight, as vessels it is only because God has worked in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). Every true vessel of mercy must confess that **“...Christ is all, and in all”** (Col. 3:11).

THE MAKING OF THE VESSELS OF MERCY

1. Every potter has a plan that he forms in his mind before He begins His work of fashioning the clay. No potter comes to the wheel in a haphazard way, hoping that some good will come out of his work. No, he has a plan, a pattern that he executes in order to make a useful vessel. Likewise, God as the Sovereign Potter devised a plan to make the vessels of mercy. Our text declares that the vessels of mercy were afore prepared unto glory. Before the world began, in the sovereign decree of election, God chose us in Christ and determined to fashion us as vessels of mercy according to His own pleasure and will. God’s plan to fashion the vessels of mercy into trophies of grace is as eternal as He is (Jer. 31:3; Eph. 1:4; II Tim. 1:9).

2. When a vessel is formed by the potter the clay is entirely passive. Whatever that vessel becomes it owes to the work of the potter who skillfully molds and shapes it. Likewise, every aspect of our salvation is entirely of God. We are regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, justified by faith in the sacrifice of Christ. If we are saved vessels of mercy we owe it all to the sovereign work of our Heavenly Potter. God is the elect’s sovereign Potter who is pleased to create within them a new nature (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) which fits them for the presence of God.

3. Once the plan is formulated, and the clay is formed, the vessel then must be placed in the fires of the kiln to cure it and prepare it for use. Likewise, God’s elect must go through the fires of conviction of sin before they are ready to receive the fountain of grace that flows from Christ. So many people are merely religious vessels who have never been cured by the heat of conviction. As a result they are unable to receive the truth of God’s sovereign grace. Every true believer has been first convicted of sin before receiving the grace of Christ. I will never forget how the fires of conviction burned within my heart and mind. God made me pass through the fiery mount of Sinai’s law, making me feel my guilt and corruption, before I was brought to the foot of Calvary’s cross and made clean by the blood of the Lamb.

4. After the vessel is cured in the fire, it must be cleansed and washed before it is used. Likewise God’s elect are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ at the point of faith in justification, fitting them for use. I will never forget the glad and joyous day when Jesus Christ washed me and made me clean through faith in His blood. It was as if the Sovereign Potter completely immersed me in the love and grace of Jesus Christ. My vessel was submerged in a sea of unending grace and mercy. I experienced the forgiveness of sins. I was made clean and righteous in the sight of God through Jesus Christ who said unto me, **“Be thou clean.”**

VARIOUS USES OF VESSELS

1. Vessels are made to hold valuables and treasures. God’s elect have within them the unsearchable riches of Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 4:7). What makes the vessel valuable, as a general rule, is what it contains.

2. Vessels are used to carry water from one place to another in order to refresh the thirsty. God’s elect are vessels filled with the living waters of the Spirit of God (John 7:38-39). As vessels filled with the grace of the Spirit we are commanded to carry the refreshing news of the Gospel from place to place in order to refresh souls that have been made thirsty by the power of God. Proverbs 25:25 declares: **“As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.”**

3. Some vessels are used to carry water for bathing and cleansing purposes. Likewise God has appointed His ministers as vessels to carry the sanctifying truth of the word of God (John 15:3; 17:17) to cleanse and sanctify the Lord’s church. Christ is pleased to cleanse His church through the power of the Word as Ephesians 5:26-27 declares: **“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”**

4. Other vessels are made for the express purpose of beautifying the Potter’s house. They are carefully formed and painted by

the Potter to reflect His glory and show the expertise of his workmanship. Likewise God’s elect are **“...his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”** (Eph. 2:10). As God’s choice vessels it behooves believers to behave in such a way **“...that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things”** (Titus 2:10), by being **“...careful to maintain good works”** (Titus 3:8). God has been pleased to place some (not all; I Cor. 12:28) of His choice vessels in His house, which is His church (I Tim. 3:15). As these vessels serve the Lord faithfully in His house they bring glory to their Maker as Ephesians 3:21 declares: **“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”**

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS DRAWN FROM THIS METAPHOR

1. Let us praise Almighty God, the Sovereign Potter, for His eternal love in marking us out as His vessels of mercy, then forming us by His regenerating power, and cleansing us through the justifying righteousness of Christ’s blood. By nature we are not better than the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction as we were out of the same depraved lump of lost mankind. Unworthy and undefiled as we were, God determined to make us partakers of His matchless and sovereign grace. As God’s elect our hearts should be filled with praise, wonder, and humility that we would bear the title of **“vessels of mercy.”**

2. Let us also remember that as vessels we are subject to the defilement of the world and the filth of indwelling sin. Let us daily pray for God’s sustaining and sanctifying grace to enable us to be vessels of honor by taking heed to the admonition of II Timothy 2:21-22 which states: **“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”** If we expect to be vessels used by the Lord for His glory we must daily bathe ourselves in the Word of God and **“...cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”** (II Cor. 7:1).

3. As God’s vessels of mercy let us never forget the purpose for which we were formed by His grace. Our lives are to be solely committed to bringing glory to our Maker. As His vessels we have been commissioned to carry the water of life with us every where we go by preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through a changed life and a clean testimony we should echo the Spirit’s declaration contained in Revelation 22:17: **“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is**

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Vessels of Mercy

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athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

4. Even the best, most durable, and beautiful of earthly vessels made by men are subject to crack and leak. Earthly vessels are often broken and destroyed through neglect or carelessness. As God's vessels of mercy in this life we are often broken by sin and disfigured by the temptations of Satan. Yet, because we are God's workmanship we can rejoice in knowing that one day every flaw will be removed and every broken piece of our lives will be made whole by God's glorifying grace when we are completely conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. God's vessels are never beyond repair. In fact there is coming a grand and glorious day when all the "vessels of mercy" will have every imperfection removed. All of God's vessels of mercy will be put on display "that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7).



Holiness of God

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holiness.

How glorious is that plan of salvation by which the vilest sinner on earth can appear with perfect holiness before Him in whose sight the very heavens are not clean! The believer is purer than the heavens, for the purity of Him who made the heavens is his purity. He is one with Him who is one with God. As the body is dignified by its union with the soul, so the believer is dignified by his union with Christ.

In a manner of speaking that proceeds on a similar principle Habakkuk says--- "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Nothing can escape the eye of the Lord. Yet to express strongly His aversion to sin, and its filthiness in His estimation, it is said that He cannot look on it. Strong aversion prompts to turn from the sight of a hated object. This, in some, may proceed to such a height that the disposition cannot be overcome. Hatred may be so intense that it cannot look on its object, even when it is before its eyes. But this is weakness. Yet, to express God's abhorrence of sin, this weakness is ascribed to Him in form of speech. How dreadful is this consideration to the sinner! If, to show the abhorrence of God to sin, forms of expression are adopted that literally limit His power, must it not be impossible for the unholy to live in His presence? How can any of the sons of men approach Him? Who is there in whom there is not sin? Be ashamed and confounded, ye sons of science, and all ye Pharisees, who dare to come before God in your own holiness. Your deity is not the

holy God of the Scriptures. He is very good-natured with regard to human frailty, and is altogether such as yourselves. But if you cannot learn the way in which a God who cannot look on iniquity may be approached with acceptance, ye must perish.

All the forms of human languages, however, are unable to give us such an idea of the infinite purity of God and His hatred of sin as we find in the cross of Christ. Such is His abhorrence of sin that when his own Son took it on Him, in a way that did not pollute His nature, he could not look at it even in Him. When the Lord Jesus Christ made himself a sinner, by taking our sins on Him, and suffered for them as if they had been committed by Him, His Father hid His face from Him. Though He was suffering according to the Father's command, and though the Father was well pleased in Him, yet, at the moment when He bore the curse of the law, He gave Him the like treatment as was due to us. He gave Him no token of His approbation till he had finished the work, and rolled away sin from off His shoulders. Under a sense of the hiding of His Father's face He exclaimed---"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yes, why? Why did the Father forsake his Son, when His Son was suffering according to the will of His Father? Had He not received a command to lay down His life for His sheep? Why, then, forsake His Son? Why smile on martyrs, and frown on the King of martyrs? Why open the heavens, for the consolation of Stephen, and from Jesus hide His face, to the additional suffering of His own Son? The answer is obvious. Stephen had no sin on him. He died acquitted from all guilt. Jesus, in His death, had all the sins of all His people on Him; and a holy God does not look on Him till He becomes as innocent in the eye of the law as He is in His own holy nature. The holy God could not look on sin even when it was borne by His own Son. How, then, can sinners expect to live before God, if there is not a point of view in which God, who cannot look on sin, can look on them as without sin? Nothing but the death of Christ can free the sinner from pollution. In Jesus Christ we have holiness as well as righteousness.

What a wonderful plan of salvation is that of the Gospel! It abounds with wonders, which human wisdom cannot understand, even when they are laid before its eyes in the plainest language of Revelation. How slowly does the Christian himself become acquainted with the glory of the Gospel! He is informed by the Divine testimony that Christ is "of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." This imports that Christ is our wisdom and our holiness, as well as our righteousness and redemption. Yet this appears to us so strange, that our own wisdom compels us, while we restrict the righteousness and the redemption to what we find in Christ, to refer the wisdom and the sanctification to what Christ by His Spirit works in us. It is very true that Christ,

by His Spirit, communicates wisdom to His people and holiness to His people. But it is evident that it cannot be of these that the Holy Spirit here speaks. He is speaking, not of what Christ works in His people, but of what Christ is made to them. It is not of the wisdom and holiness that Christ, by His Word and Spirit, communicates to us, that this passage speaks, more than it is of a righteousness and redemption which they are enabled to work in their own hearts. It is the wisdom and holiness, as well as the righteousness and redemption which are in Christ, and which are not in the believer's heart. We are not, in this passage, said to be made wise and holy by Christ; but Christ is said to be of God made all those things to us. He is said to be made to us wisdom and sanctification, in the same sense in which He is made redemption. Now, redemption

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Berea Baptist Church of Mantachie, MS is in the process of making available piano accompaniment CD's for the Berea Baptist Hymnal-Third Edition. Any churches or individuals that would like the ones currently available and the others as they are made available, please contact us and they will be sent without cost.

Also, we are looking at publishing a small number of booklets with the hymns to go along with these for those who don't have the hymnals. Please contact us if you are interested.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Caldwell, KS and Pastor Nathaniel R. Hille would like to announce that they have a church website.

The url is www.sgbccaldwell.org.

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER

Financial Report

12-1-2008 to 12-31-2008

Beginning Balance	\$7,582.93
RECEIPTS:	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX.....	25.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	200.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL.....	60.00
Berea M. B. C., West Point, TN	150.00
Bethel M. B. C., Pasadena, TX.....	100.00
Bible Believers B. C., Naples, ID	100.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	300.00
Buffalo Valley B. C., Clay, WV	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL.....	25.00
Eve Knowles, Scarborough, ME.....	200.00
Faith M. B. C., Lynn, AR.....	25.00
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY.....	100.00
Grace B. C., Marion, IL.....	50.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK.....	35.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
Joseph Jurzec, Richmond, IL	25.00
L. H. Farrell, Des Allemands, LA.....	245.00
Landmark S. G. B. C., Wheelersburg, OH..	100.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM.....	100.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH.....	100.00
New Testamnet B. C., Bristol, TN	10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Nicole Painter, Bradford, IL	30.06
Ocoonita M. B. C., Keokee, VA.....	40.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
South Park M.B.C., Seattle, WA	25.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Columbus, MS	50.00

Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL.....	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Wake Forest, NC.....	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Warren, OH.....	75.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Walnut Creek B. C., Centerburg, OH.....	50.00
Subscriptions	130.00
Anon.....	132.50
Sub Total	\$3,102.56
TOTAL	\$10,685.49

EXPENDITURES:

Printing.....	581.71
Postage	834.75
Wages	2,000.00
FICA	153.01
Supplies	161.04
Total Expenditures	3,730.51
ENDING BALANCE	\$6,954.98

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER 2008 Yearly Financial Report

Beginning Balance	\$7,729.43
Receipts.....	45,584.47
.....	53,313.90

EXPENDITURES:

Printing.....	6,990.21
Postage	9,687.66
Wages	24,942.00
FICA	1,907.93
Supplies	1,177.12
Dividing Checks	1,654.00
Total Expenditures	46,358.92
ENDING BALANCE	\$6,954.98

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST

Financial Report

12-1-2008 to 12-31-2008

Beginning Balance	\$13,001.59
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Berea M. B. C., West Point, TN	50.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY.....	100.00
.....	375.00
TOTAL	13,376.59

EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time	520.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	520.00
.....	\$12,856.59
Interest	+1.13
Check Never Cleared	+160.00
.....	13,017.72
Less Corbin, KY des.	-1,690.92
ENDING BALANCE	\$11,326.80

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance	\$1,850.92
RECEIPTS:	
.....	1,850.92
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT	320.00
.....	1,530.92
Check Never Cleared	+160.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,690.92

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST

2008 Yearly Financial Report

Beginning Balance	\$13,045.16
Receipts.....	8,700.00
Interest	16.86
.....	\$21,762.02

EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time (US)	8,280.60
Radio Time (Philippines)	3,200.00
Tape Production.....	610.00
Postage	213.70
.....	9,104.30
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	12,657.72
2 Checks Never Cleared	+360.00
BALANCE	\$13,017.72
Less Corbin, KY des.	-1,690.92
ENDING BALANCE	\$11,326.80

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance	\$1,811.52
Receipts.....	2,000.00
.....	3,811.52
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT	2,480.60
.....	1,330.92
2 Checks Never Cleared	+360.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,690.92

Heavenly Desire

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:23).

Behold the Christian where he doubtful stands,
Fast bound to Friends by blooming roseate bands;
He feels the touch of love on earth below,
And yet to heaven straightway would gladly go;
For them, more needful longer here to stay,
For him, far better thus to soar away.
As when safe-anchored in some foreign bay,
The ship of merchandise may proudly lay;

The Captain's cleared, with passport, to set sail,
He longs for home, and courts the coming gale.
The general interests of the firm demand
His longer service in that far-off land;
He fain would weigh, and homeward point his prow,
Yet to his duty would submissive bow;
This done, he'll trip, and loose the flowing sail,
And homeward scud before the sounding gale.

The engraving represents an affectionate Father, who, though standing on the world, and bound with the strong cord of affection, yet looks upward, evidently longing to depart and be with Christ, which, as the Apostle says, is far better. Though he may feel this, yet oftentimes he feels strongly bound with the cords of love to remain with the objects of his affection here on the earth, to whom his stay at present seems needful. He, however, does not consider this world as his abiding-place; he has it beneath his feet; he is looking upward, and waiting for his translation to one above.

Thus the Christian stands ready prepared, and longs to depart and be with Christ; but the interests of earth exercise an influence over him and bind him down with the golden bands of affectionate love. When a sinner becomes a saint, his relations become changed, “old things have passed away. Behold all things have become new.” A “new heart” is given, filled with



love to God and man. A new world is presented full of glorious realities, substantial and eternal. A new God is given, Jehovah is His name. He formerly worshiped the gods of this world. A new Savior is embraced, who is the “altogether lovely.” New companions, the noblest, the wisest, and the best. He is the subject of another King, one Jesus; the citizen of another city which is out of sight, whose Builder and Maker is God; the heir of an inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away.

No wonder, then, if he should oftentimes desire to depart in order to possess all this happiness. Wandering on earth, “here he has no abiding city;” a stranger and

pilgrim as all his fathers were. Nevertheless, he has interests, affections, and duties of an earthly kind; these have a weighty claim upon him; they are connected with God and eternity. The religion of the Bible, while it strengthens the powers of the intellect, and sanctifies the soul, does also increase the power of natural affection, and makes us capable of the most lively emotions.

The true minister of the Gospel, like the great Apostle, would cheerfully lay down his work and away to Jesus, but the interests of his master demand that he should stay, and build up the waste places of Jerusalem; therefore, he says, “**All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.**”

The pious parent, when visited by sickness, would fain regard it as a call to Heaven, but the dear pledges of love are weeping round the bedside, and their youthful state demands a faithful guardian. He can only say, “**I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.**” The will of the Lord be done.

“How happy is the pilgrim's lot!
How free from every groveling thought,
From worldly hope and fear!
Confined to neither court nor cell,
His soul disdains on earth to dwell,
He only sojourns here.

“Nothing on earth I call my own:
A stranger to the world, unknown,
I all their wealth despise;
I trample on their whole delight,
And seek a country out of sight,
A country in the skies.” ---Wesley

Holiness of God

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is not a thing that is wrought in us, but has been wrought for us. So the wisdom and the holiness spoken of in this passage are these qualities as they are in Christ. Wisdom is conferred on us by the Word and Spirit of God, and so is holiness; but these, as they are in us, are still imperfect and progressive. But as we have them in Christ, they are as perfect as righteousness and redemption. The sanctification and wisdom which Christ bestows on us, through His Word and by His Spirit, are gradually accomplished, from our first turning unto God by faith, till the time of our entrance into glory. But the wisdom and sanctification here spoken of must be perfect from the first moment; because we have them in Him. We need a perfect holiness, as well as a perfect righteousness and redemption, in order to find access to God. A want of perfect holiness would keep us from access to God by prayer, as well as it would keep us out of Heaven. And for the service of God on earth, as well as in Heaven, perfect holiness is as necessary as perfect righteousness. God

cannot look on sin. If we cannot approach Him in a way in which He can look on us as perfectly holy, we cannot approach Him at all. Christ, then, is this way. He is our holiness as well as He is our redemption. In Him we are as holy as we are righteous. In us, as we present ourselves before Him through Christ, God sees no sin. He looks on us in the face of His Anointed, and He sees us purer than the heavens. Everything that the law of God demands in us it finds in Him, with whom we are one. We have much ignorance, even after we are taught by the Spirit; but Christ is made of God unto us wisdom. In Him we are wise, and holy, and righteous, and redeemed.

This distinction is of great importance. Inattention to it is the ground of opposite errors. Some speak of the sanctification of the believer, through the Spirit of God, as being perfect from the moment of believing, and consequently incapable of progress. The believer has a sanctification which is perfect from the first moment of faith; but this is not the sanctification in the heart, but the sanctification which he has in Christ. While, in defending the sentiment referred to, its advocate says many things that are true, he is on other

things obliged to force the testimony of the Spirit. That sanctification is not progressive it will require force to oblige the Scriptures to testify. But that the believer must have, from the moment of believing, a perfect sanctification, is as necessary as that he should have a perfect righteousness and redemption.

Antipodal to this error is that of those who boast of attaining perfection in the sanctification of the Spirit. Such persons, unless their paradox is merely in their language, as is to be hoped may often be the case, are profoundly ignorant both of the

Scriptures and of their own hearts. He who can see nothing but what is good in his own heart must be doubly dead in sin. The most highly advanced in holiness will always have the deepest convictions of the evil of their own hearts. The heart, in all men, is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it? When any evil is confessed, the half of its evil is not told. The man who can look with complacency on his own heart must be spiritually both blind and dead.



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