

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

SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD

By Jonathan Edwards
(1703 - 1758)

(Preached on July 8, 1741)

"Their foot shall slide in due time"
(Deut. 32:35).

There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of Hell, but the mere pleasure of God.

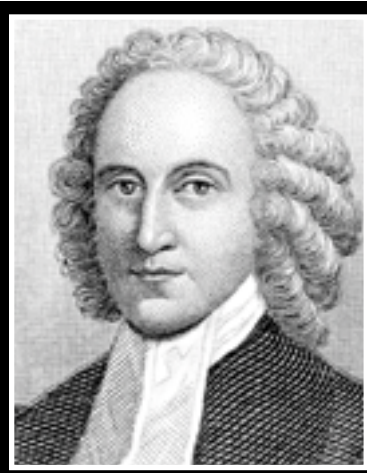
By the mere pleasure of God, I mean His sovereign pleasure, His arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty any more than if nothing else but God's mere will had, in the last degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment.

The truth of this observation may appear by the following considerations:

1. There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into Hell at any moment. Men's hands cannot be strong,

when God rises up. The strongest have no power to resist Him, nor can any deliver out of His hands.

He is not only able to cast wicked men into Hell, but He can most easily do it. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty in subduing a rebel, who has found means to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the number of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any defense from the power of God. Though hand join in hand, and a vast multitude of God's enemies combine and associate themselves, they are easily broken in pieces. They are as great heaps



of light chaff before the whirlwind; or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames. We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; so it is easy for us to cut or singe a slender thread that anything hands by: thus easy is it for God when He pleases, to cast His enemies down to Hell.

What are we, that we should think to stand before Him, at Whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before Whom the rocks are thrown down?

2. They deserve to be cast into Hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way; it makes no objection against God's using

His power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, **"Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?"** (Luke 13:7). The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will that holds it back.

3. They are already under a sentence of condemnation to Hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between Him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to Hell. John 3:18---**"He that believeth not**

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Hope for the Hopeless

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the LORD is" (Jer. 17:7).

The word "hope" means "to long for with expectation of obtainment." It would not be possible to overestimate the importance of the grace of hope. If there were no hope of a better day, then man would have no desire to continue his existence in this world. Without hope in God and the better country men are hopeless.

VAIN HOPES

Some make too much of hope, while others make too little. Many people place their hope in the wrong things. The hope of the world is not in peace counsels, a new administration in Washington, better legislation, improved social conditions, greater medical care, or racial equality. Jesus Christ is and shall forever remain the only hope of the world.



What are some of the things men hope for? The Prophet Jeremiah declared: **"Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel"** (Jer. 3:23). Here the prophet reminds Israel of the futility of hoping for salvation from their multitude of idols upon the hills and mountains. God was ignored as the people expected help from creature comforts. Such human-devised saviors always fail. **"When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of the unjust men perisheth"** (Prov. 11:7).

First, it may be said that some deluded souls, like Israel of old, put their hope in

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The Salvation of Cornelius

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

Today, I want to look at the account of the salvation of Cornelius. The account of Cornelius, and the salvation of him and his household, takes up one and a half chapters in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. The relation of the events that take place concerning Cornelius, begins in Acts 10:1 and continues through Acts 11:18. The amount of words and the space that is devoted to this man and the events surrounding him, tells me that something important is taking place here.

WE SHOULD NOT CONSIDER ANY MAN UNWORTHY TO HEAR THE GOSPEL

As the children of God, and especially as members of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the responsibility to preach the gospel. The Lord told His church in Mark 16:15, ". . . **Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to**



every creature." The Lord commanded us to preach the gospel indiscriminately, to **"every creature."** We are never commanded to withhold the gospel or the blessings of God

from any man because he does not possess some admirable quality. We are never commanded to abstain from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to a certain individual just because that individual does not seem to be as apt to believe as perhaps another, more noble, individual. We are not commanded to preach the gospel to only the best and the brightest and the most moral men within a certain area, but rather we are commanded to preach the gospel to every creature.

Peter told Cornelius in Acts 10:34,

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A world full of doomed sinners ready to be harvested from the eternal flames of Hell; while Churches are full of lukewarm repenters asleep at the plow.

"Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23).

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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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Sinners In the Hands

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is condemned already." So that every unconverted man properly belongs to Hell; that is his place; from thence he is. John 8:23---"Ye are from beneath;" and thither he is bound; it is the place that justice, and God's Word, and sentence of His unchangeable law, assign to him.

4. They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of Hell; and the reason why they do not go down to Hell at each moment, is not because God, in Whose power they are, is not at present very angry with them; as He is with many miserable creatures now tormented in Hell, who there feel and bear the fierceness of His wrath. Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth, yea doubtless with some who may read this article, who, it may be are at ease, than He is with many of those that are now in the flames of Hell.

So it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that He does not let loose His hand, and cut them off. God is not altogether such a one as themselves, though they may imagine Him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whetted, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them.

5. The devil stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The Scripture represents them as his goals--- Luke 11:21. The devils watch them; they are ever by them, at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry lions, that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back. If God should withdraw His hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; Hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.

6. There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning, that would presently kindle the flame out into hell fire, if it were not for God's restraints. There is laid in the very nature of carnal men, a foundation for the torments of Hell. There are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are seeds of hell fire. The principles are active and powerful, exceedingly violent in their nature; and if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them, they would soon break out; they would flame

out after the same manner as the same corruption, the same enmity, does in the hearts of damned souls, and would beget the same torments as they do in them. The souls of the wicked are in Scriptures compared to the troubled sea---Isaiah 57:20. For the present, God restrains their wickedness by His mighty power, as He does the raging waves of the troubled sea, saying "Hitherto shall thou come, and no further;" but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all before it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of the man is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so, if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or furnace of fire and brimstone.

7. It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand! It is no security to a natural man, that he is now in health, and that he does not see which way he should now immediately go out of the world by any accident, and that there is no visible danger, in any respect, in his circumstances. The manifold and continued experience of the world, in all ages, shows this is no evidence that a man is not on the very brink of eternity and that the next step will not be into another world. The unseen, unthought-of ways and means of persons going suddenly out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted men walk over the pit of Hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. The arrows of death fly unseen at noon-day; the sharpest sight cannot discern them. God has so many different unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world and sending them to Hell, that there is nothing to make it appear that God had need to be at the expense of a miracle, or to go out of the ordinary course of His providence to destroy any wicked man, at any moment. All the means that there are of sinners going out of the world, are so in God's hands, and so universally and absolutely subject to His power and determination, that it does not depend at all the less on the mere will of God, whether sinners shall at any moment go to Hell, than if means were never made use of, or at all concerned in the case.

8. Natural men's prudence and care to preserve their own lives, or the care of others to preserve them, do not secure them a moment. To this, divine providence and universal experience do bear testimony. There is this clear evidence that men's own wisdom is no

security to them from death; that, if it were otherwise, we should see some difference between the wise and politic men of the world and others, with regard to their liableness to early and unexpected death; but how is it in fact? "How dieth the wise man? as the fool" (Eccl. 2:16).

9. All wicked men's pains and contrivances which they use to escape Hell, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, do not secure them from Hell one moment. Almost every natural man that hears of Hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do; every one lays out matters in his own mind, how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself that he contrives well for himself, and that his schemes will not fail. They hear indeed that there are but few saved, and that the greater part of men that have died heretofore, are gone to Hell; but each one imagines that he forms plans to effect his escape better than others have done. He does not intend to go to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take effectual care, and to order matters so for himself as not to fail.

But the foolish children of men miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in confidence in their own strength and wisdom; they trust to nothing but a shadow. The greater part of those who heretofore have lived under the same means of grace, and are now dead, are undoubtedly gone to Hell; and it was not because they were not as wise as those who are now alive, it was not because they did not lay out matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If we could come to speak with them, and inquire of them, one by one, whether they expected, when alive, and when they used to hear about Hell, ever to be subjects of that misery, we, doubtless, should hear one and another reply, "No, I never intended to come here: I had arranged matters otherwise in my mind; I thought I should contrive well for myself; I thought my scheme good. I intended to take effectual care; but it came upon me unexpectedly; I did not look for it at that time, and in that manner; it came as a thief. Death outwitted me: God's wrath was too quick for me. O my cursed foolishness! I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vain dreams of what I would do hereafter; and when I was saying peace and safety, then sudden destruction came upon me."

10. God has laid Himself under no obligation, by any promise, to keep any natural man out of Hell one moment. God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but

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what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in Whom all the promises are yea and amen. But surely they have no interest in the promise of the covenant of grace who are not the children of the covenant, who do not believe in any of the promises, and have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant.

So that, whatever some have imagined and pretended about promises made to natural men's earnest seeking and knocking, it is plain and manifest, that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction.

So that thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of Hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked; His anger is as great towards them as those that are actually suffering the execution of the fierceness of His wrath in Hell; and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up for one moment. The devil is waiting for them, Hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out; and they have no interest in any Mediator; there are no means within reach that can be of any security to them. In short they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.

APPLICATION

The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons to a conviction of their danger. This that you have heard is the case of every one out of Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is Hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything to take hold of, there is nothing between you and Hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You are probably not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of Hell, but do not see the hand of God in it, but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw His hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin air to hold

up a person who is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you, as it were, heavy as lead, and to rend downwards with great weight and pressure towards Hell, and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink, and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf; and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you, and keep you out of Hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment, for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you, to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her increase, to satisfy your lusts, nor is it willing a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good, and were made for men to serve God with; and do not willingly subserve any other purpose, and groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spew you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of Him Who hath subjected it in hope. There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God they would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays His rough wind, otherwise it would come with fury; and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and would be like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are restrained for the present; but they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped the more rapid and mighty is its course when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of

God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the meantime is constantly increasing, and your are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw His hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in Hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string; and justice directs the bow to your heart, and strains at the bow: and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of any angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.

Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things and many have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but His mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction.

However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, "**Peace and safety.**" Now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of Hell, much in the same way as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; His wrath towards you burns like fire; He looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire; He is of purer eyes than to bear you in His sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in His eyes than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended Him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet, it is nothing but His hand that holds you from falling into the

fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to Hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep; and there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into Hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given, while you have been reading this address, but His mercy; yea, no other reason can be given why you do not this very moment drop down into Hell.

O sinner, consider the fearful danger you are in! It is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath that you are held over in the hand of that God whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in Hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

AND CONSIDER HERE MORE PARTICULARLY.

1. Whose wrath it is. It is the wrath of the infinite God. If it were only the wrath of man, though it were of the most potent prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute monarchs, who have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their power, to be disposed of at their mere will. Proverbs 20:2---"**The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul.**" The subject, who very much enrages an arbitrary prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments that human art can invent, or human power can inflict. But the greatest earthly potentates, in their greatest majesty and strength, and when clothed in their greatest terrors are but feeble, despicable worms of the dust, in comparison with the great and almighty Creator and King of Heaven and earth. It is but little that they can do, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their fury. All the kings of the earth, before God, are as grasshoppers; they are nothing, and less than nothing; both their love and their hatred are to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings, is as much more terrible than theirs, as His majesty is greater. "**And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him**" (Luke 12:4-5).

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Sinners In the Hands

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2. It is the fierceness of His wrath that you are exposed to. We often read of the fury of God; as in Isaiah 59:18 **“According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries.”** So Isaiah 66:15---**“For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.”** And so also in many other places. Thus we read of **“the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God”** (Rev. 19:15). The words are exceedingly terrible. If it had only been said, “the wrath of God,” the words would have implied that which is unspeakably dreadful; but it is said, **“the fierceness and wrath of God;”** the fury of God! The fierceness of Jehovah! Oh how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them? But it is also, **“the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”** As though there would be a very great manifestation of His almighty power in what the fierceness of His wrath should inflict; as though Omnipotence should be, as it were, enraged, and exerted, as men are wont to exert their strength in the fierceness of their wrath. O! then, what will be the consequence? What will become of the poor worm that shall suffer it? whose hands can be strong; and whose heart can endure? To what a dreadful inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk, who shall be the subject of this!

Consider this, you that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of His anger, implies, that He will inflict wrath without any pity. When God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment to be so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; He will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the execution of His wrath, or in the least lighten His hand: there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay His rough wind: He will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much in any other sense, than only that you shall not suffer beyond what strict justice requires: nothing shall be withheld, because it is so hard for you to bear. **“Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them”** (Ezek. 8:18). Now, God stands ready to pity you; this is the day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when once the day of mercy is passed, your most lamentable and dolorous cries

and shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God, as to any regard to your welfare. God will have no other use to put you to, but to suffer misery; you may be continued in being to no other end! For you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel, but only to be filled full of wrath. God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to Him, that it is said He will only “laugh and mock.” **“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them”** (Prov. 1:24-32).

How awful are those words of the great God. **“I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment”** (Isa. 63:3). It is, perhaps, impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things namely, contempt, hatred, and fierceness of indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, He will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or showing you the least reward or favor, that instead of that, He will only tread you under foot: and though He will know that you cannot bear the weight of Omnipotence treading upon you, yet He will not regard that, but He will crush you under His feet without mercy; He will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on His garments, so as to stain all His raiment. He will not only hate you, but He will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you, but under His feet, to be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

3. The misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict, to the end that He might show what the wrath of Jehovah is. God hath had it on His heart to show to angels and men, both how excellent His love is, and also how terrible His wrath is. Sometimes earthly kings have a mind to show how terrible their wrath is, by the extreme punishment they would execute on those that provoked them. Nebuchadnessar, that mighty and haughty monarch of the Chaldean

empire, was willing to show his wrath, when enraged with Shaderach, Meshach, and Abednego; and accordingly gave order that the burning, fiery furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it was before; doubtless, it was raised to the utmost degree of fierceness that human art could raise it. But the great God is also willing to show His wrath, and magnify His awful majesty and mighty power in the extreme sufferings of His enemies. **“What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction”** (Rom. 9:22)? And seeing this is His design, and what He has determined, even to show how terrible the unmixed, unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness of Jehovah is, He will do it to effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass that will be dreadful with a witness. When the great and angry God hath risen up and executed His awful vengeance on the poor sinner, and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of His indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold the awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it. **“And the people shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire. Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”** (Isa. 33:12-14).

Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty, and terribleness, of the omnipotent God, shall be magnified upon you in the ineffable strength of your torments. You shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and when you shall be in this state of suffering, the glorious inhabitants of Heaven shall go forth and look on the awful spectacle, that they may see what the wrath and fierceness of the Almighty is; and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great power and majesty. **“And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh”** (Isa. 66:23-24).

4. It is everlasting wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite

horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration, before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your souls; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverances, an end, any mitigation, any rest at all; you will know certainly that you must wear out long ages millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. O, what can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: for, “Who knoweth the power of God’s anger?”

How dreadful is the state of those who are daily and hourly in danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. Oh that you would consider it, whether you be young or old! There is reason to fear that there are many who will read this, or who have heard the gospel, who will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or what thoughts they now have. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one, of those that we know, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might every Christian lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember these solemn reflections in Hell! And some may be in Hell in a very short time, before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some readers, who are now in health, and quiet and secure, may be there before tomorrow morning. Those of you who finally continue in a natural condition, who may keep out of Hell longest, will be there in a little time! Your damnation does not slumber; it will come swiftly, and, in all probability, very suddenly, upon many of you. You have reason to wonder that you are not already in Hell. It is doubtless the case of some whom you have seen and known, that never deserved Hell more than you, and that heretofore appeared as likely to have been now alive as you. Their case is past all hope. They are crying in extreme misery and perfect despair; but here you are in

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Sinners In the Hands

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the land of the living, blessed with Bibles and sabbaths, and ministers, and have an opportunity to obtain salvation. What would not those poor damned, hopeless souls give for one day's opportunity such as you now enjoy?

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open to poor sinners, a day wherein many are flocking to Him, and pressing into the kingdom of God; many are daily coming from the east, west, north, and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in are now in a happy state with their hearts filled with love to Him Who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in His own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day to see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and to howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition? Are not your souls as precious as the souls of those who are flocking from day to day to Christ?

Are there not many who have lived long in the world, who are not to this day born again, and so are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and have done nothing ever since they have lived, but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? O sirs! Your case, in an especial manner, is extremely dangerous. Your guilt and hardness of heart are extremely great. Do not you see how generally persons of your years are passed over and left, in the dispensations of God's mercy? You had need to consider yourselves, and wake thoroughly out of sleep: you cannot bear the fierceness and wrath of the infinite God.

And you, young man, and young woman, will you neglect this precious season which you now enjoy, when so many others of your age are renouncing all youthful vanities, and flocking to Christ? You especially have now an opportunity, but if you neglect it, it will soon be with you as it is with those persons who spent all the precious days of youth in sin, and are now come to such a dreadful pass in blindness and hardness.

And you children, who are unconverted, do not you know that you are going down to Hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God, Who is now angry with you every day and every night? Will you be content to be the children of the devil, when so many of the children of the land are converted, and are becoming the holy and happy children of the King of kings?

And let every one that is yet out of

Christ, and hanging over the pit of Hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now hearken to the loud calls of God's Word and providence. This acceptable year of the Lord, a day of great mercy to some will doubtless be a day of as remarkable vengeance to others. Men's hearts harden, and their guilt increases apace at such a day as this, if they neglect their souls. Never was there a period when so many means were employed for the salvation of souls, and if you entirely neglect them, you will eternally curse the day of your birth. Now, undoubtedly it is, as it was in the days of John the Baptist, the axe is laid at the root of the trees, and every tree which brings not forth good fruit, may be hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and flee from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over every unregenerate sinner. Let every one flee out of Sodom: "Escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed."



Hope for the Hopeless

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creature enjoyments. The worldly man would say, "**I have made gold my hope**" (Job 31:24). But money cannot buy one an entrance into the kingdom of God. Gold cannot redeem a person from his vain manner of life. A man can be rich in purse and poor in spirit.

Centuries ago Paul warned: "**Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy**" (I Tim. 6:17).

Second, it may be said that the moralist and legalist hope in their self-righteousness. They go about to establish their own righteousness with a hope that at the end of life they will be found to have kept the whole law blameless. This was the error of the Pharisees in Christ's day. But all such hopes are vain hopes. "**So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose truth shall be a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure**" (Job 8:13-15).

Third, some hope to obtain salvation by being of a noble birth, especially by being born of Christian parents. But no one will go to Heaven on the coat-tail of their parents' religion. Each person is responsible to God for his own salvation. To pretend to be religious because of your Christian parents is to play the hypocrite. "**For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God**

taketh away his soul?" (Job 27:8).

Fourth, others hope to enter Heaven by the observance of religious rites. Their hope is in water baptism and the observance of the Lord's Supper. They think continuing in a round of religious exercises is sufficient. "**But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost**" (Job 11:20).

No created thing or creature should ever be the object of spiritual hope. God is the only suitable object of hope. In Romans 15:13 Paul spoke of "**the God of hope.**" The psalmist said: "**Hope thou in God**" (Ps. 42:11). It was the desire of the Apostle Peter that "**faith and hope might be in God**" (I Pet. 1:21). The hope which is not in God is but a fancy and will deceive.

FAITH AND HOPE

In the Scripture faith and hope are often joined together. Hebrews 11:1 says: "**Faith is the substance of things hoped for.**" Faith makes future hopes a present reality. They go together and have the same object. The believer in Christ is the only person in all the world who has any spiritual hope. "**The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him**" (Lam. 3:24).

Some hyper-Calvinists would separate faith from hope. Often they are heard to utter, "I have a hope." Then in the next sentence exclaim, "I hope Christ died for me. I hope I am one of the elect." Such sayings show little faith in God's promises to the believer. I have always wondered how some of these could claim to be ministers of the gospel, if in reality they are not certain of their own salvation.

I, too, have a hope, but it is one that is sure and steadfast. The writer of Hebrews said: "**That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil**" (Heb. 6:18-19). There is no uncertainty about our Christian hope, for Jesus within the veil is the foundation of our hope. There is no doubt but what all who are anchored in the merit and mediation of Christ shall be eternally saved.

HOPE IS FOR THE UNSEEN

Hope is the expectation of things not seen: "**For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it**" (Rom. 8:24-25).

Believers do not hope for justification and redemption, for we already have these by faith in Christ. We do not hope for life and salvation, we already have these by faith in Christ. But we do hope for future things, knowing there is a "hope which is laid up" for us in Heaven (Col. 1:5). It

becomes us to "hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:13).

Much of what Christians are to hope for will be realized at "**that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ**" (Tit. 2:13). There is no hope that outstrips the soon coming of Jesus Christ for the elect. When Christ appears our hope will end in realization.

First, the resurrection of the body is an object of Christian hope. Paul said for "**the hope and resurrection of the dead**" he was called in question (Acts 23:6). Believers "**have hope toward God. . . that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust**" (Acts 24:15). Those who know Christ are "**waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body**" (Rom. 8:23).

Christians hope for the regeneration of their bodies at the coming of Christ, for we have the firstfruits of the Spirit, "Christ in us the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Our confidence is in "**our Saviour. . . which is our hope**" (I Tim. 1:1). "**Therefore my heart is glad,**" said the psalmist, "**and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope**" (Ps. 16:9).

The believer does not hope for the salvation of his soul, by faith in Christ he is already in possession of this (I Pet. 1:8-9). But he does hope for the salvation of the body at Christ's coming. In this sense he is made an heir "**according to the hope of eternal life**" (Tit. 3:7). In the sense of the expectation of bodily salvation, he has "**for an helmet, the hope of salvation**" (I Thess. 5:8). This sure hope is like a helmet which covers the head in the day of battle. This hope makes him keep his head above the fear of danger and false doctrine.

THE CAUSE OF HOPE

The grace of hope springs from "**the hope Israel, the Saviour**" (Jer. 14:8). To the church at Rome Paul wrote, "**Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost**" (Rom. 15:13). God is the object and author of our hope. He is the foundation upon which we build our hopes, as well as the Builder of the foundation. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we hope for great things from God.

It is written in II Thessalonians 2:16: "**Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.**" Believers have a good hope which is founded on the grace and mercy of God. Their hope is the gift of God's grace to them. Such well-grounded hope is an everlasting consolation of which they will never be deprived.

The good hope of grace is wrought in us by the gospel of Christ. To the Colossians

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the Apostle Paul wrote: **"If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister"** (Col. 1:23).

The gospel brings to us the good news about salvation by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our faith in the gospel causes us to make Christ's blood and righteousness our hope. By faith in the promises of the written Word of God we are caused to make Christ's atonement the ground and foundation of hope. The psalmist said: **"Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope"** (Ps. 119:49). The whole Bible tends to promote and increase our hope. **"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).

THE EFFECT OF HOPE

First, the grace of hope frees us from shame: **"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us"** (Rom. 5:5). The true believer is not ashamed of his standing before God. He is not ashamed of his sufferings for Christ in this life. He will not be ashamed at the Lord's coming since Christ is his hope. The sense of God's love shed abroad in his heart by the indwelling Holy Spirit will never let him be ashamed. **"Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope"** (Ps. 119:116).

Second, the grace of hope cheers the Christian in all the difficulties of life. **"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope"** (Rom. 5:2-4). **"The hope of the righteous shall be gladness"** (Prov. 10:28).

After God brings us safely through trouble, our hope is brightened and our strength revives. Our hope in Christ of glory to come causes us to rejoice in the Lord always. If our God is able to bring us through trouble and tears, then He is able to bring us home to the glory world.

How precious the grace of hope as we face the valley of the shadow of death! **"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"** (I Cor. 15:19). But our hope in Christ does not die when the body dies. If this were the case, we would have no hope. Proverbs 14:32 declares: **"The righteous**

hath hope in his death." When a child of grace finishes his course in this present life, he has a hope in death of happiness on the other side. Hope in Christ takes the chill out of mortal death! The believer can say that death will **"be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil"** (Jer. 17:17).

NO HOPE

Fallen angels have no foundation and no hope of eternal salvation. They are given no repentance or remission of sin. Jesus Christ did not take their nature or die to redeem them. They are in a hopeless condition.

All human beings while in a state of nature have **"no hope"** (Eph. 2:12) beyond this life. They have no hope grounded in God, no hope of spiritual and eternal blessings. Those out of Christ are strangers to the covenant and have no good hope, for Christ and the covenant are the ground of all Christian hope.

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, he told them of the hope of the resurrection of dead believers at Christ's coming. Then he wrote of **"others which have no hope"** (I Thess. 4:13). An unbeliever has no positive, definite hope embracing the future life. The man who lives and dies without knowing Jesus Christ can entertain only vain hopes. The Prophet Isaiah declared: **"They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth"** (Isa. 38:18).

More than a few have a gloomy outlook on life and religion. They have said within themselves: **"There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart"** (Jer. 18:12). They are living in a state of despair and despondency. They have thrown off all moral restraint and their hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. They are living without any hope of a better day to come. Horror of horrors is what this is!

If this is your condition, please don't throw up your hands and give up. There is a good and living hope for you. There is hope of deliverance. **"As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water"** (Zech. 9:11).

Sin put man in Satan's dungeon where there is no water of comfort. The blood of the covenant is the effectual means made by God for sending forth the prisoners. Men are invited to look to Christ and flee to Him for the good hope of God's grace: **"Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope"** (Zech. 9:12). Sinners are prisoners of fear and doubts, but they are prisoners of hope. **"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD"** (Lam. 3:26). Those who make Christ the object of their hope are "begotten again unto a living hope" (I Pet. 1:3).

Sinner, I beseech you to throw yourself upon the mercy of God--Jesus Christ is

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DXDS, Digos City, Philippines.....	Sunday 12:00 - 12:30 p.m.....	1161 Khz.....	1,000 AM

your only hope. There is no hope in the waters of baptism. There is no hope in living good enough to be saved. There is no hope in belonging to a church or fraternal organization. Jesus Christ is the only foundation of spiritual hope!

*"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

*When darkness seems to hide His face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the vale.*

*His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.*

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne."*



God's Scrutiny Longed For

By Alexander MacLaren
(1826 - 1910)

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

This psalm begins with perhaps the grandest contemplation of the Divine Omniscience that was ever put into words. It is easy to pour out platitudes upon such a subject, but the Psalmist does not content himself with generalities. He gathers all the rays, as it were, into one burning point, and focuses them upon himself. **"O Lord, thou hast searched me, and**



known me" (Ps. 139:1). All the more remarkable, then, is it that the psalm should end with asking God to do what it began with declaring that He does. He knows us each, altogether---whether we like it or not; whether we try to hinder it or not; whether we remember it or not. Singular, therefore, is it to find this prayer as the very climax of all the Psalmist's contemplation. The "searching" which was spoken of at the beginning is not so profound or effective as that which is desired at the end. It is a process which has for its issue the cleansing of all the evil that is beheld. The prayer of the text is, in fact, the yearning of a devout soul for purity. I simply wish to consider the series of petitions here, in the hope that we may catch something of their spirit, and that some faint echo of them may sound in our desires. My purpose, then, will be best accomplished if I follow the words of the text, and look at these petitions in the order in which they stand.

I. ---Note, then, first, the longing for the searching of God's eye.

Now, the word which is here rendered "search" is a very emphatic and picturesque one. It means to dig deep. God is prayed, as it were, to make a section into the Psalmist, and lay bare his inmost nature, as men do in a railway cutting, layer after layer, going ever deeper down till the bed-rock is reached. **"Search me"** ---dig into me, bring the deep-lying parts to light---**"and know my heart"**; the center of my personality, my inmost self.

That is the prayer, not of fancied fitness to stand investigation, but of lowly acknowledgment. In other words, it is really a form of confession. "Search me, I know Thou wilt find evil, but still---search me!" It seems to me that there are two main ideas in this petition, on each of which I touch briefly.

One is, that it is a glad recognition of a fact which is very terrible to many hearts. The conception of God as "knowing me altogether," down to the very roots of my being, is either the most blessed or the most unwelcome thought, according to my conception of what His heart to me is. If I think of Him, as so many of us do, as simply an "austere man" who "gathers where he did not straw," and reaps where he did not sow; if my thought of God

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God's Scrutiny

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is mainly that of an investigator and a judge, with pure eyes and rigid judgment, then I shall be more ignorant of myself, and more confident in myself, than the most of men are when they bethink themselves, if I do not feel that I shrink up like a sensitive plant's leaf when a finger touches it, and would fain curl myself together, and hide from His eye something that I know lurks and prisons, at the center of my being.

The gaoler's eye at the slit in the wall of the solitary prisoner's cell is a constant terror to the man who knows that it may be upon him at every moment and does not know where the eyehole is, or when the merciless eye may be at it. But if we love one another, we do not shrink from opening out our inward baseness to each other. We can venture to tell those that are dear to us, as our own hearts, the things that lie in our own hearts, and make them black and ugly in all eyes but love's; or, if we cannot venture to do it wholly, at all events we do it more fully, and more willingly, and with more of something that is almost pleasure in the very act of confession, in proportion as we are bound by the sacred ties of love to the recipient of the confession. There is a joy and a blessedness deeper than joy, in discovering ourselves, even our unworthy selves, when we know that the eye that looks is a loving eye.

If, then, we have rightly conceived of our relation to Him, that infinite Lover of all our hearts, who looks "with other eyes than ours, and makes allowance for us all," there will be a certain blessedness, almost like joy, in turning ourselves inside out before Him; and in feeling that very corner of our hearts lies naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do. "**Search me, O God,**" is the voice of confident love, which is sure of the love that contemplates the sinner.

And for us Christian people, to whom all these attributes of Deity are gathered together and brought very near our hearts and our experiences in the Person of our brother Christ, the thought of such knowledge of us becomes still more blessed. Just as the Apostle, who was conscious of many sins, could say to his Master, not in petulance, but in deeply-moved confidence, "Thou knowest all things! Why dost Thou ask me questions Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest, notwithstanding my denials, that I love thee," so may we turn to Jesus Christ, Who knows what is in men, and Who knows each man, and be sure that the eye which looks upon our unworthiness pities our sinfulness, and is ready to bear it all away. There is a deeper gladness in pouring out our hearts to our loving Lord than in locking them in sullen silence, with the vain conceit that we thereby

hide ourselves from Him. Make a clean breast of your evil, and you will find that the act has in it a blessedness unique and poignant. "Pour out your hearts before Him, O ye people, God is a refuge for us."

This prayer is also an expression of absolute willingness to submit to the searching process. God is represented in my text as seeking into the secrets of a man's heart, not that God may know, but that the man may know. By His spirit He will come into the innermost corners of our nature, if this prayer is a real expression of our desire. And there the illumination of His presence will flash light into all the dark corners of our experience and of our personality. We cannot afford to be in ignorance of these. Pestilence lurks in the unventilated, unlighted, uncleaned corners of a neglected nature. It is only on condition of the light of God's convincing spirit being cast into every corner of our being that we shall be able to overcome and annihilate the creeping swarms of microscopic sins that are there, minute, but mighty in their myriads to destroy a man's soul. "**Search me**" is the expression of a penitence that knows itself to be full of evil, that does not know all the evil of which it is full, that needs enlightenment, that desires deliverance, that is sure of the love that looks, and that so spreads itself, as a bleacher spreads some piece of stained cloth in the gracious sunshine and sprinkles it with the pure water of Heaven, that all the stains may melt away.

It is useless to ask God to search us if we lock our hearts against His searching. The mere natural exercise, if I may so say, of the Divine attribute of Omniscience we cannot hinder. He knows us thereby altogether, whether we like it or not; but the "searching" of my text is one which He cannot put in force without our consent. We have to confess our sins unto the Lord, ere this kind of Divine scrutiny can be brought to bear. By His natural Omniscience, He knows them altogether, but the seeing which is preparatory to destroying them depends on our willingness to submit ourselves to the often painful process by which He drags our sins to light.

Do you want Him to come and search your hearts, and tell you in your spirits what He has found there? Do you desire to know your hidden evil? Then keep close to Him, and tell Him what the sin is which you know to be sin; and ask Him to show you what the sins are which as yet, you have not grown up to the height of understanding and acknowledging.

II. ---Next, there follows the longing for the Divine testing of our thoughts.

Now you will have observed, I suppose, that in the second clause of my text, "**try me, and know my thoughts,**" the result of the investigation is somewhat different from that of the previous clause. The "searching" issued in a Divine knowledge of the heart; the "trying" or

testing, issues in a Divine knowledge of the thoughts. The distinction between these two, in the Biblical use of the expression, is not precisely the same as in our modern popular speech. We are accustomed to talk of the heart as being the seat of emotions, affections, feelings, whereas we relegate thoughts to the head. But Scripture does not quite take that metaphorical view. In it the heart is the center of personal being, and out of it there come, not only emotions and loves, but "**thoughts and intents**" (Heb. 4:12). The difference, then, between these two, "heart" and "thoughts," is this, the one is the workshop and the other is the product. The heart is the place where the thoughts are elaborated. So you see the process of the Psalmist's prayer is from the center a little outwards, first the inmost self, and then the "thoughts," meaning thereby the whole web of activities, both intellectual and emotional, of which the heart, in his sense of the word, is the seat and source.

In like manner as the field of investigation is somewhat shifted in the second petition, so the manner of investigation is correspondingly different. "Search" is the Divine scrutiny of the inner man by the eye; "test" is the trial, as metals are proved by a fiery furnace.

So, then, the innermost man is searched by the Divine knowledge, and the thoughts which the innermost man produces are tested by the Divine providence. And this second petition is for a trial by facts, by external agencies, of the true nature and character as of our purposes, desires, designs, intentions, as well as of our affections and loves and joys. That is to say, this second prayer submits absolutely to any discipline, fiery and fierce and bitter, by which the true character of a man's activities may be made clear to himself. Oh! it is a prayer easily offered; hard to stand by. It is a prayer often answered, in ways that drive us almost to despair. It means, Do anything with me, put me into any seven-fold heated furnace of sorrow, do anything that will melt my hardness, and run off my dross, which Thy great ladle will then skim away, that the surface may be clear, and the substance without alloy.

Do you pray that prayer, brother, knowing all that it means, and being willing to take the answer in forms that may rack your heart, and sadden your whole lives? If you are wise, you will. Better to go crippled into life than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into hell fire! Better to be saved, though maimed, than to be entire and lost.

"Try me." It is an awful prayer. Let us not offer it lightly, or unadvisedly. If we are wise it will be our inmost desire. And when the answer comes, and sorrows fall, do not let us murmur, do not let us kick, do not let us wonder, but let us say, "Thou art a God that hearest prayer," and "I will glorify God in the fires." Then "**the trial of your faith, being much more**

precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, shall be found unto praise and honour and glory" (I Pet. 1:7).

III. ---The next petition of my text is a longing for the casting out of evil.

"**See if there be any wicked way in me.**" Now, that "if" is not the "if" of doubt whether any such "way" is in the man, but it is the "if" of consciousness that there are such, though what they are he may not clearly discern. And so, it is the "if" of humility---knowing that he is not justified because he knows nothing against himself---and not the "if" of presumption.

I have only time to observe here, in a word or two, what would well deserve more expanded treatment, and that is, the very striking and significant expression here employed for this evil way which the Psalmist desires to be detected, that it may be cast out. The word rendered "wicked" ---or, more properly, wickedness---is literally "forced labour," which was, in old times, and still is in some countries, laid upon the inhabitants at the command of authority; and then because forced labour is grievous labour, it comes to mean sorrow. So the "way of wickedness" that the Psalmist feels is in him is a way of compulsory service, and a way that leads to sorrow. That is to say, all sin is slavery, and all sin leads to a bitter and a bad end, and its fruit is death. And so, because he feels that his better self is in bondage, and shudderingly apprehends that the course which he pursues can only end in bitterness and misery, he turns to God and asks Him that He would enlighten him as to what these fatal courses are. "See if there be any way of wickedness in me," because he is quite sure that the evil which God sees God will help him to overcome.

Ah, friends, we all have such ways deeply lodged within us, and we do not always know that we have; but if we will turn ourselves to Him, He will prevent our condemning ourselves in things that we allow; and, by increasing the sensitiveness of our consciences, He will teach us that many things which we did not know to be wrong are harmful.

As soon as we learn that they are, He will help us to cast them out. God has nothing to do with our evil but to fight against it. Be sure of this, that whatsoever evil in us He thus searches and shows us, is shown us that we may fling it from us. He goes down into the cellars of our hearts, with the candle of His Spirit in His hand, in order that He may lay hold of all the explosives there, and, having drenched them so that they shall not catch fire, may cast them clean out, so that they may not blow us to destruction.

IV. ---The last petition of my text is for guidance in "the everlasting way."

The "ways of wickedness" are in us; the "**way everlasting**" we need to be led

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God's Scrutiny

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into. That is to say, naturally, we incline to evil; it must be the Divine hand and the Divine Spirit that lead our feet in the paths of righteousness. When we ask Him to "guide us in the way everlasting," we ask that we may know what is duty, and that we may incline to do it. And He answers it by the gift of His Divine Spirit, by the quickening of our consciences, by bringing nearer to our hearts the great Example Who has left us His footsteps as a legacy that we may tread in them.

Whosoever walks in Christ's footsteps is walking in "the way everlasting." For that path is rightly so named which leads to eternal blessedness. It is everlasting, too, inasmuch as nothing of human effort or work abides except that which is in conformity with the will of God, and inasmuch as it, and it alone, is not broken short off by death, but runs, borne upon one mighty arch that spans the gorge, clean across the black abyss, and continues straight on in the same course, only with a swifter upward gradient, through all the ages of eternity. The man who here has lived for God will live yonder as he has lived here, only more completely and more joyously for ever. "A highway shall be there, and a way, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads." (*The Wearied Christ and Other Sermons*, 1893 edition).



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Chairman of Biblical Studies
Southeastern Baptist
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The Myth of Separation of Church and State

Judge Roy Moore from Alabama became the most hated and most loved man of the hour a few years back. He is a man of integrity who has stood for a cause with a liberty granted him by this country's guiding document, the Constitution. Some say the issue is about the state endorsing, even promoting religion, while others say the real issue is about the interference of the federal government in a state government affair. In a sense, the issue is a combination of both, but is an issue that never in a million years should have been raised. First look at the first amendment to the Constitution and then consider some hard facts about this amendment. The wonderful thing about being an American is you do not have to be an attorney, judge or member of any elite group to learn how to read

and interpret the constitution. Just read it, never saying what it doesn't say, with common sense as your guide, allowing it to speak as its own independent authority. Any other approach will result in "messing" with the grand old document, pulling out "new and exciting truths" making it a living document, that would amaze the original writers. This season of the year is usually when God hating liberals repeat their mantra of "separation of church and state" as they bellyache about nativity scenes, angels and other Christian related objects, so now is a good time to be reminded of the truth of the freedom granted us in the first amendment, concerning the exercise of religion

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

FACT # 1- The phrase "wall of separation of church and state" appears nowhere in the constitution, and especially not in the first amendment.

FACT # 2- The amendment guarantees the free exercise of religion and freedom of speech.

FACT # 3- The amendment DOES NOT mention government or public property as an exception to the free exercise of religion. NO exceptions are mentioned, period.

FACT # 4- The guarantee of free exercise of religion means religious views CAN be expressed in the political arena.

FACT # 5- Government is to remain absolutely neutral in all matters pertaining to religion, not making laws for the promotion or prohibition of its exercise.

Did you notice fact # 5? Government should keep its nose out of religion. It can't be for or against religion. All rulings that forbid prayer, Bible clubs and such from government school property are illegal, or to use the big word of the day, unconstitutional, according to the first amendment. Rulings that forbid the expression of anything religious, whether on public or private property, are unconstitutional.

Notice also, the phrase "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion" is one of the most misunderstood phrases in the constitution. Most believe it is speaking of the establishment of a state church. The first amendment is not primarily for preempting government from establishing a state religion, as most think. Look at the amendment again. The word "respecting" means "in regard to" or "pertaining to" an establishment or institution of religion. The first part of the amendment simply means that "congress shall make no law (for or against) pertaining to any religious organization,

institution or establishment." The instituting of a state endorsed church or denomination would be automatically prohibited on these grounds alone.

The first amendment is all about freedom OF religion, not freedom FROM religion. The idea that government, politics and society should be free FROM religion is a hatched up notion of God hating liberals via the ACLU, PAW and numerous other freedom destroying institutions. Not only does the amendment PREVENT government from interfering in expression of religion, it calls for protection of the rights of individuals as they practice the free exercise thereof. The ACLU should be protecting, not prohibiting free exercise. Note also, the word "exercise" means to act upon, not simply give mental ascent to a creed or set of beliefs. We are not only allowed freedom of belief, but the freedom to live out and express those beliefs. This means the Boy Scouts of America have a constitutional right to reject homosexual leaders, thereby exercising or practicing their belief. It means parents have a right to home school or send their children to a Christian school if they so desire.

Religion that cannot be practiced in daily life is useless. Don't believe the liberal lie of the left. Religion and free expression of it is not illegal. It is not only legal, but guaranteed by government. Thank God. Let freedom ring.

Thousands of pages of American history would have to be burned to delete all references to God and religion among the documents of the founding fathers of this country.



Salvation of Cornelius

(Continued from page 1) ◊

"...Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." The salvation of Cornelius, is the point in church history where it is made clear to all, that the gospel is meant to be presented to all of the world. Now, when this verse tells us that "God is no respecter of persons," we are not being told that He views all men equally. But rather, we are being told that no man's goodness is sufficient in the sight of God. It is being made clear to us that the Jews are not naturally better than the Samaritans or the Gentiles. There is not something inherent in the Jews that make them better qualified to partake of the gospel and the grace of God. What is being demonstrated here for us is the equality of men, as far as wickedness is concerned. In other words, all men are equally wicked, and no one race or class of people is naturally better and more inclined to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul tells the Romans,

"For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:11-12). When we read the context surrounding these verses, we discover that Paul is making it clear that the Law does not save those to whom it is given; nor is the absence of the Law a viable excuse to those that were not blessed with the Oracles of the Law as they were delivered to Moses and the prophets.

Later, Paul said, **"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons"** (Col. 3:23-25). And then Peter said in his first epistle, **"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear"** (I Pet. 1:17).

If you will notice, all of these passages mention the fact that God is not a respecter of persons. It seems clear, that God does not judge a man upon the basis of who he is, but rather upon the basis of what he does. I know that this might seem rather harsh, or perhaps rather simple, especially to those of us that believe in the Sovereign Grace of God as it is manifest in the predestination, the calling, and the justification of the saints of God---but it is true. Men, no matter who they are, are not judged (justified or condemned) based upon who they are, but what they do. Remember that God told Cain, **"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him"** (Gen. 4:7).

This can be certainly seen in the case of the reprobate---he is condemned because of his wicked deeds. But, this is also the case of those that are the elect of God. Just to be named as one of God's is not enough. (Although I know that from God's perspective, salvation, once begun in election must result in glorification.) Those that are the elect of God must come unto Him and believe on Him. Of course this is inevitable in the case of each and every elect child of God, but still the faith and the belief must be manifest in order for the justification to be lawful. We must do the works of God, beginning with repentance and belief in Jesus Christ. Those that are God's people will follow the Lord as He leads them, and He will lead them unto the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. It is this confession and belief and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit that delivers men from the judgment of God---it is not that they are simply different and therefore worthy of different treatment at the hands of

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Salvation of Cornelius

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God. So, we can safely say that God is not a respecter of persons, but rather a respecter of His own grace, and the love that He and His son have made manifest unto us.

The Apostle Paul often used himself as an example when he taught concerning the grace of God as it relates to the unworthy and the unclean. Paul told the Corinthian Church, **"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God"** (I Cor. 15:9). Later, Paul, very humbly told Timothy, **"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting"** (I Tim. 1:12-16). The Apostle Paul is a wonderful example of the fact that God is not a respecter of persons when it comes to salvation. He does not look for any inherent goodness or godliness---because Paul was **"a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious."** In the Apostle Paul we can see that the grace of God is **"exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."** And, in the Apostle Paul we can find a pattern of God's grace in the face of wickedness, and His **"long-suffering"** toward those that are His---those that do not deserve His attention or His grace. In reality, we all must agree with the Apostle Paul when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ: **"...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."** It is not a false sense of modesty that Paul is portraying when he said that he was the **"chief"** of **"sinners."** In fact, he truly understood his own wicked estate, and his own helplessness and worthlessness outside of Jesus Christ. You and I, as well, should notice our own helplessness and worthlessness outside of Jesus Christ. We, too, must agree (and not in a false sense of modesty---but in truth and certainty) that we are the chiefest of sinners. In our own eyes, when we are confronted with our own poor condition, we must admit that there is no man or woman in this world that is as wicked or as capable of wickedness as we ourselves are. Surely, God has kept most of us from the most grievous and

terrible sins; but still, left to our own, without any restraint from God or our environment, we are fully capable of the most wicked of deeds and words. Praise God, that He has saved me, who am the chiefest of sinners!

To wrap up this point, let's notice what our text says about Cornelius: **"And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee"** (Acts 10:22). And then we read the words of the Jews in Acts 11:3: **"...Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them."** What we can see about Cornelius, is that the well-wishers and the esteem of some could not save him; nor could the discrimination and ignorance of others keep him from being saved. In the eyes of those that knew him, Centurion was known as a **"just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report."** But, in the eyes of those that did not know him, he was known simply as a man that was **"uncircumcised."** So, though some might highly esteem him, their high esteem did not automatically ensure that God would have respect towards him. Neither, on the other hand, could the low esteem (or even disdain) that some might have for him, cause God to have any less respect unto him. (Whether or not Cornelius is already saved here, is not my point. What I want us to see is that whatever man might think of Cornelius, this did not affect the light in which God would behold him.) In the end, some that were saved might have thought that Cornelius was worthy to have the gospel preached to him; while others might have thought that he was not worthy to have the gospel preached to him.

This thought leads us to my next point.

WE SHOULD NOT DOUBT THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN SALVATION

In the previous point I tried to emphasize the fact that all men need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that we should not discriminate in our attempts to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world of men. Now, in this point, I want to emphasize that as we deliver the gospel, we should not doubt that power of God in the salvation of lost souls. We ought to not just feel that we have accomplished our purpose when we have preached the gospel to others, whether we do so with some effort, or whether we just go through the motions. I believe that we should preach the gospel to all, without discrimination, and do so in love, and in joy, and with great desire. In other words, we should preach the gospel to every man as God gives us opportunity, with the faith and the confidence that God will save those that are His, and that He will use us to bring

the Word of God to those that He will surely save.

The words of God, as they were delivered to Peter come back to mind: **"...What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common"** (Acts 10:15). And consider Peter's words to Cornelius and Cornelius' **"...kinsmen and near friends"** (Acts 10:24): **"And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean"** (Acts 10:28). You see, it is the invincible power of God that makes any man clean---whether that man is a Jew or a Gentile. And once that power of God is engaged upon the endeavor of cleansing an individual, that individual will be saved, regardless of how **"common or unclean"** he might have been. Therefore, who are we to call any man or woman unclean or unworthy, when it is of God that men are saved?

Consider the man Zaccheus. He is one that the Jews considered a sinner, because he **"...was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich"** (Luke 19:2). He was one that the Jews thought, certainly, was not worthy of the grace of God in salvation. Surely, if any man was beyond the goodness of God, it must be this man Zaccheus! But, what does the Scripture tell us? Well, the Lord comes to Jericho, and He tells Zaccheus that He must eat at his house, and Zaccheus gladly receives Him. (See Luke 19:1-6). And then, we pick up the account in verse 7: **"And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"** (Luke 19:7-10). A wonderful thing to consider here, is that no matter what depths Zaccheus might have sunk to after the flesh, and no matter what disfavor he might have had in the eyes of the Jews, still **"he also is a son of Abraham."** When the Lord says this, He does not mean only that he was a physical son of the seed of Abraham, but He means also that Zaccheus is a spiritual son of the spiritual seed of Abraham. (See John 8:39; Gal. 3:6-9).

You get an idea of the invincibility and the sovereignty of our God in salvation when you consider His words, **"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."** He didn't just come to **"seek"** and then to wait for men's response; but rather He came to **"seek and to save."** He didn't come to do one, and not the other. But

when He came He did both. When the Lord Jesus Christ came to this earth, He came in an irresistible way. How could we ever imagine that His purpose could be thwarted? How could we ever pretend that His will could be subverted? He has the power and the authority and the right to accomplish whatever it is that His will would desire. Therefore, He will save those that are His. He will invincibly seek them; and He will invincibly save them.

As we get back to the man, Cornelius, let me say this: No matter what Peter might have thought of the Gentiles, and Cornelius in particular, the Lord still had determined to save Cornelius, and He had determined to save the Gentiles. Therefore, no matter what Peter or the other Jews might have thought of Cornelius, God had ordained to save him. And, in like manner (Praise the Lord!), no matter what any of the Jews might have thought of the Gentiles as a whole, the salvation of Cornelius and his house has made it clear that the Gentiles, too, were ordained unto salvation!

CONCLUSION

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it is a wonderful thing that God did choose to save Cornelius. In doing this, He brought salvation to the Gentiles. The apostles and the Jewish brethren said in Acts 11:18, **"...Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."** Later on Peter would say before the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, **"...Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us: And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith"** (Acts 15:7-9). Praise the Lord that Cornelius was saved, and that Gentiles all over the world have been saved!

Cornelius gives hope to the lost and he gives the desire to preach to the saved. Whoever you are, and whatever others might think of you, there is hope in Jesus Christ! However you might see yourself; no matter how wicked you may know that you are; when the Lord gives you an understanding of your own condition and your need of Jesus Christ, you will find salvation in Him! Those of us that are saved must not be discriminatory or judges of persons. Who knows the ones that God has determined to save? They may be of any race of man; they may be committers of any wickedness of man. Still, we cannot discriminate in preaching the gospel, for if God could (and would) save Cornelius, then He, perhaps, will save those that you and I witness to.



The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. *Precisely what beliefs/practices are to be classified as Tests of Fellowship?* – Tennessee

Mike DeWitt Sr.
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477



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

seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ (Gal. 1:10).

MIKE DEWITT

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



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

The Apostle Paul, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes this for our learning and meditation.

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:6-10).

This may not be the answer that you were looking for because I will answer with questions that you have to answer yourself.

God's Word is very specific and there are a few reasons as to why tests of fellowship vary among Bible adhering Baptists.

The test of fellowship should never be less than the Church we belong to. If a Church does not have tests of fellowship then ask why. The membership, as individuals, may have tests of fellowship that are more stringent than the Church they belong to. I ask, what about you?

What do you, and the Church you belong to, consider to be the Gospel? Is it just the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Is it less than that, or...is it more comprehensive than that? How important is the gospel and it being upheld in truth and sincerity?

Having said that, I ask, are you and the Church you belong to willing to forgo the gospel for fellowship with other Churches or members that do not have the same convictions concerning the Gospel that is preached and taught where you are a member of?

Finally I ask, are you and the Church you are a member of willing to forgo fellowship with a few Churches that do not pass the tests of fellowship for a closer relationship with Jesus Christ? **“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I**

Though the phrase “test of fellowship” is never used in Scripture, there are certain doctrines and practices that set apart true Baptist churches from all other religious assemblies that should be carefully observed and defended. It is up to each individual New Testament Baptist church to determine what they consider is a test of fellowship according to sacred Scripture. What is written below is what I consider to be tests of fellowship as the pastor of Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church, the body of Christ that meets in Chesapeake, Ohio. It should go without saying that all true Baptist churches believe the Scriptures to be divinely inspired, inerrant, preserved, and are the final authority for all faith and practice. I have limited the “tests of fellowship” to three basic components.

1. All genuine fellowship begins with the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. I John 1:3 declares: **“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”** True Baptists believe that Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the sacred Trinity, eternal, equal, and in union with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the eternally begotten Son of God, born of a virgin, not tainted by inherent depravity, sinless, obedient to the law of God in all respects, and the only Person qualified to redeem the elect through His sacrifice and shedding of His precious blood on the cross. Jesus Christ literally bore the sins, the guilt, and penalty of the elect in His body on the tree of cursing, died in their stead, was buried and rose again from the dead for their justification. I Timothy 3:16 states: **“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”** Baptists recognize Christ alone as the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6), and His Gospel as the power

of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Rom. 1:16).

Baptists regard all individuals, churches, and religions who differ on the essential doctrine of Christ and His Gospel as being in error and out of fellowship with Christ and His kind of church. Galatians 1:8 declares: **“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”** II John 9-11 states: **“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”** It is impossible to be wrong about Christ and His Gospel and be in fellowship with His kind of church. Romans 16:17-18 emphatically states: **“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”**

2. True Baptists believe that salvation, from beginning to end, is all of God's sovereign grace apart from human merit, works, or the observance of religious ceremonies (Romans 4:4-7; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-6).

Baptists believe that the new birth (regeneration, being born again) is not an act of the human will (John 1:13; Rom. 9:16), but rather has as its source the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the sacred Trinity. The Holy Spirit quickens dead sinners by imparting to them spiritual life and creating within them a new and holy nature that corresponds with God's divine nature (Eph. 2:1-3; Eph. 4:24; II Pet. 1:3-4). As soon as the Holy Spirit regenerates God's elect they immediately receive the gifts of repentance and saving faith which are the necessary components of genuine conversion (Luke 24:44-48; Acts 20:20-21).

Baptists believe that justification is by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ apart from the works of the law (Gal. 2:16; 3:11), or any human effort or merit (Rom. 3:24-28). The very moment a sinner believes the Gospel of Christ he has eternal life (John 3:16), peace with God (Rom. 5:1), and forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:38-39). When the gift of saving faith is received and exercised the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believing sinner, thus securing a right standing before God (Eph. 1:6-7; Col. 2:9-10). Justification is a legal position of righteousness before God that cannot be altered or abolished (Isa. 51:6)

Baptists believe that all genuine believers are preserved by God's immutable grace and will persevere in holiness. The believer's eternal security is entirely bound up in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. As such there is no possibility that a true believer could ever lose his salvation or fall from grace as some falsely believe. Jesus said: **“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day”** (John 6:37-39). John 10:27-30 declares: **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.”** Baptists recognize that there are false professors of religion who depart from Christ and His Word, but they never were truly born again or converted (I John 2:19).

Thus, in order to be in fellowship with a Baptist church you must believe that salvation is all of grace, that the new birth is a work of the Holy Spirit, that the gifts of repentance and faith are necessary to conversion, that justification is by faith, and that salvation is eternal and cannot be lost. Philippians 1:5-6 states: **“For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”** There can be no true fellowship without spiritually and intellectually acknowledging the basic tenets of salvation by grace. True Baptists have always believed that people are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ apart from denominational affiliation. Simply put, Baptists don't believe they are the only folks going to Heaven.

3. To be in fellowship with the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church you must believe basic doctrines regarding the Lord's kind of church, otherwise referred to as “church truth.” We believe that a New Testament church is a local, visible, called out assembly of baptized believers who are committed to carrying out the Great Commission.

We believe each church is the body of Christ in that location even as Paul the apostle regarded the church at Corinth (I Cor. 14:23). We do not believe in a universal, invisible church like the Protestants, nor do we believe in a universal, visible church like the Catholics. Each individual New Testament

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. If another Baptist church has differences about what is termed a "Test of Fellowship" and how it is applied with your church, does this mean the other church is not a member of the Bride of Christ? - Tennessee

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

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



Acts 15:28-29: **For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.**

2 Cor. 11:2: **For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.**

Rev. 2:2: **I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars**

Rev. 2:14-15: **But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.**

Rev. 2:20: **Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.**

I'm not sure as we have the authority before God to even attempt to answer this question. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (Rom. 14:4). I'm curious to see how the other brethren answer this question. However, I think the decision reached by the church at Jerusalem is a good guide line. While the Church at Jerusalem would not fellowship with uncircumcised Gentiles, they did not "un-church" the church at Antioch, or the churches in Asia Minor because those churches did fellowship with uncircumcised Gentiles. That

should pretty much give us a New Testament pattern to follow.

Paul obviously considered the Church at Corinth as the Bride of Christ in spite of all her doctrinal, practical and associational errors. The Church at Ephesus only shows little hints of error prior to the letter in Revelation (see some of Paul's instructions to Timothy) while there were many errors in the churches on Crete for Titus to "set in order", yet Paul obviously considers them all proper churches.

By the time of the letters in Revelation, Ephesus still had a record of strictly guarding their fellowship but the churches at Pergamos and Thyatira had allowed their "tests of fellowship" to weaken to the point of even allowing drastically false doctrine to be practiced in the church. Still, even though these churches were on the brink of losing their candlestick, the Lord addresses them as churches.

There are really very few specific requirements for being the church which we believe is "The Bride of Christ". They can be outlined (in order) in Acts 2:41-42: "**Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.**"

1. A credible testimony of salvation.

2. Authorized scriptural baptism (not just a dunk in the creek by someone).

a. By "authorized" we mean administered under the authority of a properly authorized church, not a "self generated" church, and

b. By a person authorized by that church to do the baptizing.

3. By virtue of that baptism, becoming members of that local church.

4. Faithfully continuing in proper doctrine and fellowship. (Apostate doctrine leads to apostate practice and is the surest way to become excluded from the "Bride of Christ".)

5. Finally, a regular but proper participation in a properly administered Lord's Supper. (Allowing unauthorized participants or serving elements with leaven is not proper administration of the Lord's Supper!)

Number 5, I think, is one of the most fought over practices within the ranks of professing Baptists, and even within many of our own churches.

RAY BENNETT

Mike DeWitt Sr.
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477

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



I suspect that a great problem we are facing nowadays is that people or Churches are too concerned with other men's or Churches matters.

No, the only one to determine who is a member of the Bride of Christ is the Bride Groom Himself.

Churches have differences with other Churches no doubt, so why try to reach a conclusion that has no bearing on a decision that will not be made by them?

MIKE DEWITT

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

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



Ultimately the members of the Bride of Christ will be determined by the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ and revealed at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-9). My personal conviction is that only faithful Baptist church members will be in the Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't believe any Catholics, Protestants, or excluded/disciplined Baptist church members will be in the Bride of Christ. All believers will enjoy the glories of Heaven. Only faithful members of the Lord's church will enjoy the reward of being in the Bride of Jesus Christ. I don't for one moment believe that those who were in rebellion to the most fundamental ordinance of the New Testament church, namely scriptural baptism, will be in the Bride. I don't believe that the Lord will reward those who persecuted and derided the Lord's church with the privilege of being in the Bride.

Are you saved, scripturally baptized by a New Testament Baptist church, and faithfully serving the Lord in His church? If not, why not? Seek out a church that believes the truth and serve the Lord with all your might. Read the Word, pray, attend services faithfully, witness, live right, pay your tithes, and be loyal to the Lord and His church. When its all said and done hopefully you will hear the sweetest words from the lips of our lovely Lord: "**Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy**

lord" (Matt. 25:21).

TOM ROSS



Forum #1

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Baptist Church is to be recognized as an autonomous, independent assembly. Thus we do not believe that a church is a body within a larger mystical, universal body comprised of all of God's elect (a body within a body). You cannot be a member of Christ's church unless you have the same kind of baptism that Jesus submitted to, namely Baptist baptism (Matt. 3:13-16; Luke 7:28-30; Eph. 4:3-5). There is a major difference between the family of God and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. All believers are members of the family of God comprised of all of God's elect, but only scripturally baptized believers are members of Christ's New Testament Church. To simplify, as long as Protestant reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin were truly born again they are recognized as members of God's family. However, they were never part of and never will be part of Christ's New Testament Church because they were never baptized. There is no membership in Christ's body without scriptural baptism. We do not fellowship with those who believe in any form of the universal church theory.

Baptists believe that baptism has four essential components that must be in place to be considered as valid and scriptural. 1) Baptism must be administered by the authority of a New Testament Baptist Church. Where there is no church authority there is no baptism, plain and simple. This is why Baptists regard the administration of Catholic and Protestant ordinances as invalid. 2) Baptism must be viewed as a symbolic ordinance with no saving qualities. Sinners are saved by believing on Christ before they ever go into the waters of baptism, thus there is no such thing as baptismal regeneration or justification as the Catholics and Campbellites teach. 3) Baptism must be performed in the proper way, by complete immersion of the believer in water. The New Testament never teaches that the mode of baptism is by sprinkling or pouring as the Catholics and Protestants have taught through the centuries. 4) Baptism is for believers only. The only people who qualify as candidates for baptism and church membership are believers who have professed faith in Christ. Thus infant baptism must be rejected and regarded as heresy. We do not fellowship with churches that receive any kind of alien baptism where any of the four requirements is missing.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only two ordinances that Jesus gave

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Forum #1

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to His church. You cannot observe the Lord's Supper until you are scripturally baptized. The observance of the Lord's Supper is restricted to members of the local church. The Supper cannot be extended beyond the membership that the church has the authority to discipline (I Cor. 5:1-13). The Lord's Supper has two elements that are strictly symbolic, unleavened bread and wine which represent the sinless body and precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like baptism, the Lord's Supper has no saving qualities. Our church is not in fellowship with churches that practice open communion.

Jesus Christ organized His church during His earthly ministry and promised perpetuity to that church (Matt. 16:18; 28:16-20). From the time that Jesus organized the first Baptist church until now there has existed a holy succession of true churches that have never identified with the Roman Catholic church or the Protestant sects that came out of Rome. Because Baptists do not recognize the Roman Catholic church or the Protestant sects that came out of her as true churches we do not regard their ordinances or ordinations as valid. Thus we do not invite Catholics, Protestants, or Reformed Baptists into our pulpits.

True churches of the Lord Jesus Christ believe in preaching the Gospel, baptizing converts, and teaching them the truth as set forth in the Great Commission. As such, the Lord's churches are considered to be missionary. Our church is not in fellowship with hardshells or primitives who do not believe in mission work, preaching to the unsaved, or personal witnessing.

There are many other doctrines and practices that could be considered by some to be "tests of fellowship." I have confined my answer to the question to three basic categories. I am a premillennialist, but I do not make eschatology a test of fellowship. I am sure there are many other finer points of doctrine and practice that could be discussed, but the three simple distinctions outlined above should serve as a good foundation.

TOM ROSS



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

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

Rom. 16:17: **Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and**

avoid them.

Titus 3:10-11: **A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.**

Rom. 14:1-6, selected verses. **"For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him...One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks."**

Tests of fellowship are as varied as the legalistic spiritual pride of the people who make them and often more based on personalities or some particular interpretation of debatable doctrine which is not clear enough to drive our proverbial "stake in the ground" about. Paul makes it pretty clear about certain sins that should be tests of fellowship. **"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one not to eat"** (I Cor. 5:9-11).

"No not to eat" refers to the communion table, not to everyday social contact. Paul makes that clear in the previous verse, **"for then must ye needs go out of the world"** and again later in I Corinthians 10:27: **"If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake."**

Correct doctrine is also a test of fellowship. **"A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject."** Briefly, correct doctrine may be defined by the rest given in Romans 16:17, **"contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned"**, referring of course to the doctrine Paul had taught. We notice that even though five of the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 were on the verge of having their candlestick removed because of false doctrine and wrong practice, Jesus still dealt with them as His churches, giving them time to repent and "get their act together." But there comes a time when He will write "Ichabod" over the doors. Then we should also.

It is noteworthy that Paul didn't

deal with many of the social, political and personal habits that many of our churches use today as tests of fellowship. I suggest that most of our Landmark Baptist Churches today have established such legalistic requirements that they would not have fellowship with Charles Spurgeon. **We fight over days!** (See Rom. 14 quoted above) **We fight over the shape of the cross. We even fight over our name "Baptist."** (I freely admit that sometimes I am so ashamed of some of my "Baptist" brethren that even I have been tempted to drop the name in search of a better identification - but I WON'T.)

There are some churches that willingly compromise on the doctrines of grace but split hairs on eschatology. There are "Baptist" churches that still insist that we are a product of the Reformation. We argue over points of doctrine which are not dogmatically clear while ignoring practices that are clearly and concisely called for or forbidden in the Scripture.

I suggest these few tests as concise tests of fellowship. This, of course, will not be an exhaustive list but I think it will be a good guide to maintaining a good separation while not excluding everyone who doesn't "dot their 't' and cross their 'I'" exactly the same way I do.

1. Doctrines of grace - all five of them.
2. Proper local church and practice.
3. I do not believe that dispensationalism or eschatology should be rigid tests of fellowship unless they are taken to such extremes (as some do) that they exclude whole portions of Scripture as having no application for New Testament believers. Also we notice that Paul did not break fellowship with either Corinth or Thessalonica because they erred in eschatology, pronouncing some things as fulfilled but were still waiting their full fulfillment.
4. If we would not accept them as members in our churches we should not cooperate with them in ecclesiastical fellowships.

RAY BENNETT



Songs & Singing

By F. Leon King
of Willow, Alaska

INTRODUCTION

In the past years, this writer has heard a great deal about singing, but most of what has been said is merely the opinions and preferences of men. We all have preferences of music and preferences in singing.

The New Testament, which is our only and sufficient rule of faith and practice,

has some things to tell us about songs and singing. Later, in this article, the writer will observe what is written on this subject. Undoubtedly, the first century churches had singing in their meetings, but we are not told expressly in the Holy Scriptures about exactly how they did it. The writer is convinced that they sang, otherwise, they would not have been obedient to at least two verses which enjoined singing and making melody.

Some have said:

* "I don't agree with contemporary Christian music."

* "We like and sing contemporary Christian music."

* "We sing only Psalms."

* "We sing Psalms, but those adapted in the Psalter."

* "We use only 'Favorite Songs and Hymns,' the book our churches have used for more than a hundred years."

* "If it has a beat, it cannot be Christian music."

* "We can never sing Christian music accompanied by a guitar or any such instrument---pianos and organs are all that ought to be used."

* "We ought to have special music in our church services---that is, individuals or groups who sing while the others listen."

* "Church singing ought to be strictly congregational singing---no special music."

* "A church needs a choir."

* "We sing without the 'benefit' of musical instruments---that is, we sing our hymns with no instruments accompaniment and sing them very slowly."

After more than forty-one years as a preacher of the gospel and pastor of churches, the writer has seen and heard most of the different kinds and styles of singing. From a child, he has heard the songs of the churches and knows many of them very well. Most of the arguments we hear about singing and music are designed to discourage instead of encourage singing. Does everything go? Of course not! We need the Word of God and the wisdom of God to ascertain what is good and what is not. Since we do not have certain detailed specifics about songs and singing in the Holy Scriptures--the New Testament, let every man be persuaded in his own mind. Let us look at the definition of sing, sung, and sang.

Many speak of gathering for worship in a singing service and have employed those they have named "worship leaders." Is singing worship? Not necessarily--and it is clear that a great deal of singing cannot properly be called worship. One truly worships when he submits himself to the providence and will of God. A good illustration of this is found in the book of Job. Upon hearing the messengers tell him that his wealth was gone and that all his children had been killed, **"Job arose,**

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Songs & Singing

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and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped. And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." One's acquiescence to the will and providential care of God is true worship. When one can say, in the midst of any happening and circumstance, "Even so, Father, as it seemeth good in thy sight," he experiences worship. Worship may or may not be going on when one sings. How blessed is the one who sings to the Lord in holy and humble submission to His will!

SINGING – DEFINED

Exactly what is singing? We all know what it is---or isn't, do we not? Or do we? Webster defines singing as follows:

"SING, verb, intransitive, prêt. Sung, sang; pp. sung.

1. To utter sounds with various inflections of melodious modulations of voice, as fancy may dictate, or according to the notes of a song or tune. The noise of them that sing do I hear Ex. 32.

2. To utter sweet or melodious sounds, as birds. It is remarkable that the female of no species of birds ever sings. . .singing birds in silver cages hung.

3. To make a small shrill sound; as, the air sings in passing through a crevice. O'er his head the flying spear sung innocent, and spent its force in air.

4. To tell or relate something in numbers of verse. Sing of human hope by cross event destroy'd.

SING, verb. Transitive.

1. To utter with musical modulation of voice. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. Rev. 15.

2. To celebrate in song; to give praises to in verse. The last, the happiest British king, whom thou shalt paint or I shall sing.

3. To relate or rehearse in numbers, verse or poetry. While stretch'd at ease you sing your happy loves."

1. *First mention of singing in the New Testament.* We have two verses which tell us expressly that the Lord Jesus Christ and those in attendance at the last Passover and the institution of the Lord's Supper sung a hymn after the Lord's Supper and went out.

Matthew 26:30: "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."

Mark 14:26: "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."

The Lord's Supper is a church ordinance (tradition, as some say). That Jesus instituted the Supper at the last Passover is not doubted by most. Furthermore,

the Lord set the apostles in the church first (I Cor. 12:28), which leaves us to understand the church had already been established before the death of our Lord and during His earthly ministry. The record of our Lord's appointing the apostles from the company of His disciples is recorded in Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19, and Luke 6:12-19). These twelve men were the first officers of the Lord's church.

Upon the institution of the Lord's Supper, after the last Passover which He ate with them before His crucifixion, it is clear that Jesus sang a hymn with them before they left the place where the supper was instituted. In other words, He sang in the midst of the church (Ps. 22:22; Heb. 2:12). Is it right, then, to sing in the church? That is, when the church is assembled? Yes---it is right---and we have both a pattern and precept for it. Many want to force patterns upon churches when there is no precept to reinforce the pattern. How far should a pattern go? This is a very serious question. For example:

We are told that many of the first church---the church at Jerusalem---"were together, and had all things common: and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:44-45).

Does this example mean that we as New Testament churches must be together continually, have all things common and sell all our possessions and goods parting them to all men as there is need? No, we are not expressly told to do that anywhere in the Scriptures. Examples are good and useful when accompanied by a clear precept of Scripture. Let's see another example which does have a scriptural mandate:

We are told that these same people---the ones who came to be united to the church at Jerusalem---upon hearing Peter's words to "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ. . ." did so. Acts 2:41 tells us that "they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Therefore, taking the whole tenor of Scripture into account with other commandments for believer's baptism, we conclude that the example of these being baptized is one that certainly must be followed.

2. The *next mention of singing* in the New Testament is found in Acts 16:25. Paul and Silas were in the stocks in the prison of Philippi. Acts 16:25: "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." The writer has absolutely no doubt that Paul and Silas were accustomed to singing praises unto God, for they did it in the middle of the night while they were in deep trouble. When God's people sing unto God, that kind of song is usually called a hymn

because it is addressed to God.

Another passage presents this same picture to us: Romans 15:7-11: "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people."

Singing unto God---and unto His name is a practice continued from the Old Testament times. The Psalms are replete with admonitions to "sing unto the Lord." No less than eleven times does the Psalmist mention singing to the Lord---which is a far different thing than singing 'about' the Lord. Paul and Silas sung unto the Lord and an earthquake followed!

Psalms 13:6: "I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me."

Psalms 30:4: "Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

Psalms 95:1: "O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation."

Psalms 96:1-2: "O sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day."

Psalms 98:1: A Psalm. "O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

Psalm 98:5: "Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm."

Psalms 104:33: "I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being."

Psalms 147:7: "Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God."

Psalms 149:1: "Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints."

Songs that are written expressly for the purpose of singing unto the Lord can be and are a great blessing to those who sing them. Who can doubt that God inhabits the praises of His people? Since women of the church are expressly forbidden to speak in the church---(at the very minimum in the context of unknown tongues and prophesying [expounding the Scriptures]), how can they praise the Lord with the assembly except they sing?

It is abundantly clear to this writer

that the saints shall sing unto the Lord in the ages to come. Note these passages from the Revelation: "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Pre. 5:6-10).

Revelation 15:1-4: "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

At the very least, we can say that the four and twenty elders---who are in Revelation 5:6-10---clearly representative of all the redeemed from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation---sung a new song to our Lord---the Lamb of God. Those who overcome the beast and his image are said to be standing on the sea of glass with the harp of God singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. They are singing their song to the Lord God Almighty---the King of Saints. What a joyful way to sing---to sing unto the Lord!

It is marvelous to address a song to our God---the great I AM---and to know that He inhabits our songs of praise. With the eye of faith, a child of God can see His God high and lifted up on the throne in the heavens and the Lord Jesus Christ, God's lamb and our great High Priest, seated at His right hand. How unspeakably blessed is it to sing with the four and twenty elders, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory

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and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

3. *Singing with the spirit and with the understanding.* Paul made this remarkable statement about singing to the church of God at Corinth. **"What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also"** (I Cor. 14:15).

In the context of speaking in [unknown] tongues (languages), Paul made this statement to stress both the spirit of singing and the understanding of it. Singing is a spiritual exercise and it encourages our spiritual man--the new man which is created in righteousness and true holiness. Singing ought to be done in the spirit--with a full attention to what is being sung and in consideration of the whole theme of the song. Consideration and contemplation of what we know of the God of the Bible in singing lends itself to singing in the spirit.

Singing with a lack of understanding is much like the Corinthian's abuse of tongues. If one cannot understand what is being articulated, will not he say **"ye are mad?"** That is true either of expounding Scripture or singing. That is one of the dire objections to the world of contemporary Christian music (CCM)--but not the only objection, of course. Like rock music and such like, most of the words are distorted in favor of a pulsating instrumental noise that overrides one's ability to understand what is being sung. In any case, if the use of an instrument in the singing of the saints drowns the words of the songs and makes them misunderstood or not understood at all, better it is to leave off the instrument. This writer has absolutely no use for either contemporary Christ music or rock music. Rock music is admittedly the music of rebellion--as their own performers have said in years past. God's children are not rebels and should not portray themselves as such by their singing or music.

Words of the songs we sing ought to be intelligible--easy to be understood and sung in such a way that the whole congregation can understand. This, of course, includes any who might come into our assembly. Those who visit the churches need to understand what we are singing. This was the apostle's point in making this statement.

Songs that are not sung distinctly and with meaning ought to be left off.

4. *Speaking to ourselves.* . . *singing and making melody in our heart to the Lord.* This is the first of two New Testament commandments concerning songs and singing. We will look at the next one just a bit later in this article. Ephesians

5:18-21: **"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."**

We are told to speak to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. What did the inspired writer mean to convey to us by these words? What do they mean?

Psalms: The word 'psalms' comes from the Greek word *psalmos* which, according to Strong's Concordance is taken from the Greek word *psallo* and *psao*--which had the suggested meaning of touching, or plucking of a musical instrument. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines psalms as: Any of the sacred songs contained in the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament and Hebrew Scriptures; a version or paraphrase of any of these, esp. as sung or said in public or private worship.

Hymns: This comes from the Greek word *hymnos* (hoom'-nos) apparently from a simpler (obsolete) form of *hudeo* (to celebrate) and probably akin to the Greek word *ado* (ad'-o). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines hymn as: A song of praise to God' any composition in praise of God which is adapted to be chanted or sung; spec. a metrical composition adapted to be sung in a religious service; sometimes distinguished from *psalm* or *anthem*, as not being part of the text of the Bible.

Spiritual Songs: This expression comes from the Greek word *ode* (o-day) and is translated as 'song' seven times in the New Testament. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines song as: A metrical composition adapted for singing, esp. one in rime and having a regular verse-form; occasionally, a poem.

Using all three of these different types of songs, we are enjoined to speak to ourselves, singing and making melody in our hearts. In other words, we are to speak to ourselves in singing. What does it mean to make melody in one's heart? It means to sing, of course, but making melody. Webster defines the noun 'melody' as: An agreeable succession of sounds; a succession of sounds so regulated and modulated as to please the ear. To constitute melody, the sounds must be arranged according to the laws of rhythms, measure, or the due proportion of the movements to each other. Melody differs from harmony, as it consists in the agreeable succession and modulation of sounds by a single voice; whereas harmony consists in the accordance of different voices or sounds. Melody is vocal or instrumental.

Singing of songs to ourselves which address the Lord--speak of the Lord--and encourage our spirit in the things of

God are designed to make melody in our hearts. Blessed is the man who sings and contemplates the things of God--truths concerning God's person, God's purpose, and God's unconditional, everlasting, unchanging love to the saints. There can be little doubt that singing the songs of Zion has a great effect on our spiritual, mental, and physical well being for a merry heart doeth good like a medicine.

Proverbs 17:22: **"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."**

James 5:13: **"Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray, Is any merry? Let him sing psalms."**

5. *Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.* . . This is the second imperative to us as God's dear children concerning singing in the New Testament. Not only are we to speak to ourselves by singing in our hearts, but also to teach and admonish one another with the same kinds of singing. **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"** (Col. 3:16).

It is clearly the design of God that part of our singing teaches and admonishes others in the church of which we are a part. This, of course, denotes assembling together for the purpose of singing. This is undoubtedly not the main reason for assembling together, but it is surely one of the reasons. In our day, the singing in most churches amongst which we have had our early training has deteriorated to nothingness. The singing is dead without spirit and focus if there is singing at all. Some very small congregations have two or three people stand in the front of the meeting house as a choir sings while the congregation sits in silence--often with an apathetic attitude.

Special singing is stressed in nearly all churches to the sore neglect of congregational singing. Much special singing is nothing more than bizarre attempts at showmanship and is performance oriented. The singers are the objects of observation during their performances rather than God being the object. It is for this reason that congregational singing is far better. It is not that 'special singing' is necessarily wrong--but congregational singing is better. Congregational singing involves every member of the body and is a splendid time for obeying this command from Colossians 3:16.

Songs that are sung for the purpose of teaching and admonishing require a great deal of forethought. Many songs, written by well-meaning people, are not worth the paper they are written on when it comes to scriptural teaching and admonishment. Far from it! In fact, much of it is blasphemy and ought not to be sung in a congregation that claims to be

the Lord's people. Sometimes entire songs should be omitted--other times verses should be omitted or words changed and altered so the truth is presented. Many songs that we 'have sung our whole life' are clearly unscriptural. Many are man centered instead of God centered. Since the Bible exalts God and shows sinful man for what he truly is, the songs of Zion ought to reflect the same truths.

How about Scripture songs and praise choruses? Some saints have been gifted with the ability to assemble songs from the Scriptures and make them easy to learn and sing. Such is the case with a number of churches. The hidden Hills SG Baptist Church is no exception. What better way to teach and admonish than to sing the Scriptures themselves? Many contend that we must sing only Psalms--but on investigation, the Psalms have been 'adjusted' with words left out or added. Some are put into a Psalter in this way. What is the difference in adapting a Psalm in this way and in the writing of a song with complete lyrics that expound scriptural truth?

The writer is looking at a little book entitled *The Psalms of David in Metre* which is used by many churches in order to sing Psalms only. This particular book was published by the Trinitarian Bible Society, Tyndale House, Dorset Road, London, SW19 3NN, England. It is published "According to the version approved by The Church of Scotland and appointed to be used in worship." The Church of Scotland is the Presbyterian Church--a state church founded by both John Calvin and John Knox. Let us quote the very first song in the book:

"Psalm 1

1. That man hath perfect blessedness who walketh not astray in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinners' way, nor sitteth in the scorner's chair:

2. But placeth his delight upon God's law, and meditates on his law day and night.

3. He shall be like a tree that grows near planted by a river, which in his season yields his fruit, and his leaf fadeth never; And all he doth shall prosper well.

4. The wicked are not so; But like they are unto the chaff, Which wind drives to and fro.

5. In judgment therefore shall not stand such as ungodly are; nor in th' assembly of the just shall wicked men appear.

6. For why? The way of godly men unto the Lord is known: whereas the way of wicked men shall quite be overthrown."

The words are not the same, are they? Of course not! They have been altered so the song can be sung easily in the English language. Is that wrong? No--it is not, unless one denies or distorts the truth of the Scriptures in his song.

Some are adamantly opposed to praise choruses and scripture songs in

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fear that they are moving toward the 'Contemporary Christian Music Crowd.' To fear singing praise to the Lord because on thinks that someone will dub him 'charismatic' is an unhealthy fear. Little does this writer concern himself with the possibility that others will place him in somebody's 'pigeon hole' or call him by some degrading name because of his praise to the Lord. Brethren, let us lift our voices and sing unto the lord! Extol Him and bless His name!

What of musical instruments? Many say, dogmatically so, that all singing must be vocal only with no instruments. Many articles are available which are attempts to prove from the New Testament that musical instruments ought not be used. Such thinking makes this writer wonder how the harps ever made their way into the heavenlies. That the four and twenty elders played harps is not open to question (Rev. 5:8). The Apostle John heard the "harpers harping with their harps" (Rev. 14:2). One can have great expectations of glorious music and singing by thinking of "them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God" (Rev. 15:2).

This writer has very serious doubts that Jubal was the first with musical instruments--he and his worldly followers merely used them for the wrong purpose. One thing is certain--there is just as much Scripture to support the use of a trumpet as there is stringed instruments--just as much to allow the playing of a timbrel as stringed instruments and organs. Some gag at the piano or guitar while extolling the virtues of pitch pipes to keep them on tune. The Psalmist said, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord" (Ps. 150:6). These arguments are clearly preferences for there is nothing known to this writer in the New Testament which indicates the early church did or did not ever use musical instruments when they sung their songs.

It is the belief of this writer that things which are not clearly spelled out in the holy Scriptures ought not be made 'bones of contention,' but rather, ought to be left to the liberty and discretion of the Lord's churches. If a church wants to sing her songs with no instrumental accompaniment, so be it. On the other hand, if a church wants to use a guitar, it is their free option to do so. Some use pianos--some use organs--some use both. Some people like neither. Some people like none. It is a matter of liberty, brethren. Some churches use other kinds of musical instruments.

The main thing, for this writer, is that the assembly sings praise to God or sings for teaching and exhortation.

7. How much singing? This, too, is a

matter of discretion for the church. In the churches where the writer of this article grew up, we did the 'standard missionary Baptist' thing; three or four songs at the most--1st, 2nd, and last verse if a song had more than three verses. It seemed to many of them a grievous thing to sing the third verse of the song. There were exceptions, of course. The reason for this never became apparent. For years, the writer thought this was standing operating procedures among Baptist churches. There were notable exceptions, though, for which we heartily thank God.

The Hidden Hills Sovereign Grace Baptist Church meets at noon on Sunday and at 7 PM on Wednesday evenings. On Sundays, the church sings for nearly an hour with numbers being called out by the congregation. We have a short break, then a song, Bible reading, and we usually sing for another hour. This is the will of the church body. The church is located in a sparsely populated, rural area of Alaska. We decided--that is, the church decided--that we would have one service on Sunday instead of having people drive back and forth to two different services. This began out of a necessity because many of the church members were driving more than fifty miles to the services. Following the old established way of having two services on Sunday worked a great burden on people unnecessarily. Meeting this one time on Sunday seemed to strike a singing cord in all the members of the church. They wanted to sing--and they wanted to hear the Word of God preached. They still do. As pastor of this church, it is refreshing, blessedly so, to see a people who come every time to every service unless they are hindered by providence. The preaching service begins immediately on the conclusion of the last song. Sometimes, our services last for four hours on Sundays--and two hours on Wednesday evenings.

The writer has been in churches where many in attendance tried to keep their eye on the clock to be sure that the preacher was finished at 12 PM on the dot. These pray that the 'sermon and the son, won't be too long,' because something else beckons them. One can watch these same people set 'at the feet of their TV set' for hours on end without a twitch. Many who never left their voice in song to the Lord are the driving force and leaders behind the screams and cheers at ball games and social outings. Two or three minutes past the 'worship hour' is, for these clock watchers, a 'thorn in their flesh.' One would think that the mourners of Zion would have the desire to lift their voices in praise to their God Who showed mercy on them in bestowing life and immortality upon them through the death, burial, and resurrection of God's only beloved Son. Surely if they restrained themselves, the rocks would cry out!



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.

SCALIA WARNS JUDGES AGAINST RELYING ON FOREIGN LAW

(EP News)--The U.S. Constitution is not a "living document" and should not be filtered through foreign law, according to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia during a speech to judges and lawyers in Houston in late November. "I fear the courts' use of foreign law in interpreting the Constitution will continue at an accelerated pace," the 72-year-old jurist told the local chapter of the Federal Bar Association. Scalia called on judges to adhere to the constitutional authors' intent. He said the Founders of this country did not want us to emulate Europe.

IN SCHOOLS, GAY ACTIVISTS INCREASINGLY SET THE AGENDA

(EP News)--The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) wants to take control of school calendars, scheduling at least six "Days of Action" or other celebrations in public schools every year. The group is calling on students to recognize the "Transgender Day of Remembrance" on Nov. 20. A GLSEN guide encourages students to lobby for a "multi-gendered bathroom at your school" and "join or create a coalition with transgender advocacy groups in your community." TransAction -- a recent addition to the gay-activism calendar -- arrives Feb. 27. The cause for celebration? "Transgender and gender non-conforming people and experiences."

PLANNED PARENTHOOD LOSES SOME STATE FUNDING

(EP News)--For 35 years, the state of Georgia has been funding Planned Parenthood of Georgia in Fulton County. On Sept. 30, the \$420,000 annual contract was cut, Atlanta Progressive News reported. And last month, Sarasota County in Florida dropped the annual \$25,000 it had allocated to Planned Parenthood of Southwest & Central Florida for the last 10 years. With the economy stumbling and tax revenues falling, Commissioner Paul Mercier said the county needs to focus on groups that truly need help. "It's not political," Mercier told the Herald Tribune. "They don't need the money."

COLORADO GOVERNOR SUED OVER DAY OF PRAYER

(EP News)--The Wisconsin-based Freedom From Religion Foundation is suing Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter and the state of Colorado over a state-sanctioned "Day of

Prayer," claiming the government is turning nonbelievers into "political outsiders." In 2008, all 50 U.S. governors issued National Day of Prayer Proclamations. Ritter spokesman Evan Dreyer said he was confident the suit would fail because the National Day of Prayer has been around for decades and has withstood other legal challenges. The Wisconsin group also has sued President George W. Bush and Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle over the same issue.

CATHOLIC PRIEST REFUSES COMMUNION FOR OBAMA SUPPORTERS

(EP News)--A South Carolina Roman Catholic priest has told his parishioners that they should refrain from receiving Holy Communion if they voted for Barack Obama because the Democratic president-elect supports abortion, and supporting him "constitutes material cooperation with intrinsic evil." The Rev. Jay Scott Newman said in a letter distributed Nov. 9 to parishioners at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Greenville that they are putting their souls at risk if they take Holy Communion before doing penance for their vote. "Our nation has chosen for its chief executive the most radical pro-abortion politician ever to serve in the United States Senate or to run for president," Newman wrote. "Voting for a pro-abortion politician when a plausible pro-life alternative exists constitutes material cooperation with intrinsic evil, and those Catholics who do so place themselves outside of the full communion of Christ's Church and under the judgment of divine law."

JOE BIDEN'S BISHOP WON'T DENY COMMUNION OVER PRO-ABORTION VIEWS

(EP News)--The Catholic bishop that oversees the diocese where Joe Biden worships says he will not deny the incoming vice president communion over his pro-abortion views. Bishop W. Francis Malooly's decision stands in contrast to one made by Bishop Joseph F. Martino, of Biden's hometown Scranton, Penn. Malooly, bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, told the Associated Press that he won't ask Biden to withdraw from receiving communion even though several of his fellow bishops have done so. He said he would rather change Biden's opinion on abortion. "I won't politicize the Eucharist," Malooly said. "I don't want to alienate people. I want to

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change their hearts and minds.”

POSSIBLE BARACK OBAMA SUPREME COURT NOMINEE BACKS ABORTION

(EP News)--When the time comes for Barack Obama to make his first selection for the Supreme Court, Harold Hongju Koh, the dean of Yale Law School, is one of the people on his short list. A Koh nomination would be a severe blow to the pro-life movement as he would assuredly vote to uphold *Roe v. Wade*. During the campaign, Pepperdine University professor Douglas Kmiec said Obama would want judges in the mold of Stephen Breyer and David Souter and mentioned Koh as a possible nominee. But Piero A. Tozzi, of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, says Koh is strongly pro-abortion. Tozzi worries that Koh, as a Supreme Court justice, would use a new standard beyond the so-called privacy basis to justify keeping *Roe* and its ruling that unlimited abortions should be legal throughout pregnancy for any reason.

OBAMA TAKES AIM AT PRO-LIFE POLICIES

(EP News)--Americans won't have to wait for liberal nominees to the U.S. Supreme Court to undermine pro-life policies: President-elect Barack Obama reportedly is set to begin his attack on life during his first days in office. Obama pledged during the campaign that one of his first acts in office would be to sign the Freedom of Choice Act if it hits his desk, a bill that would overturn many state abortion regulations such as parental notification and waiting periods. He also is expected to rescind Bush administration restrictions on the use of federal funds for embryonic stem-cell research, and for abortions and abortion referrals by international agencies. Cecile Richards, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, said her organization is regularly advising Obama's transition staff. "We expect to see a real change," she told *The Washington Post*. The Family Research Council's Tony Perkins said, "With almost full control of Congress, Obama will be expected to live up to his promise as payback for the abortion community's support. If successful, the newly expanded majority would abolish over 300 pro-life laws and restrictions -- even reinstating partial-birth abortion."

HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVISTS DISRUPT MICHIGAN CHURCH SERVICE

(EP News)--A homosexual anarchist group on Nov. 9 disrupted the worship services of an evangelical Christian church in Michigan's capital city. The anarchist group, Bash Back, claimed credit for the disruption, referring to Mount Hope Church of Lansing as "a deplorable, anti-queer mega-church..."

complicit in the repression of queers in Michigan and beyond. So long as bigots kill us in the streets, this pack of wolves will continue to Bash Back!" the group threatened in an online posting. Mount Hope Church, a 5,000-member racially diverse church, issued a statement which described the disruption: "On Sunday, November 9, 2008 at the 11:30 AM services the people of Mount Hope Church were shocked by an unwelcome violent demonstration by a homosexual/transgender anarchist group based in Chicago, IL. The group threw fliers at churchgoers and shouted sentiments such as, 'It's okay to be gay' and 'Jesus was a homo' during a Sunday morning service. The Eaton County Sheriff's office was called and the illegal demonstration ceased."

GAY ACTIVISTS CALL FOR BOYCOTT OF UTAH

(EP News)--Weeks after California voted to protect marriage as the union of one man and one woman, the anger from the gay community has failed to subside. During the weekend after the Nov. 4 election, protests of Proposition 8 continued in Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego -- and Washington, D.C. Now, gay activists are calling for a boycott of Utah, which takes in \$6 billion from tourism every year. They are seeking to punish the Mormon Church for promoting California's marriage-protection amendment. Thousands of Mormons worked as grassroots volunteers and donated to the campaign, *The Associated Press* reported. Kim Farah, spokeswoman for the Mormon Church, said, "While those who disagree with our position on Proposition 8 have the right to make their feelings known, it is wrong to target the Church and its sacred places of worship for being part of the democratic process."

NATIONAL BIBLE BEE HOPES TO START NATIONAL MOVEMENT

(EP News)--The Shelby Kennedy Foundation, a nonprofit ministry established in her name to encourage children and youth to grow in Christ through Scripture memorization, is launching what it says is a "world-class Bible Bee." The goal of the Bible Bee is to build godly character in young people by calling them back to the lost discipline of Scripture memorization. Local Bible Bee Contests will be conducted throughout the United States on Sept. 12, 2009. One hundred finalists from each of three age categories will then advance to the National Bible Bee for a two-day competition held in Washington D.C., on Nov. 5-6, 2009. The National Bible Bee will distribute more than \$260,000 in prize money with \$100,000 being awarded to the first-place winner of the top age bracket.

FLORIDA JUDGE RULES AGAINST GAY ADOPTION BAN

(EP News)--A Florida judge ruled on Nov. 25 that a state law banning homosexuals from adopting children is unconstitutional. Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Cindy Lederman

said the 31-year-old law violates equal protection rights for the children and their prospective gay parents. John Stemberger, president and general counsel for the Florida Family Policy Council, called the ruling judicial activism. "Everywhere in the law where children are affected, the standard must always be what is in the best interest of the child," he told the *Associated Press*. "What is stunning to me is that when it comes to dealing with gays, that standard goes out the window. Children do better with a mother and a father." The Florida Department of Children & Families plans to file an appeal.

OBAMA APPOINTS ABORTION ACTIVISTS TO HIS TEAM

(EP News)--President-elect Barack Obama appointed Ellen Moran, executive director of Emily's List, as his White House communications director. Emily's List is a group that spends hundreds of millions of dollars funding pro-abortion Democrat candidates. Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, said it comes as no surprise to those who followed Obama's record that he is forming such a strongly pro-abortion team: "Ms. Moran's fealty to abortion is so strong that after the Supreme Court upheld the ban on partial-birth abortion, she saw it as a call to arms to raise more funds for her group to work towards overturning the decision and cut off funding for politicians who voted to ban the gruesome practice." Obama also recently named Melody Barnes, who formerly served on the boards of Emily's List and Planned Parenthood, as his director of Domestic Policy Council. "President-elect Obama was arguably the most pro-abortion member of the U.S. Senate," said Ashley Horne, federal policy analyst for Focus on the Family Action. "As such, his selection of staff who share his pro-abortion views is disappointing but not surprising."

TEXAS TOWN CUTS PLANNED PARENTHOOD FUNDING

(EP News)--Corpus Christi, Tex., has decided it will no longer fund Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider. The decision, which will cost the local Planned Parenthood about \$30,000 in funding, came after about 20 people spoke against the abortion giant, the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* reported. Kristie Rutledge said she had visited Planned Parenthood's Web site, which outlines birth-control options and suggested teens engage in masturbation and fantasy. "We don't want our children ages 10 and up to be targeted with this information," she told the budget meeting. "This is pornography."

BETTER HEALTH LINKED TO CHURCH ATTENDANCE

(EP News)--A new study, which followed the health of more than 90,000 older women over an average of more than seven years, found that those who attended church were one-fifth less likely to die during the study

than those who did not, *The New York Times* reported. The study, which appears in *Psychology & Health*, looked at women 50 to 79 at 40 locations across the U.S. "All things being equal, religious people need and use fewer health care services," said Dr. Harold G. Koenig, professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Duke University Medical Center, who did not participate in the study of women. "They are healthier, more likely to have intact families to care for them and have greater social support."

GEORGIA BILLBOARDS SUPPORT MARRIAGE

(EP News)--Every year, nearly 750,000 Georgians get divorced. A recent report on the taxpayer costs of divorce and unwed childbearing estimated the cost to taxpayers of family breakdown in Georgia exceeds nearly \$1.46 billion a year. The Georgia Supreme Court is fighting back, by sponsoring a dozen billboards around the state that urge residents to "Get Married, Stay Married." The billboard space was donated by the Outdoor Advertising Association of Georgia, and the billboards were paid for by the Georgia Bar Foundation. Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears co-chairs the court's Commission on Children, Marriage and Family Law, which put on a two-day marriage conference last week. "Accepting divorce and unmarried childbearing as inevitable means giving up on many of our children," Sears said on her Web site. "Georgia's children deserve far better than that. We can make a difference for this generation, and the next."

LAWSUIT FORCES eHARMONY TO MATCH HOMOSEXUAL COUPLES

(EP News)--Under an agreement with New Jersey's Division on Civil Rights, eHarmony will create a same-sex dating Web site -- "Compatible Partners" -- and pay \$50,000 in administrative costs. Eric McKinley, who filed a "discrimination" complaint against eHarmony three years ago, gets \$5,000 under the settlement. The new site and eHarmony will maintain individual matching pools and registration information. As a result, users of the two sites cannot be paired. The new site must be launched by March 31. eHarmony -- which claims 236 of its members marry every day in the U.S. -- agreed to ensure that same-sex users will be matched using the same or equivalent technology used for its heterosexual clients. Its matching system, however, is based on research involving heterosexuals. eHarmony was founded in 2000 by evangelical Christian Dr. Neil Clark Warren and had ties with the influential religious conservative group Focus on the Family.

CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT TO RULE ON MARRIAGE AMENDMENT

(EP News)--The California Supreme Court has agreed to hear three cases challenging the constitutionality of Proposition 8, which voters approved Nov. 4. That means a ruling on the marriage-

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protection amendment could come in months. In the meantime, the court said, marriage will be reserved for heterosexual couples. "This is a great day for the rule of law and the voters of California," said Andy Pugno, general counsel for ProtectMarriage.com. "This order means voters will get their day in court and ensures voters will have a vigorous defense of Proposition 8 before the California Supreme Court. We are confident Proposition 8 will be upheld."

GEORGE DOCHERTY, RESPONSIBLE FOR "UNDER GOD" IN PLEDGE, DIES

(EPNews)—The Rev. George M. Docherty, who is credited for getting the phrase "under God" added to the Pledge of Allegiance, died on Thanksgiving Day, 2008. He was 97. With President Dwight Eisenhower sitting in the same pew that Abraham Lincoln had occupied nearly a century prior, Docherty delivered a sermon at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., on February 7, 1954. Recalling a central passage from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, Reverend Docherty preached that America's Pledge of Allegiance should acknowledge God because, "To omit the words 'under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance is to omit the definitive factor in the American way of life." The next day, Rep. Charles G. Oakman, R-Mich., introduced a bill to add the phrase "under God" to the pledge, and a companion bill was introduced in the Senate. Eisenhower signed the law on Flag Day that year.

MARRIAGE SUPPORT IN CALIFORNIA WIDESPREAD

(EP News)—Support for Prop. 8, California's marriage-protection amendment, crossed religious, racial and age lines. That's according to a poll by the Public Policy Institute of California. The amendment was strongly supported by evangelical Christians, as well as nearly 60 percent of minority voters. Overall, 52 percent of voters supported Prop. 8, which defines marriage as between one man and one woman.

AMERICANS ARE HISTORICALLY AND CIVICALLY ILLITERATE

(EP News)—At the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) released a new study Nov. 20 that found most Americans to be civically illiterate. The study was conducted by giving a random sampling of more than 2500 people a 33-question test on civic literacy. Questions ranged from knowledge about the Declaration of Independence to the economy. The result of the test was that more than 1,700 people failed. The average score overall was 49 percent, which equals an "F" on the ISI scale. Another finding of the study was that twice as many people know that Paula Abdul was a judge on American

idol than they know that the phrase "government of the people, by the people, for the people" comes from the Gettysburg Address. Josiah Bunting, III, is chairman of ISI's National Civic Literacy Board. He said, "There is an epidemic of economic, political, and historical ignorance in our country."

HOW THE MEDIA COVERED RELIGION

(EP News)—Religion played a much more significant role in the media coverage of President-elect Barack Obama than it did in the press treatment of Republican nominee John McCain during the 2008 presidential campaign, according to a study of media coverage conducted by the Pew Research Center. Much of the coverage related to the persistent rumors that Obama is a Muslim. Meanwhile, there was little attempt by the news media during the campaign to comprehensively examine the role of faith in the political values and policies of the candidates, save for those of Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin. And when religion-focused campaign stories were covered by the mainstream press, often the context was negative, controversial or focused on a perceived political problem. In all, religion was a significant but not overriding storyline in the media coverage of the 2008 campaign.

GERMAN HOME SCHOOLING FAMILY SEEKS ASYLUM IN U.S.

(EP News)—The Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) is supporting a first-of-its-kind application for political asylum by a German home schooling family. Uwe and Hannelore Romeike left their home in Bisingen, Germany, to escape government persecution directed at them because they home-school. They arrived in the United States in August and are settling in Tennessee. Michael Farris, HSLDA founder and chairman, told WorldNetDaily:

"Germany's behavior in this area is the edge of the coming night. You don't expect to apply for political asylum from a Western country ... but the East German government's philosophy seems to be the style adopted by today's German government as it approaches children." Political asylum is available to people in the United States who fear returning to their home country due to persecution or who have a well-founded fear of persecution.

ADF SUES TO KEEP 'GOD' ON INDIANA LICENSE PLATE

(EP News)—The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) is challenging an Indiana statute that bans references to religion or a deity on personalized license plates even though the state issues "In God We Trust" plates. Nine years ago, Liz Ferris bought a personalized license plate reading "BE GODS" -- a reference to the late Christian songwriter Rich Mullins, who signed autographs with the phrase "Be God's." When Ferris re-applied for the plate in March, the state denied her request. "The Bureau of Motor Vehicles is speaking out of both sides of its mouth," said Erik Stanley, senior legal counsel for ADF.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS URUGUAY PRESIDENT VETOES LIBERAL ABORTION LAW

(EP News)—A presidential veto has kept Uruguay from having South America's most liberal abortion law, The Associated Press reported. The legislation would have allowed abortion in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. President Tabare Vazquez's veto sends it back to Congress, where pro-abortion lawmakers lack the votes to override it. Vazquez has said he doesn't agree with abortion "philosophically or biologically."



The Relation of Baptism to Salvation

By James Robinson Graves
(1820-1893)

(Continued from last issue.)

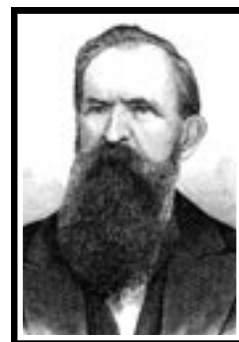
8. Nor is baptism a seal, or the seal, of the Covenant of Grace, that not only offers and applies, but confirms, all the blessings of that covenant to us.

It is most absurd, if not profane, to teach that any conceivable physical act performed by man is the "Seal" of the "Covenant of Grace"—a spiritual covenant; and the more so to say it has two or more seals. This is also to profane the office-work of the Spirit, by virtually committing it to fallible men, thus teaching that man—a priest—could do the work which a gracious God committed alone to the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit is the "Sealer," and "Christ's likeness," left upon the character as the result of the Spirit's sealing, is the image and superscription of

the seal itself.

"In whom [Christ] also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13).



"Grieve not the Holy Spirit by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

Now, having shown from the harmonious teachings of the Word of God that baptism is not a "means of remission," or the cleansing away of sin, or of "justification" or "regeneration," or "union" with Christ, or a "seal" of the Covenant of Grace, how can we understand the passages quoted at the opening of these pages, in which baptism "seems" so intimately connected with remission and salvation? It seems to me

that Peter, who uses one or two of the most plausible, is the one to explain them, which, we think, he most clearly does. He says:

"The life figure whereunto baptism doth now also save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,) but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

From this we learn, at least, two things--

(1) That baptism does not "produce" a good conscience---for one must have been produced before baptism in order for the rite to answer or satisfy its demands. Therefore baptism does not secure the remission of sins, and a conscience cleansed by the blood of Christ.

(2) That the rite of baptism was appointed, not to be a sacrament of salvation, but a "figure," and a "figure" only, whether we consider it as related to repentance, to the remission of sins, or to regeneration. Whatever it is said to do, it "does figuratively," ---"declaratively," and can do nothing, confer nothing really.

If we read "baptism of re-pentance," we must understand that it is an act professing repentance---declaring one in the exercise of re-pentance.

If it is the "baptism of the remission of sins," or to "wash away sins," it still is declarative of the remission of sins enjoyed, and figurative of sins actually washed away by the blood of Christ.

If we read the "bath of regeneration," we must understand it as the outward evidence and sign of the existing fact.

This is the pass-key to all the passages quoted by those who teach that baptism is an, or "the," efficacious means of, and necessary to, salvation---joined to faith in Christ---on the part of an adult; but efficacious and essential to salvation "without" faith or consciousness on the part of infants.

Now, it must follow that baptism is connected with faith in our salvation declaratively only. It is a visible expression or declaration that faith exists; it simply expresses or professes a saved state. By faith we receive Christ and all the blessings that flow from a union with Him; and in the act of baptism we confess Christ, and avouch our allegiance to Him as our Savior and Lawgiver. It is in no sense a "seal," but simply a sign of grace received, and a union formed, the visible and appointed fruit or evidence of a loving faith.

Baptism not alone does this; good works---all outward obedience---do it also. For without obedience our faith would be reckoned a "dead" faith, because, without the inseparable "sign" of life---"growth."

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" (James 2:14).

The evidence that we are believers---that faith in, and union with, Christ does exist: but the observance of outward rites did not produce the faith, nor affect the union.

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Relation of Baptism

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In the same way a verbal confession of the sinner is joined with faith:

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom.10:9-10).

“Confession with the mouth,” says Carson, is not less necessary, then, than belief with the heart, though in different respects. They are equally essential, only for different purposes; the one is required to own or authenticate the other; the one is the spirit, the other is the body---the visible form of the churchman. It is not strange, then, that we should find baptism joined with faith in the commission; its omission there would surprise us. Baptism is the appointed mode of confessing Christ: **“As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.”** It is the great public act by which we assume His name, and subscribe ourselves His servants; and it is the declaration of Christ to us and the world that our sins are washed away; and thus we may be said to declaratively wash our sins away. It is our badge of discipleship; in its waters we **“put on Christ”**---openly avow our interest in, and our dependence on, Him. Primitive believers were known as such by their baptism---not soldiers, not recognized as Christians, until baptized; and, without this, they would not have been recognized as disciples, or followers, or friends, of Christ. Here, also, to the eye of others, we take our stand among the disciples of Christ. Previously possessing the substance---the spirit we put on the form, the body, the clothing of Christianity---our baptism authenticates our faith, declares us believers; it says, in symbol, we are Christ’s; it is an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace; and hence can belong only to such as possess that grace, since its observance is designed to attest the reality and present existence of that grace. To place baptism upon a sinner, or a non-believer, or an unconscious infant, is to pervert the ordinance, and to teach a falsehood, which, if the person or child so baptized should believe, would insure the loss of the soul.

Illustration: In the Episcopal office, every one received into that organization is required to confess and affirm, that, in baptism, although it was administered to him when an unconscious infant, and asleep in his nurse’s arms, without knowledge or volition, he was made an “heir of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.”

Now, with the Word of God to guide us, we say every one of all baptized into that communion, implicitly believing that statement, and depending upon it for salvation, will inevitably be lost; for no living infant or adult, without volition, ever was

made an heir of God, a member of Christ, or an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven. And we ask the thoughtful Christian to examine each of the Protestant Confessions, and decide if their teachings were implicitly believed by those baptized in infancy, if they would not be forced to conclude that their salvation was secured to them when their parents had baptism administered to them in unconscious infancy as the “sacrament of salvation,” or “seal of the covenant of grace?”

It must be evident to all that the position we occupy as Baptists, touching the relation of baptism to faith, does not necessitate the conclusion, that, in every case, there is an absence of salvation where there is an absence of baptism, as we are forced to conclude from the position occupied by Catholics, and Protestants, and Campbellites, who teach that it is the seal of the covenant of grace, or the appointed sacrament of salvation, or the law of pardon. Many will doubtless be saved who were never baptized. They confessed Him with their mouths, and honored Him with their lives; and they were accepted of Him, as was the thief. But all these are saved without baptism, as, in other circumstances, they could be without good works, nay, without verbal confession. Yet the two latter are joined with faith in our salvation. Good works, a verbal confession, and a baptismal profession, are none of them “agencies,” or even “instruments,” in our deliverance; but merely its declaration and evidences. In this relation alone are they required by God; and they are required only as opportunity of obedience is offered, and as light, in order to obey, is possessed. Good works are declared essential to a living faith (James 2:17); **“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”** And a verbal confession is required; and yet the thief was saved without the former, and who will say that he would have been lost had he not been able to express himself in the hearing of others,---that his secret reliance and trust in the Savior would not have been accepted? May we not say the same of baptism as associated with faith in preceding salvation. “When it is not understood,” or when “opportunity of observing it is not enjoyed,” its absence is not the absence of salvation.

But if baptism is the law of pardon, the divinely appointed means of remission, or the seal of the covenant of grace, then no one can be saved where there is no church or priest to administer it.

I submit here an illustration I submitted to Mr. A. Campbell in a written discussion had with him in 1853-54. He had said:

“I affirm, then, that the first institution in which we can meet with God is the institution of baptism.”

“Remission of sins can not be enjoyed by any person before immersion.”

“Before we are justified in Christ, live in Christ, fall asleep in Christ, we must be introduced or immersed into Christ.”

Since Mr. Campbell has given us an illustration, I will suppose one in turn:

A Chinese father, taking a boat of

tea from the remote interior to Canton, received a copy of the Bible from our missionary there. On his long voyage home, he read the wondrous book; and his heart, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, was deeply affected by its truths. He read it in his family; and within a few months, all his household embraced the faith of Christ, and that happy father rejoiced, believing on him with all his house.

One month after this, the fever prostrated the eldest daughter, and was rapidly hurrying her to the grave. She called her father to the bedside, and asked him if she might, in this last hour, trust this new religion in death; ---if trusting upon the merits and promises of Him Who died for sinners, and bore their sins in His own body on the tree would suffice to appease God’s violated law on her behalf; and if she might hope for a place in those heavenly mansions of our Father’s house on high.

“Yes, my daughter,” said the distressed father, “without a doubt. This new Bible is true; we have felt its truth in our own hearts; if has proved its authenticity to us, that it is indeed from the great Father above. The Savior of the Bible says, **‘Whoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out;’** and, **‘He that believeth on him is not condemned;’** and, **‘That whoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.’** Do you believe on Him, my child?”

“Oh, yes, father! I can, I do wholly, fully lay my soul on the blood and righteousness of Jesus my Savior only---on Jesus only; but, father, I have done, and I can do nothing.”

“Hear, then,” said the father, as he wiped away the tears of mingled joy and sorrow from his eyes, “hear what this Bible says to such: **‘Christ is the end of the law [of all law, my daughter, and works are of the law] for righteousness to every one that believeth’** not worketh, but believeth. And hear the reason, my child, **‘Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.’**”

“**‘Sure to all the seed’** it reads, father, and to the seed which is of the faith of Abraham; but how may I know that I am of this seed, and am an heir according to this precious promise, that is sure, because it rests not in works, but in grace? and that word grace---grace---how sweet that word is to me now, father! All the books of the temple contain no word like it; grace, favor, free gift. The books of Boodah talk of works, works, works. Could I but know that I am of the seed!”

“The apostle answers your question, my child: **‘And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.’** Will not that solve your doubts?”

“Yes, yes! How beautiful, how glorious, how sweet these precious words and teachings to my soul! I never appreciated them so fully before. I feel that I am Christ’s:

my spirit, my all rests upon Him. But does it not tell how I became Christ’s, and a child of God? Read it now to me, father, read it now!”

And the old man read through his tears, **“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,”** and bowed his head upon the sacred book. There was silence for a moment; and he heard soft whispers stealing from the couch, the tears were slowly trickling from the half-closed eyes of the dying girl, and a sweet smile was playing over her features as she whispered: “That’s it---that’s it: a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus; and then heirs according to the sure promise.”

“And there are other passages, my child, shall I read them?” said the father.

“Oh yes! They are so precious; they just meet my case; they fill my soul so completely; read them.”

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“There, father, that’s enough---enough,” she faintly whispered. “My soul is more than satisfied. Blessed Savior!” and she looked up as if to see Him above her couch---“Blessed Savior, through thee I come to thee.”

And the whispers were hushed; and the family gathered around the couch. The eyes, though glazed, were still upward and full of light; the lips were parted, and a smile of unearthly sweetness illumined her features: She had gone to Jesus.

This is an illustration of salvation by faith alone. Will Mr. Campbell deny that that humble, believing child was regenerated, justified, satisfied, adopted, and saved---saved, too, according to the plan of salvation? He will not do it---he dare not do it in the face of that declaration of Christ Himself; **“He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, and shall never come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.”**

But the Scriptures afford no ground for any one to hope for salvation who has the light and will not use it---who cares not to know what Christ requires of him, and who has an opportunity to be baptized as Christ was, and will not take up his cross and follow him. We have no right to say that such a one is a child of God; he does not give us the evidence of it: for by their fruits, not professions, we are to know them. “But this is no more,” says Carson, “than denying salvation to the Antinomian, or to those who, through fear or shame, refuse to confess Christ before men.” I can not think him safe whose course, whatever be his profession, is a course of sin and willful or willing disobedience. Christ says: **“He that doeth the truth cometh to the light:”** and, **“If a man love me, he will keep my commandments.”** To such the apostle says: **“Wilt thou not know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”** which is equivalent to saying, it is no faith at all, just as a dead man is no man at all, only the form of one. I can not think him safe who will not,

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for any reason, confess Christ before the world; to him the Savior says: **“Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny”**---refuse to own. I can not think him safe who, with every opportunity of knowing his duty, and who has right views of the duty, and no real hinderance to his or her observing it, is yet living in neglect of the ordinance. Let such hear these awful words of Christ: **“Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be gloried when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels”** (Luke 9:26). Solemn words! uttered not to frighten, but to warn.

Do parents, or relatives, or friends deter you? **“If any man love father, or mother, or husband, or wife more than me, he is not worthy of me.”** He that is ashamed not of my person merely, but of my laws, of him will I be ashamed. Yet how many who call themselves Christians, or cherish the hope, are exactly in this case with respect to baptism! They are willing to bear the name of Christ, because to do so involves no reproach; they are more respected for this than they would be to disown Him; but it is not so in coming out before the world, and designating and honoring by your acts His ordinances, and his despised church; and this the sinful neglect of baptism sees. He or she knows, that, to submit to the rite Christ appointed, and to follow Him in it, is to expose himself to scorn and contempt---is to bear the cross after Christ---is to offend family or friends. Let such hear the words of Christ: **“Of him will I be ashamed.”** Such will He reject in abhorrence.

Remember that Christ is “King,” and is to be received as King as well as “Savior.” “How can you be His friends if you do not admit His rule? It is vain to boast that you trust His Cross if you do not reverence His Crown.”

This refusal on the part of a professed disciple to hear the voice and obey the command of the Master for personal considerations and the assurance of salvation, is not consonant with the gospel scheme. That scheme, indeed, saves merely by grace, through faith---saves without the least merit on the part of man; but does it save “rebels?” does it license “contempt of divine authority?” **“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”** Will the Christian desire to do so? Is the gospel a doctrine of licentiousness? Is it sent to open the flood-gate of error? To beget sin? to warrant us to serve our own wills and notions, fancies and conveniences? Nay, nay, but to subdue them---to renew our natures, and make us obedient to God.

The gospel knows no one, however high in profession, who does not love and obey the commandments of Christ; and they wholly mistake it who suppose themselves saved in willing or willful “disobedience.” Ignorance of the law, when they have it, and

have sense to understand and opportunity to obey it, will not avail; nor will the plea of sincerity in their error. Hear the savior to such: **“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”**

Rejecters of immersion! Ponder these things. The institution you rightly understand, or it is in your power to understand it; you may know, without a doubt, how Christ was baptized; your conscience is convicted. If you knew that you were going to the judgment tomorrow, and your salvation depended upon your being baptized as Christ was, and as He has commanded you to be, you would not be at a moment’s loss; you would, this day, be **“buried with him by baptism;”** you would be **“planted in the likeness of his death;”** and yet you will not obey. Are you not, then, rebels against Christ, and consequently exposed to His wrath? You are willing to own “His person; but you reject and deny His word, and dislike His law. Will He not reject and deny you before His angels? You knew your Lord’s will; but you refused to do it; and do you hope to escape being beaten with many stripes? You say Lord, Lord, and do many things in Christ’s name; but this being all, may He not profess unto you, **“I never knew you?”**

Let me, in all affection and earnestness, as one who loves your everlasting happiness, as one who would be faithful to his mission, beg and entreat you seriously and prayerfully to think on these things. Will you not, as you love your own souls, and as you hope you love Christ, carefully examine the New Testament and see what Christ requires of you as the act of baptism. Do not fail to do it---do not refuse to do it, and still hope to be saved, for you have no right to hope for salvation. Not because there is any merit in the act, or any grace conferred by baptism *per se*, but because such aversion to do the will of Christ should be an all-convincing evidence to you that your heart is not right in the sight of God---that you are as Simon Magus was, **“in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.”** Think, I beg of you, can you be saved while you openly condemn the authority, and reject the counsel of God against yourself? Your neglect of baptism, and union with the church of Christ, will not, on its own account, condemn you; but it certainly will as indicative of the state of your heart. Your obedience will be taken as evidence against you, and thus will be your death. **“If you love me, ye will keep my words.”**

Your flagrant and inexcusable neglect of divine law declares you the enemy of Christ. You are willing enough to confess Christ in a way that will not expose you to

opposition or reproach, but the cross you are unwilling to bear. Can you, then, be His disciple? **“And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”** Does not this cross of Christ try you, and find you wanting?

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

*Didst thou, dear Savior, suffer shame,
And bear the cross for me?
And shall I fear to own thy name,
Or thy disciple be?*

*Inspire my soul with life divine,
And make me truly bold,
Let knowledge, faith, and meekness shine,
Nor love, nor zeal, grow cold.*

*Let mockers scoff, the world defame
And treat me with disdain;
Still may I glory in thy name,
And count reproach my gain.*



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 11-1-2008 to 11-30-2008

Beginning Balance	\$8,451.88
RECEIPTS:	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX.....	10.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	37.12
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
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	300.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	150.00
Buffalo Valley B. C., Clay, WV	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
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
Joseph Jurzec, Richmond, IL	20.00
L. H. Farrell, Des Allemands, LA	100.00
Landmark M. B. C., Moncks Corner, SC	50.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM	100.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	400.00
New Testamnet B. C., Bristol, TN	10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
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
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Walnut Creek B. C., Grove City, OH	50.00
Subscriptions	84.00
Anon	205.00
Dividing checks	150.00
Sub Total	\$3,046.12
TOTAL	\$11,498.00
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	581.71

Postage	890.45
Wages	2,000.00
FICA	153.01
Supplies	139.90
Dividing checks	150.00
Total Expenditures	3,915.07
ENDING BALANCE	\$7,582.93

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 11-1-2008 to 11-30-2008

Beginning Balance	\$12,827.64
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Berea M. B. C., West Point, TN	50.00
Calvary Ind. B.C., Everson, WA	300.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
.....	775.00
TOTAL	13,602.64
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	410.00
Postage	192.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	602.00
.....	\$13,000.64
Interest	+ .95
.....	13,001.59
Less Corbin, KY des.	-1,850.92
ENDING BALANCE	\$11,150.67
CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT	
Beginning Balance	\$2,010.92
RECEIPTS:	
.....	2,101.92
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT	160.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,850.92

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Bethel Bible Baptist Church, PO Box 85, Mansfield, LA is in need of a pastor. Their former pastor, Bro. Keith Kennison recently went home to be with the Lord.

Any interested elder should call Connie McMellon at 318-872-1647.

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

The 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.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Northport AL, amd Pastor Todd Bryant would like to announce they will be having a Winter Meeting Jan. 16-18. Elder Tom Ross will be speaking.

Service times are Friday at 7:00 p.m., Saturday 10:30 a.m. with lunch following and Sunday at 10:30 a.m. with lunch afterwards.

All are invited to attend this meeting.

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The Path of Life and Way of Death

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

Here is depicted the path of life and the way of death. The way of death is exceeding broad, and on an inclined plane. It has a downward tendency; it is occupied by a vast multitude. Some are seen throwing themselves off the way headlong; others are bearing aloft the terrible banners of war. They are elated with victory. Here the man of pleasure revels in delight. The drunkard is dancing with wild delirious joy, and the miser groans beneath his bags of gold. There are, however, some sober, respectable people on the way. These appear to look grave and thoughtful. The way ends, you perceive in total darkness. Thick clouds of curling blackness, rising from a pit or gulf, cover the extremity of the way. The travelers enter the dismal shades, and we see them no more.

From the way of death you see another way, or path, rather, stretching up, as it were, into the clouds. This is called the path of life. It is extremely narrow. It is, moreover, difficult, on account of its upward tendency. Few persons are seen walking on it; these are scattered here and there. This path appears to end well. We can see where it does end. A beautiful palace opens its golden gates to receive the wearied travelers. From its opened portals bursts forth a dazzling light that illuminates the pathway beneath.

By the way of death is signified the way of sin that leads to death eternal. “**The wages of sin is death.**”--Its downward tendency denotes that it is much easier to go wrong than to go right. The way of sin is easy and pleasant to man's corrupt nature. He delights in it after the inner man. Were it not so, surely so many in all ages would not be found walking therein. The Creator Himself gives us the reason. “The thoughts of the imaginations of his heart are evil, only evil, and that continually.” Hence man follows the bent of his inclination. He goes with the stream, “every one in his own way.” To do otherwise would require self-denial, and vigorous, persevering effort.

In the engraving, some are seen casting themselves off the way. By this is meant, not that sinners grow tired of the way of sin exactly, but that they are tired of themselves; they are tired of life. Their



substance is expended in gambling and profligacy. The means of indulging their depraved appetite no longer exists; hence they commit suicide, plunge into eternity, and add to the number of those who die without hope; for, “**except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**” Others, by their excesses in riotous living and debaucheries, break down their constitution and destroy life, and thus perish with those who “**live out half their days.**”

Warriors are also in the way of death, raising to the breeze the flag of triumph. These denote the men “who delight in war”--who, for wealth and glory, “sink, burn, and destroy,” and slaughter their fellow-creatures. These violate the law of Jehovah, “**Thou shalt not kill.**” Drunkards, too, are in this way, carousing with strong drink, dancing with maniac madness, and yet, on the way to ruin, drowning the cares of time, but planting thorns for eternity. These belong to the class of whom it is said, Such “**shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**” The one with the bag of gold represents that very large class who worship Mammon on the earth; who never think even of Heaven, except when they remember that it is paved with gold. These are idolaters, the meanest of the Devil's drudges, the vilest of the slaves of sin. Others enjoy the pleasures of sin, but he sweats and groans beneath his load; he takes place with the breakers of God's law, “**Thou shalt have no other gods before me.**”

Some pass the time in wanton dalliance; these designate the adulterer, fornicator, and the impure. These take pleasure in unrighteousness, give up their affections to the control of lust, indulge in mere animal

*The Path of Life, and Death's frequented way,
Who can describe? what pencil can portray?
The Way of Death is broad, with downward slide.
Easy and pleasant to man's lust and pride;
Tis' thronged with multitudes who glide along
With gold, and drink, and dance, and wanton song;
Not these alone, but some of decent mien,
“Harmless” and “useless” on the way are seen;
In ruin's gulf it ends. See! Rising there,
Thick clouds of blackness, and of dark despair,
The Path of life lifts up its narrow breadth,
High o'er the realms of darkness and of death;
Sky-rising, still, laborious and straight,
Leading directly up to heaven's gate;
Tis' wondrous strange, and yet, alas! It is true,
The Path of Life is traveled but by few.
Though ending where the shades of night ne'er fall,
But one eternal Light encircles all.*

delights, imbrute their manhood, quench their intellect, and barter the glories of Heaven for a “**part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.**” Others of staid and respectable appearance are in this way--men of dignity and of consequence; men of morals and philosophy, all honorable men; men who are harmless in their generation, honest in their dealings. They “**render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's,**” but, alas for them! they do not render “**unto God the things which are God's.**” One thing only is wanting: “**One thing thou lackest.**” The heart is unrendered; hence there is no repentance, no living faith, no homage, no love, no obedience, no salvation. These, alas! all take rank with the “**unprofitable servant,**” who was cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

But time would fail to describe the various characters that throng the way of death. The gross sensualist, the haughty Pharisee, and the specious hypocrite are all here. But is it possible, some one may say, that so many are in the way to eternal death? God Himself has answered the question; we have heard His voice. It is not only true that they are going, but that they go of their own accord. The sinner is threatened, admonished, and warned, and yet he goes on. He is persuaded, entreated, and invited to turn and live, and yet he goes on.

If you see a man traveling a road that you know to be frequented with robbers, you tell him of his danger; he persists in going on; the robbers strip him and leave him for dead; who is to blame? The sinner is warned of his

danger, and yet he persists in sin. Numbers control not the sword of Justice. The antediluvians were faithfully warned; they went on, and perished in the flood. The men of Sodom were warned; they perished, and perished in the rain of fire. The Jews were warned also, even by the Son of God, and yet they went on in rebellion, until of their city not one stone was left standing upon another, and themselves scattered and peeled among the nations.

The sinner neglects a great salvation. Neglecting only to get into the ark will expose him to the flood of fire. Neglecting salvation, he condemns the “**love of God.**” He “tramples upon the blood of the covenant.” He does “**despite**

unto the Spirit of grace.” How shall he escape if he neglects so great salvation? “**These shall go away into everlasting punishment.**”

By the path of life is designated the path of holiness, that leads to life eternal. “**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**” It is narrow and steep; it requires care and effort. The pilgrim must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and watch unto prayer. It is difficult only to flesh and blood; to the carnal mind, not to the spiritual; to the unregenerate, not to him that is born again. To the righteous its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are paths of peace. Narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there are who find it. Fewer still endure to the end thereof. The few were ones in the way of death. They are among the many that were called. They obeyed the heavenly call, forsook the broad way, and entered upon the path of life.

The path of life ends well; God delights in holiness. He did not overlook Noah in the overflowing of the ungodly, nor Lot in Sodom. The faithful few are God's jewels; His hidden ones, while tribulation and “anguish are assigned to the disobedient.” The patient continuance of the righteous in well doing “will be rewarded with glory, and honor, and immortality,” for the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.