

The Berea Baptist Banner

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

God's Sovereignty in Salvation

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

In this sermon (which will take several weeks to preach), I want to prove the fact that God is Sovereign over all things, even the salvation of souls. In proving this fact, I



want to use some basic assumptions that every Christian should agree upon. In so doing, I think that I will give us all an opportunity to talk to some Christian, or some person that gives verbal obeisance to the Bible, and prove to them that if God is who He says He is; and, if God is who the Bible says He is, then we have to conclude that God is sovereign in the affairs of men's souls. In other words, if a person says that he believes the Bible, then we can use some very basic and

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A Devilish, Depraved and Determined Man

By Wayne Cox
(1913 - 2003)

"And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him; for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw



him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down; and received him

joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto

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Clearing Away the Mist

By Timothy Hille
of Ashland, Illinois

or, What Is the Gift of the Holy Spirit?
Acts 19:1-7

I think in this day and time in which we are living, that many religious people are in the same condition



as these twelve men whom Paul encountered during his third missionary journey. These said, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit." Many today do not know who the Holy Spirit is. They do not know who the Holy Spirit is, nor what is His office work in the world and in the lives of saved children of God, because they do not know Him who ministers the Holy Spirit to saved people, the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you unless you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and your own personal Substitute upon the cross. People are not going to rightly understand the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the

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Men Reap As They Sow

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8).



one great volume. None of God's laws, either in the natural or moral world, interfere with each other. They are all harmonious, and all combine to form a system perfectly adapted to show forth the wisdom and power of the Lawgiver. This harmony is not confined to the things of time, but it extends to the unseen world.

Perhaps in Scripture this is nowhere

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On Reading the Bible by Books

By John A. Broadus
(1827 - 1895)

The main support of all individual Christian life, the main-spring of all high Christian work, must be the truth of God. Truth is the life-blood of piety. Truth is always more potent and more precious when we draw it ourselves out of the Bible. I rode out yesterday afternoon with a kind friend among the glories of the famous avenue of Cleveland, and then away into the beautiful country region which they hope is to be Cleveland Park some day, until we passed presently a little fountain where the water, coming fresh and sweet and bright, was bursting from the hillside.



The water we drink in the houses here from the lake is delightful, but there it was a fountain. There is nothing like drinking water out of a fountain. And I remembered what my Lord Bacon has said: "Truth from any other source is like water from a cistern; but truth drawn out of the Bible is like drinking water from a fountain, immediately where it springeth." Ah, this Christian work we have to day in the world will be wise and strong and mighty just in proportion, other things being equal, as it is directed

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Let me be a sorrowing saint, rather than a merry sinner.

Let me rather sigh for sin, than sing in sin.

The sacrifices God loves best are broken hearts for sin oppressed.

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart ; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalms 34:18).

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

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

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manifestations of the Spirit, or evidence the fruits of the Spirit until they know as their Savior the One who gives the Holy Spirit to believers, the Lord Jesus Christ. Part of the office work of Jesus is that He, as our Great High Priest, ministers to us who are saved and washed from our sins in His blood the Spirit of God. You cannot be saved without believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither can you be saved without the Holy Spirit. That's why Paul inquired of these disciples at Ephesus, "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" In other words, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" This is the meaning of the text. Every one who believes receives the Holy Spirit.

Now this passage of Scripture which is before us as our text is perhaps one of the most misunderstood and misinterpreted in all of the Bible. Nevertheless, just because some corrupt the Word of God should not keep you and me from believing and obeying all that God has revealed. Never get upset or become discouraged from following the Word of God because of someone or some group who corrupts or perverts the teachings of the Bible. You believe God, or else you will be wrong with God yourself. Some declare the false doctrine that these verses teach "the second blessing." Many people, most going by the name Pentecostal, or Assembly of God, believe that after a person is saved he or she needs to receive "the second blessing." What they mean is that a person is a believer, but that the believer is not or cannot know that he or she is truly saved until they speak in tongues or prophesy. And so these people go about in their religion seeking to have an experience that mimics what we read here in Acts chapter nineteen, as far as outward appearance is concerned; yet, they do not seek it in a scriptural manner, nor do they have any warrant from the Scriptures to believe that they shall have such an experience.

Now you don't only need the second blessing if you're here and saved today. You also need the third, the fourth, the fifth, and the thirty-fifth. You do not need to have the Holy Spirit come down upon you, but you need to have Him fill you, and that over and over again, so that you will be what God wants you to be. If you're not saved, you don't need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit--and you're not going to be--you need to be born of the Spirit (John 3:3-7). You need to be born of the Word and the Spirit of God, or else you are not saved and you are not a child of God.

What really happened here in Acts chapter nineteen? What was the spiritual event that took place? Here in verses one through three we see twelve men who

had been baptized, but who had never believed and were unsaved. In verses four and five we see these believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of their souls, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ who saved their souls in scriptural baptism. In verses six and seven we see these baptized believers--which all believers should be--now saved by grace through faith, receive, not "the second blessing," and not salvation or the confirmation of salvation, but rather, the gift of the Holy Spirit. If you are ever going to understand the Scriptures, you are going to have to understand them scripturally. When Paul first encountered these men, they were called "disciples," but they were nothing more than baptized, lost sinners. Did you know that the majority of religious people today are lost and on the road to Hell? They have been baptized, have their names on a church roll, and are religious, but they have not trusted in the One who died for sinners upon the cross and have not been born of the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Paul detected some defect in these twelve men. They were called "disciples," but something was wrong, spiritually speaking. If your religion that you follow does not agree with the teachings and sayings of this Book, then you have no right to think that you are a child of God or that you are on the road to Heaven. It does not matter what you feel: it matters whether or not you have saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that you have been made alive by the Holy Spirit who dwells in every true believer.

These twelve men whom Paul encountered had never been born again. They had never believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. They had been baptized. They had heard about John the Baptist, and they had been baptized in a mimicking of John's baptism; but they had not believed on the One whom John believed on, and whom John preached was the only Savior of men, women, boys, and girls, the Lord Jesus Christ. "And he said unto them, **Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.**" The only way you are going to be saved is that you repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 3:1-17, John 1:6-8, 19-34). You may have been baptized, and you may attend church, and you may be very good in your own eyes and in the eyes of your family and friends; but unless you have confessed your sins to God and received Jesus Christ His Son as your Sin-bearer, Law-keeper, and only Savior, then you are in your sins and guilty before God. You do not need to seek an emotional or hysterical experience; but rather you need to seek the Lord and believe on His only begotten Son.

Now we note that these twelve men were saved, and then they were baptized--and that is always the proper order, first saved by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then baptism by the hand of a proper administrator--and then we find that Paul laid his hands on them, and "the Holy Spirit came on them." I thank God that it does not say, "The Holy Spirit came into them." Now some will become excited, and others will become doubtful, because the verse here reads, "and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." Why should you be excited or doubtful, when it is a certainty that it happened? They did speak with tongues, which means, not gibberish or foolishness, or some unknown tongue, but with languages they themselves had never studied or learned. Never think that when the Bible talks of speaking in tongues that it means gibberish or foolishness. No, the word "tongues" means languages; and these twelve men spake in languages they had not learned in school or in any other way. This is the same thing which occurred on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two (Acts 2:1-11). It also says that they prophesied, and that word always means the telling forth of the Word of God. These twelve men were enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak and tell forth part of the wisdom and knowledge of God's will that had not yet been revealed. The Bible was not written all at once. No, beloved, over a course of several thousand years the Bible came to us, God moving holy men of old to speak and write by the Holy Spirit. These men spake in languages they had not studied, and spoke forth the counsel of God. Now that we have the completed Bible, these things are no longer necessary, and God says in His Word that they no longer exist (I Cor. 13:8-13).

Now none of you ever received the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, and you never shall. Yet, you may ask, "Why did this happen here, by the laying on of Paul's hands?" This was an extraordinary case. This was the first time that men had to be baptized again. This was the first anabaptism, or rebaptism. Some of you who are reading this have been rebaptized. You were baptized falsely in some false religion, or sprinkled in infancy; but God by His grace called you to eternal life in His Son, and gave you faith to believe the gospel, and you followed the Lord Jesus Christ in true Bible baptism by immersion after that you had believed. There are three other extraordinary cases. I have already read one to you in Acts chapter two. On that day, Jesus baptized His church as an institution in the Holy Spirit, to empower His church to carry out the Great Commission, the job of going and preaching the gospel to all the world, baptizing the saved, and teaching those who are saved and baptized all the

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commandments of God. The first church could not do anything to fulfill the gospel commission without the Holy Spirit, and neither can this church. The second case that is similar to this one is recorded in Acts chapter eight (Acts 8:5-8, 14-17). Once again, this was an extraordinary case. Samaritans were being added to the Lord's kind of church. These people were half-breed Jews. They had no place in the Jewish religion. Yet, by the grace of God, they were saved from their sins by the hearing and believing of the gospel; and after believing and being baptized, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The third extraordinary case is found in Acts chapter ten (Acts 10:24-28, 34-48). Here we note that these were Gentiles, or non-Jews, like you and me; and they were the first Gentiles to be saved, and to be added by baptism into a New Testament church. Peter had not wanted to go and preach to Gentiles. He was prejudiced against the Gentiles, as a Jew; but God showed Peter that every man whom God saves is clean, whether Jew or Gentile, white, black, yellow, or red; and that God gives the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, and adds them to His kind of church.

Now all these four occasions which we have noted were extraordinary occasions. They were the first of something; and the first of something is always different in its beginning than the rest of that kind of thing. The first man Adam was formed of the dust of the earth by God, and God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; but every man since then has been born from his mother's womb. The first church which Jesus organized during His earthly ministry was organized and authorized directly by Him; but every true gospel church since then has come from another true gospel church which existed before it. These four cases were all the first of something. Acts chapter two was the firstfruits of the church which Jesus built carrying out the Great Commission. Acts chapter eight was the first time the Samaritans were added to the kind of church which Jesus built. Acts chapter ten was the first time Gentiles were added to a New Testament church. And Acts chapter nineteen was the first time that persons were rebaptized and thus added to the work of the Lord. In each case the gift of the Holy Spirit was manifest in an outstanding way. Now someone will want to say, "What if something happens for the first time again?" How can something happen for the first time again? God tells you that to be saved you must repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He tells you that after you have believed, you ought to be baptized by a true gospel church like the one Jesus founded during

His earthly ministry, which was in doctrine and practice a Baptist church. God tells you that those who believe and are baptized receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; and it is this gift that I want us to note in the remainder of the message.

Acts 2:32-47, now we do not read in these verses of a single person speaking with tongues or prophesying. We do not read of anyone performing any miracles of healing. Yet, we do read of the preaching of the gospel and the command of God to repent and turn to Jesus Christ. We do read of many believing and being saved and baptized and added to the church at Jerusalem. This is still true today, and this is true in every case, that when someone is saved, he or she is to follow the Lord in Bible baptism, and to join the Lord's kind of church where that person can serve and worship God by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. Now the apostles on the day of Pentecost were empowered to proclaim the Word of God in other languages by the Holy Spirit. That was a special manifestation of the Spirit. Yet we find that Peter stated in the message of God which he preached, "**Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for (because of) the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**" (Acts 2:38). This is still the gospel message. Repent, or else you cannot be saved. Turn from your sins, and turn to God. Forsake your own way, and trust in the Lord and seek His mercy. Be baptized. Everyone who repents should be baptized. Baptism does not take away sins. If Jesus has taken away your sins and granted you repentance from sins, then your conscience which has experienced the forgiveness, or the remission, of sins, should now answer back to God by obeying the Scriptures and the example of Jesus and being baptized in much water. Those who are saved through repentance and faith today, and who obey God in baptism, still "**receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**." Now this does not mean the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. You do not have to be baptized to receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. No Old Testament saint was ever baptized in the New Testament order; but they all had the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. You cannot be saved without having the Holy Spirit take up His abode in you. (Numbers 27:18) Joshua had the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, and filling him, which made him able to take the place of leader of the people once Moses was gone. Some people have said that the Holy Spirit did not permanently dwell in Old Testament saints. They are wrong. You do not receive the indwelling Holy Spirit by baptism, or by laying on of hands, but you receive the indwelling Holy Spirit when you believe (Gal. 3:2).

What is this gift of the Holy Spirit? This is what Jesus obtained of His Heavenly Father when He ascended up to Heaven.

This is the promise, of which He spoke to the apostles prior to His ascension, which He said they were to tarry at Jerusalem in order to receive (Acts 1:1-9). This is that which Jesus spoke of during His earthly ministry prior to His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection (John 7:37-39). In that the Holy Spirit was not yet given does not mean that saved people did not have the Spirit of God in them. We have already showed that Old Testament saints had the Spirit in them. How can there be life without the Spirit? There was no life in the creation until the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters. There is no life in the new creation until the Spirit quickens a dead sinner and makes that person alive. The Spirit imparts life. You do not have spiritual life without the Spirit of God. Yet, Jesus has, in this New Testament age, given to those who are the members of His kind of church, New Testament missionary Baptist churches, the gift of the Holy Spirit. He gave it to the first church. He gave it to those who were saved on the day of Pentecost and added to the first church. He gave it to everyone who was saved, baptized, and added to one of His churches throughout the New Testament, and He still does so today. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the special unction or anointing of the Holy Spirit upon a believer that enables that person to serve God in and through His kind of church. The gift of the Holy Spirit is that special pouring out of the Spirit which has occurred in these New Testament times, so that the Lord's churches can be fully equipped to carry out the Great Commission, to preach the gospel to every creature, to baptize the saved, to edify the body of Christ--the local church, and to earnestly contend for the faith which has once and for all been delivered to the saints. For a very limited period of time, before the end of the first century, the gift of the Holy Spirit sometimes was manifested by speaking in other languages and prophesying, by healing miracles and other signs and wonders. These were necessary in the plan of God for a very short period of time. Did you know that before the end of the first century the Bible was complete? Once the full revelation of God, Genesis to Revelation was complete, we did not need those special manifestations of the Holy Spirit. But we still need the Holy Spirit and His office work in order to do anything in the work of God.

The Holy Spirit enables saved people to understand the Bible (John 16:13, I John 2:20, 27). The Holy Spirit enables pastors and evangelists to preach the Word of God (Eph. 4:7-16). No church will ever be what it ought to be without the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads every one of God's churches in doing scriptural mission work (Acts 13:1-3). The Holy Spirit enables church members to worship God in the right way (Eph. 5:17-20). These things--

-understanding the teachings of the Bible, preaching the Word of God and the gospel, carrying out gospel mission work, and worshipping God aright in the church--would all be impossible without the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now you need to answer two questions of yourself. The first question is, "Do you have the Spirit of Jesus Christ dwelling in you?" The Bible says, "**Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his**" (Rom. 8:9). "**For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God**" (Rom. 8:14). You are not saved if you have not been born of the Spirit, born again. You do not belong to Jesus Christ if God the Holy Spirit does not dwell in you. You receive the indwelling Holy Spirit only by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. The second question which you need to ask is, "If I'm saved, am I submitting to the Holy Spirit of God?" Are you following the Holy Spirit? Are you being filled with the Holy Spirit? Are you quenching the Spirit, and putting out His influence in your life? Are you grieving the Holy Spirit, by continuing in sin, even though Jesus has died to save you from sin and from sinning? Are you serving God in and through the gift of the Holy Spirit? May God bless this feeble message.



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the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything 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 19:1-10).

I am going to speak to you on the subject, "A Devilish, Depraved and Determined Man."

Someone said to me one time, "Why do you speak on this subject dealing with man's depravity?" Well, it is a known fact that unless men come face to face with their own natures and are made to see that they are sinners in God's sight, that they are wholly incapable and incompetent to save themselves, then they will look away from Him who is the Saviour. As long as a man entertains the vaguest idea or hope that there is something good in him, then, just that long, he won't be saved, because he will not trust his all to the only One who is able to save--Jesus.

People talk about repentance, but the average man knows nothing about repentance; for repentance, like faith, is a gift from God, and it is given to men through the hearing of the Gospel by the Spirit of God. But the direction of

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repentance---if there be such a thing as direction---is from dead works. In Hebrews 6:1, the Apostle Paul points out that in order for a man to be saved, he must repent from dead works.

Now, the only kind of a man who has dead works is a dead man. A living man cannot produce dead works. He may not produce any kind of works at all, but he cannot produce dead works. That is a Biblical fact that cannot be successfully denied. A spiritually dead man cannot please God; he cannot do anything to help himself, for he produces dead works. As long as a man entertains in his heart the slightest hope that he can pull himself up by his own boot straps and make himself acceptable in the Beloved, he will never be saved. It is Christ who makes us acceptable in the Beloved, and not we ourselves: **"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved"** (Eph. 1:6).

You might call the message by another name if you desire. You may call it an "Old Fashioned Biblical Conversion," but I prefer to call it "A Devilish, Depraved and Determined Man." Zacchaeus was a publican, and a publican was a man who sold out his country. He was a tax collector; he collected for the Romans, who had subjugated Palestine. He was a collaborator with the Romans against his country. He was a man who desired to "get somewhere." The poverty, sorrow and misery to which his people had been subjected was of no concern to Zacchaeus; he was determined to get rich, and his was a profession that would make a man rich in a hurry.

Now he didn't rob and steal from his people in order to become a devilish, depraved man. Men do not have to do anything to be devilish and depraved. The only thing you or I have to do in order to be both is to be born into the world. We are both by nature. He was acting like a devil because inwardly he was a devil; not the devil, but he was acting like a devil because he was one of the devil's children. Men do not commit the gross sins they do in order to become sinners, but they do those things as the manifestation of their natures. They are sinners by nature; they do what they do because of what they are.

I say without fear of contradiction, although people don't like to hear it, for it is an obnoxious doctrine to the carnal mind, but I tell you that every person outside of the Lord Jesus Christ is a devilish and depraved man. Everyone outside of Jesus is lost---not going to be lost, but he is already lost. This fact is presented in John 3:18, and also in II Corinthians 4:3: **"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."**

Jesus said in John 3:18: **"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."**

Jesus said that the unbeliever is already lost and condemned---not going to be, but is already lost. We, therefore, are drawn to the specific conclusion that people outside of Jesus are lost and are the children of the devil.

Perhaps one of the doctrines that has caused more confusion than any other doctrine advanced in the last fifty years is the doctrine of "Fatherhood of God" and "Brotherhood of Man." The proponents of this hellish doctrine say that all people are the children of God.

Now, beloved, that isn't so. There isn't a word of truth in the first word of that statement. All men are the handiwork of God, to be sure, and we are all the creation of God; but He is not the spiritual Father of those who are lost. He is only the Father of those who have experienced the birth of the Spirit which is from above---the New Birth. We are by birth and adoption transferred from the family of the devil into the family of God.

"You mean to say, Brother Cox, that because I am not a Christian I am a child of the devil?"

That is exactly what I mean. I say again that everyone outside of the Lord Jesus Christ is lost, and he is the child of the devil. If you are lost, you are a child of the devil.

You wonder why men go to Hell. They go there because they want to go there. Their spiritual father is there, along with all their spiritual brothers and sisters. I mean by that, those who are unsaved have no desire for heavenly, immortal glory, for their affection cannot be set upon things above when they, themselves, are from beneath.

I say this in all kindness and not in order to offend---although I am not an apologetic preacher and I never make apologies for the Word of God, but I say this in order that you might realize your position in the sight of God. If you are without Christ you are lost already, and you are a child of the devil.

In John 8:34 and also in John 8:44, Jesus said to that great religious group, the religious Pharisees, **"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."**

Jesus said they were of their father the devil. They were very religious, but religion will not get you to Heaven. It is like a baby with a ten-pound weight hung around its neck, cast into the river and told to swim out. It is that which condemns men's souls. The only religion---if you can call it that---which will save is the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ---though I don't like to associate the word "religion" with Christ.

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KARI, Blaine, WA.....	Saturday 10:30 - 11:00 a.m....	550.....	5,000 AM

Romans 9:8 tells us that **"They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise and counted for the seed."**

Now the Holy Spirit points out that these Pharisees were not the children of God. Then, if not the children of God, they must be the children of somebody, and that someone is the devil. I say this without fear of contradiction, every lost person in this building, nay, in the world, is a child of the devil.

In Matthew 13:38, when Jesus spake the parable of the tares and the wheat---and I might just pause here long enough to point out the word "tares" comes from the word zizanion, and it means that which looks just exactly like the wheat; in fact, unless you are well acquainted with wheat there can be no distinguishing between the two---but notice in the parable, the angels of God know the difference; for Jesus said in explanation that the tares are the children of the evil one, and that all the wheat are the children of the kingdom. Thus, the lost are the children of the devil, and second, they are depraved.

I heard a man say one time that this was one of the two blackest doctrines this side of Hell, the doctrine of total and inherent depravity. I heard him say this and cold chills ran over my body. He was lost. A man who will say that doesn't know the Word of God; moreover, he doesn't know the Author of this Book. The doctrine that he despised is a doctrine that destroys his own theology, but nevertheless, the Bible teaches the doctrine of depravity.

I want you to get this now: men are depraved by nature. We do not mean by the words "total depravity" that men are as bad as they can get. We mean that the total man is depraved; every faculty of man is depraved. I have seen many lost people whose outward lives were as clean as that of Christians, but they have a depraved heart. We do not mean that man is just as mean as he can become, the Bible doesn't teach that. In fact, it teaches that evil men shall wax worse and worse for it says in II Timothy 3:13, **"But evil men shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."**

The Bible teaches, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that men are depraved in the sight of God, that is, in their natural state. Not only their hearts, but from the

top of their heads to the soles of their feet. Isaiah 1:5-6: **"Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."**

This covers the whole man; for He said, "From the top of your heads to the sole of your feet there is no soundness in it." He said that it is rotten; it is rotten to the core; the whole man has no soundness in him. There is nothing but putrifying sores: they have not been closed up, neither bound or mollified with ointment. The balm of Gilead has not been applied.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:25, **"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess."**

Jesus said that they make the outside of the cup clean, but on the inside they are filthy. He said, **"You appear beautiful in the sight of men, but on the inside you are full of dead men's bones."**

A lost man is like that. He is depraved and needs something besides his own strength---indeed; he has no strength with which to save himself! David knew the Lord in the free pardon and forgiveness of sins, but he also knew something else: he knew that he was depraved, for he said in Psalm 51:5, **"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."** Now this was no reflection upon the character of his mother, but only the recognition of his own condition: he was depraved by nature.

Adam stood as the federal head of the human race and when he fell the whole human race fell with him, or rather fell in him. Romans 3:23 says that **"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."** And the tense of that verb "sinned" means sinned in the indefinite past. And in the first part of Romans 5:12 we locate the time. It was in Adam. When Adam transgressed against God, He immediately imputed that sin to all Adam's posterity, that is, the whole human race. We sinned in Adam, and we are all born into the world with this imputed sin. We are born with

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A Devilish, Depraved

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a deceitful heart. There is nothing in the world as fickle as the human heart. In Jeremiah 17:9 the wailing and lamenting prophet of God had this to say: **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”** The heart is deceitful and wicked, and who can know it? God knows it.

Not only is the heart wicked, but the mind is against God. **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God”** (Rom. 8:7-8).

Beloved, the carnal or lost man is at enmity with God. He is an enemy of God. Never talk to me about a lost man, a man who is depraved as I have pointed out, never talk to me about such a one assisting God in any way in saving himself.

Jeremiah 13:23, **“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”**

I tell you, beloved, it is just as easy for a Negro to change the color of his skin, and a leopard his spots as it is for a man to do good, who is accustomed to do evil. It just can't be done. A man can no more save himself or help save himself than a Negro can change his skin, or a leopard his spots.

Before us is a passage that teaches that Zacchaeus was a depraved and devilish man. Not only that, he was a determined man. He wanted to see Jesus, who He was, with no desire for salvation, that being the farthest thing from his mind. He closed his office and went down into the street; for he heard that Jesus was to pass that way. He was a determined man, and regardless of the cost, he was going to see who He was.

The crowd was so great he could not see, but he was a very ingenious fellow so he climbed a tree. . .for Jesus was to pass that way” (Luke 19:4). He looked down the road. He was not looking for salvation for the thing that happened to him was just as big a surprise to him as it was to the bystanders. He wanted to see this miracle Man of the ages---**“who He was. . .”** (Luke 19:3).

When Jesus got to where Zacchaeus was **“He looked up.”** Brother, Jesus came to where Zacchaeus was and looked up, and if you are ever to be saved, Jesus will come to where you are and call you. The Scriptures say that Jesus **“looked up”** and said, **“Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house”** (Luke 19:5).

Then we see that Zacchaeus made haste and came down and **“received Him joyfully.”** I tell you there is joy in coming into an intimate relationship with the

Master. There is joy in coming to know Christ as personal Saviour. Zacchaeus passed from death unto life, for he came down and **“received Him joyfully.”** And what did he say? He called Him **“Lord.”** He was saved for “no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Spirit” (I Cor. 12:3). And no man has the Holy Spirit except he be saved.

Then notice something else. There was a change in Zacchaeus from what he was when he climbed the tree. What did he say? **“Half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold”** (Luke 19:8). That was according to Law---Deut. 22. But before he climbed the tree he was a devilish and depraved man, and he would have taken money from his own mother or anyone else; but now there is a change: he had come into the knowledge of Christ; Christ had saved him and he wants to make everything right. He is no longer a devilish and depraved man; he wants to make things right. I tell you, God's people always want to make things right.

And Jesus said---bless His holy name---**“This day is salvation come to this house.”** I tell you, beloved, Jesus saves; for He said, “I come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Jesus came, He sought and saved Zacchaeus, and not only that, He saved his whole family. He said, **“This day is salvation come to this house.”** I believe in household salvation; it is demonstrated through the New Testament. Cornelius and his whole household were saved. We see this throughout the New Testament.

When the Lord saves us we ought to desire to see our families saved. You know, I could never understand why a Christian can be unconcerned about the spiritual condition of his family. When I was saved I wanted to see everybody saved, especially those of my own family, and I witnessed to them of Christ and His saving grace and power.

Do you know Christ? Has He come to where you are? Have you come down and received Him joyfully even as did Zacchaeus? Has He spoken to your heart? If so, may you receive Him right now as your personal Saviour. Amen.



God's Sovereignty

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God-glorifying Scriptures and beliefs---beliefs that are commonly held by most Christians---and we can carry this logic forward to the conclusion that God is sovereign in the salvation of men's souls.

SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Let's start out by making some observations, and laying down some basic facts that ought to be believed by all that are saved; in fact, most Christians that you and I speak to will agree with us

on these basic assumptions. If we begin here, on this common ground, then, later in the message we can forge ahead and seek agreement on the sovereign plan of redemption that has saved each one of us.

GOD KNOWS ALL THINGS

A.W. Pink says, in his booklet *The Attributes of God* (Chapter 3- The Knowledge of God), “God is omniscient. He knowseverything: everything possible, everything actual; all events, all creatures, God the past, the present and the future. He is perfectly acquainted with every detail in the life of every being in heaven, in earth and in hell. **“He knoweth what is in the darkness”** (Dan. 2:22). Nothing escapes His notice, nothing can be hidden from Him, nothing is forgotten by Him. Well may we say with the Psalmist, **“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it”** (Ps. 139:6). His knowledge is perfect. He never errs, never changes, never overlooks anything. **“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”** (Heb. 4:13). Yes, such is the God with whom **“we have to do!”**

“Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether” (Ps. 139:2-4). What a wondrous Being is the God of Scripture! Each of His glorious attributes should render Him honorable in our esteem. The apprehension of His omniscience ought to bow us in adoration before Him. Yet how little do we meditate upon this Divine perfection! Is it because the very thought of it fills us with uneasiness?

How solemn is this fact: nothing can be concealed from God! **“For I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them”** (Ezek. 11:5). Though He be invisible to us, we are not so to Him. Neither the darkness of night, the closest curtains, nor the deepest dungeon can hide any sinner from the eyes of Omniscience. The trees of the garden were not able to conceal our first parents. No human eye beheld Cain murder his brother, but his Maker witnessed his crime. Sarah might laugh derisively in the seclusion of her tent, yet was it heard by Jehovah. Achan stole a wedge of gold and carefully hid it in the earth, but God brought it to light. David was at much pains to cover up his wickedness, but ere long the all-seeing God sent one of His servants to say to him, **“Thou art the man!”** And to writer and reader is also said, **“Be sure your sin will find you out”** (Num. 32:23).

Men would strip Deity of His omniscience if they could---what a proof that **“the carnal mind is enmity against God”** (Rom. 8:7)! The wicked do as

naturally hate this Divine perfection as much as they are naturally compelled to acknowledge it. They wish there might be no Witness of their sins, no Searcher of their hearts, no Judge of their deeds. They seek to banish such a God from their thoughts: **“They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness”** (Hosea 7:2). How solemn is Psalm 90:8! Good reason has every Christ-rejecter for trembling before it: **“Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance.”**

“But to the believer, the fact of God's omniscience is a truth fraught with much comfort. In times of perplexity he says with Job, **“But He knoweth the way that I take.”** (23:10). It may be profoundly mysterious to me, quite incomprehensible to my friends, but **“He knoweth!”** In times of weariness and weakness believers assure themselves **“He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust”** (Ps. 103:14). In times of doubt and suspicion they appeal to this very attribute saying, **“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). In time of sad failure, when our actions have belied our hearts, when our deeds have repudiated our devotion, and the searching question comes to us, **“Lovest thou Me?”** we say, as Peter did, **“Lord, thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love thee”** (John 21:17).

“Here is encouragement to prayer. There is no cause for fearing that the petitions of the righteous will not be heard, or that their sighs and tears shall escape the notice of God, since He knows the thoughts and intents of the heart. There is no danger of the individual saint being overlooked amidst the multitude of supplicants who daily and hourly present their various petitions, for an infinite Mind is as capable as paying the same attention to millions as if only one individual were seeking its attention. So, too, the lack of appropriate language, the inability to give expression to the deepest longing of the soul, will not jeopardize our prayers, for **“It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear”** (Isa. 65:24).

“Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite” (Ps. 147:5). God not only knows whatsoever has happened in the past in every part of His vast domains, and He is not only thoroughly acquainted with everything that is now transpiring throughout the entire universe, but He is also perfectly cognizant with every event, from the least to the greatest, that ever will happen in the ages to come. God's knowledge of the future is as complete as is His knowledge of the past and the

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present, and that, because the future depends entirely upon Himself. Were it in anywise possible for something to occur apart from either the direct agency or permission of God, then that something would be independent of Him, and He would at once cease to be Supreme."

To summarize, God cannot be surprised. He cannot be ignorant. He cannot ever forget. He cannot ever learn anything. Past, present, and future – He knows and understands all persons, places, events, thoughts, and imaginations. He knows and is familiar with every rain drop that has ever fallen. Not one snowflake has ever escaped His notice. There is not one single atom in one solitary molecule that is beyond His knowledge. He knows the rotation of every electron within every atom that has ever existed. In fact, He is the One that ordains the existence of each of these, and He is the One that preserves all things.

GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL

The rest of A.W. Pink's chapter on "The Knowledge of God," reads this way: "Now the Divine knowledge of the future is not a mere abstraction, but something which is inseparably connected with and accompanied by His purpose. God has Himself designed whatsoever shall yet be, and what He has designed must be effectuated. As His most sure Word affirms, **"He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand"** (Dan. 4:35). And again, **"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand"** (Prov. 19:21). The wisdom and power of God being alike infinite, the accomplishment of whatever He hath purposed is absolutely guaranteed. It is no more possible for the Divine counsels to fail in their execution than it would be for the thrice holy God to lie."

"Nothing relating to the future is in anywise uncertain so far as the actualization of God's counsels are concerned. None of His decrees are left contingent either on creatures or secondary causes. There is no future event which is only a mere possibility, that is, something which may or may not come to pass, **"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning"** (Acts 15:18). Whatever God has decreed is inexorably certain, for He is without variability, or shadow, of turning. (James 1:17). Therefore we are told at the very beginning of that book which unveils to us so much of the future, of **"Things which must shortly come to pass"** (Rev. 1:1).

"The perfect knowledge of God is exemplified and illustrated in every

prophecy recorded in His Word. In the Old Testament are to be found scores of predictions concerning the history of Israel, which were fulfilled to their minutest detail, centuries after they were made. In them, too, are scores more foretelling the earthly career of Christ, and they too were accomplished literally and perfectly. Such prophecies could only have been given by One who knew the end from the beginning, and whose knowledge rested upon the unconditional certainty of the accomplishment of everything foretold. In like manner, both Old and New Testament contain many other announcements yet future, and they too "must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44), and they too "must be fulfilled" by Him who decreed them."

"It should, however, be pointed out that neither God's knowledge nor His cognition of the future, considered simply in themselves, are causative. Nothing has ever come to pass, or ever will, merely because God knew it. The cause of all things is the will of God. The man who really believes the Scriptures knows beforehand that the seasons will continue to follow each other with unfailing regularity to the end of earth's history (Gen. 8:22), yet his knowledge is not the cause of their succession. So God's knowledge does not arise from things because they are or will be but because He has ordained them to be. God knew and foretold the crucifixion of His Son many hundreds of years before He became incarnate, and this, because in the Divine purpose, He was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world: hence we read of His being "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23).

"A word or two by way of application. The infinite knowledge of God should fill us with amazement. How far exalted above the wisest man is the Lord! None of us knows what a day may bring forth, but all futurity is open to His omniscient gaze. The infinite knowledge of God ought to fill us with holy awe. Nothing we do, say, or even think, escapes the cognizance of Him with whom we have to do: **"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good"** (Prov. 15:3). What a curb this would be unto us, did we but meditate upon it more frequently! Instead of acting recklessly, we should say with Hagar, **"Thou God seest me"** (Gen. 16:13). The apprehension of God's infinite knowledge should fill the Christian with adoration. The whole of my life stood open to His view from the beginning. He foresaw my every fall, my every sin, my every backsliding; yet, nevertheless, fixed His heart upon me. Oh, how the realization of this should bow me in wonder and worship before Him!"

Let me summarize what Pink is saying: God does not share power. Nor is His power limited in any way by any

outside force. Knowledge alone is not His domain, but all power is His as well. Who can hope to defy a God Who has both all knowledge and all power? Who would we want to serve, but a God Who both knows all things---past, present and future---and Who can certainly accomplish all of His will and purpose?

We read in Isaiah 45:5-13, **"I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts."** This passage reminds us of God's power and might, and also makes clear reference to His salvation that He has determined to administer to mankind. We read a little later in the same chapter, **"But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right. Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and**

there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Isa. 45:17-25.) Clearly, the Lord's will and purpose will be accomplished. This includes all of creation, and this includes man, because God has created man upon the earth, as a part of His creation. He is the maker, we are the creature. He is the potter, we are the clay. He is the father, we are the children.

So, there is no doubt that God is both all-knowing and all-powerful. We have taken just a taste of Him and His ways through the study of the verses that we have opened up. But, there is so much more. His knowledge and His power are too high for us, we cannot attain to their perfection, neither can we attain to a complete understanding of them. However, let us take comfort in the understanding that God has given unto us. Let us take refuge in the revelation of His person and purpose that is revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. And, let us next directly apply these magnificent truths to the salvation of man.

GOD HAS DETERMINED TO SAVE

It is our task now, to take the thoughts that we have considered, concerning the knowledge and power of God; and let us apply these thoughts (God's omniscience and omnipotence) to the realm of the salvation of mankind. Surely, given the Scriptures that we have just read, it cannot be denied that God is the maker and the ruler of all that exists. And, clearly, this includes mankind. And yet, why are men so eager to deny His power and rule over us? And why do men that even (apparently) allow that God is sovereign over the creation, still seek to deny Him a sovereign purpose and will in the salvation of men's souls? The reality is this: men are fallen and depraved in nature. In our natural condition, as we are born into this world, we are opposed to God and the things of God. We are, in fact, opposed to the idea of a sovereign God. Then, we are brought up in our world, and in particular, the society of the current generation of the world, to believe that we are the rulers of our own fate; and the existence of any man is a product of evolution. These wicked understandings and teachings that are propagated today, encourage men to depend upon the goodness and abilities of

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mankind, rather than to cast themselves at the feet of an almighty Creator, Who is also the Saviour of mankind.

So, without further pause, let us go on to consider the salvation of man, and God's role in that salvation.

SALVATION IS ORDAINED

Let us begin by reading Isaiah 41:1-14, **"Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment. Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he. The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the sodering; and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved. But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will**

help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

God doesn't do anything haphazardly. Nor is there ever a time when He changes His mind or His ultimate intents, purposes, and goals. In this regard, salvation is no different than any other aspect of God's creation. It should not surprise us that our God is both Creator and Redeemer. And, it should not surprise us, that just as He rules over all in creation, He must also be sovereign in the redemption of mankind.

In the passage that we have just read, we notice that it is God that **"raised up the righteous man from the east."** And, it is God that has **"wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning."** And then, the Lord God, the redeemer of Israel, speaks to Israel this way: **"But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away."** Finally, notice that the passage that we have just read reminds us of our own inabilities, and God's power and strength in salvation: **"For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."**

All things that take place in this earth, in this universe of God's creation, are ordained of God. This does not mean that God approves of all that takes place. Nor does this mean that God inspires men to do the evil things that they do. But, as we noticed when we studied the knowledge and the power of God, we know that God knows the minds of men; and, He knows what it is that He desires to accomplish. Therefore, He will use men, either actively drawing them, and raising them up; or by allowing and permitting them to do the evil that they would do. Then, when the happenings take place in the realm of mankind, God is not surprised. Rather, He can see His own counsel and will and purpose being worked out.

These thoughts are true even in the area of the redemption of mankind. **"The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done"** (Acts 4:26-28). God's purpose to save men cannot be thwarted. Nor are there any surprise turns or reactions

during the course of the working out of God's "counsel" and what He has **"determined before to be done."**

INDIVIDUAL SOULS ARE PREDESTINED TO SALVATION

Not only has God purposed and ordained to save some from amongst mankind; but, He has also predestined the individual souls that are to be saved. Remember, our God knows all things, and cannot be surprised. Nor can our God ever learn anything – He already knows everything. He even knows your thoughts before you think them. Wouldn't a God that has all knowledge be aware of every single soul that would be saved? And, wouldn't a God that has a purpose and a will that cannot be deterred, know that those souls would be saved without fail? Some might allow that God is sovereign over the plan of salvation, but they want to preserve man's power, and his options and will, in the case of the individual souls that are saved. But, this cannot be! For, if God is sovereign over the whole, then He must be sovereign over the details! We read in Ephesians 1:3-6, **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."**

Do you agree with me that God sees and knows all things? Do you agree with me that God is Almighty and cannot be prevented from accomplishing His purpose? I'm trying to demonstrate to you, that if God is omniscient and omnipotent then His knowledge and power must extend to the salvation of men's souls. So, if God sees and knows all things, then He must see and know those that will be (and have been) saved. Looked at from this perspective, we know that salvation itself is not just randomly distributed. Nor is God's favor (grace) in salvation just casually or accidentally obtained by any man; nor can any man obtain that favor through any will or purpose of his own.

We read further in Ephesians 1:9-12, **"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory,**

who first trusted in Christ." His will is a "mystery" unto men, until we see it being worked out. The fact that some have **"obtained an inheritance"** is a mystery unto us, until we see those souls saved. Plainly, according to God's Word and purpose, the ones that are saved by the grace of God are **"predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."** The result of this predestination and calling out by God is that salvation is a means to demonstrate the glory and grace of God. That is, every one of us that are saved, redound **"to the praise of his glory."**

GOD HAS PROVIDED A SALVATION

I suppose that if we are going to talk about the sovereignty of God in the salvation of mankind, then we would be remiss if we did not speak of the means of that salvation.

We have already mentioned the passage in the book of Acts where Peter and John quote from the Psalms, and make application to the Lord Jesus Christ, and how that He came to do the will of God and accomplish the salvation of men. Well, it is imperative to remember that God's knowledge is not just the simple knowledge (or parlor trick) of a fortune teller. His knowledge of all things is based on His purpose and will that He has ordained. In other words, He doesn't just guess or forecast future happenings; He is, in fact, in control of those future happenings. We can even say that the reason for His knowledge of all things, is because of His power and purpose and the inevitable nature of His will.

So, when our God ordains to save souls, He doesn't just predestine souls to salvation; but, He actually provides and accomplishes that salvation. We know from our examination of the Scriptures, that the Lord Jesus Christ and His life and death and resurrection are the means by which God will save the souls of lost mankind. Paul speaks about the will of the Father, and the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ in Galatians 1:3-5, **"Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."** The Lord God has provided a perfect salvation for His people. There is nothing that we can (or need) do to add unto that salvation.

This offering of the Lord Jesus Christ is acceptable in the sight of God's holiness and justice. We read again, the words of Peter and John in the book of Acts: **"But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And**

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God's Sovereignty

(Continued from page 7) ◊

his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all" (Acts 3:14-16).

The offering of the life, person, blood, and soul of Jesus Christ is the means by which men are saved. This offering is accepted by the Father on the behalf of each and every one of those that are intended for salvation. This is His will; and His power and purpose are worked out in this salvation for lost man that He has provided. This offering is completely effective in the lives of those for whom it is intended.

GOD'S WILL CANNOT BE RESISTED

So, we see that God's knowledge and power are infinite. And, we see that God has ordained to save men, and that He has even predestinated the particular souls unto salvation. And, we have noticed that God does not just ordain men to salvation, He accomplishes that salvation on their behalf. Next, I want us to notice that God's will and purpose in the salvation of the souls of men cannot be resisted.

God's will is preeminent, and He must do whatsoever pleases Him. We have already referred to this passage, but let me refer you again to the words of Nebuchadnezzar, a man that had no prior knowledge of God, and whose understanding of God should have been far inferior to the knowledge that the children of Israel ought to have had: **"And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou"** (Dan. 4:34-35)?

Brothers and sisters, we need to apply these words of Nebuchadnezzar not just to the creation that exists around us, but even to the fates of men's souls! None can resist God! We read in Romans 9:14-24, **"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for**

this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 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: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" Who are we to reply against God? Who are we to resist His will? It is of God **"that sheweth mercy."** Mankind is the clay, God is the potter. There is no doubt that the clay will respond and do the will of the potter.

But, lest you claim that men are saved against their will, let me ask you this question: Who would want to resist the will and purpose of Him that has designed to save him? Once you are made aware of your miserable condition, and the Hell that awaits you, would you resist, even for a second, that purpose of grace that has been ordained for you? Sure, men might resist and fight against the knowledge of their own sins for a while; but, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and reveals to you who you are, while at the same time showing you Jesus Christ as your Saviour; who would ever want to resist or deny that saving grace?

To put it plainly, the Creator will have His way, and will accomplish His purpose. And, in the course of accomplishing His will, the converted creature will adore and follow his Master and Saviour.

GOD'S WILL MUST BE CONCLUDED

Finally, let me direct your attention to the eternal nature of this salvation that God has given to mankind. Now, remember, He is the Master of His creation from first to last. Previously we read Isaiah 41:4, **"Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he."** I believe that we need to remind ourselves that God is not only with the **"first"** that are saved, but He is also **"with the last."** The same God that called Noah out from the masses of mankind is the same God that will save your soul! The same God that rescued Israel from the land of Egypt is the same God that will save your soul! The same God that took the thief on the cross into Paradise is the same

God that will save your soul! The same God that struck down the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus is the same God that will save your soul!

If nothing else, our investigation into the Sovereignty of God in salvation ought to assure us that nothing can prevent the completion of God's will and purposes, and this includes the salvation of the souls of men. Satan has sought to derail this plan of salvation from the very beginning. Perhaps even in the death of Abel, Satan thought that he could prevent the coming of the Blessed One, Who would save mankind. Certainly at every turn, in every century and every generation, Satan and his followers have sought to prevent God's will. But, as we can see from history, God has not been thwarted. Rather, we see that God has used Satan and his followers to accomplish His own will.

Well, with this confidence in God's knowledge and power, we ought to take satisfaction and comfort in the fulfillment of our own salvation. We read in Ephesians 1:13-14, **"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."** Nothing has prevented God from thus far saving us, and we should allow that nothing can prevent the completion of the purchased possession. We read in John 10:27-30, **"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."**

Given what the Scriptures reveal to us concerning our God and His characteristics, we must admit that once God sets out on an endeavor, nothing can possibly prevent Him from accomplishing that which He sets out to do. This is (dare I say) especially true in the matter of men's souls. God will certainly save those that are His. And, that salvation is eternal and cannot be taken away or lost. God's will (desire or pleasure) cannot be thwarted by any person--human or angelic. His ultimate goal shall be accomplished. **"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"** (Rom. 6:23).

CONCLUSION

Human beings owe God everything. Humanity would not exist without God's favor. And yet, men and women do their best to ignore His existence. And, those that do acknowledge the existence of God, seek to limit His authority and power to the parts of God's creation that

do not pertain to mankind. This shouldn't be the case. And yet, we find that even much of Christianity is vainly puffed up, and they think to take the glory that is God's, and give it to the simple, obscene, finite, and depraved human beings! What a tragedy that even those that claim to be saved will set out to obscure the glory of our Sovereign God!

I hope and pray that each of us today will do our best to show the world the sovereign nature of our God, especially the way that He has sovereignly saved those that are saved. Whether you and I will acknowledge it or not, God does rule over this creation. And, whether the religious world will allow it or not, God does rule over the fate of men's souls.



Men Reap As They

(Continued from page 1) ◊

expressed in a more condensed form than in our text: **"For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."** Human actions draw after them consequences corresponding with the nature of these actions. The results of the conduct of men in this life bear the same relation to that conduct as the harvest does to the seed sown. Our present time is seed-time. In another world there will be a great harvest. As a farmer reaps what he sows, so we shall reap then as we sow now.

A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

The words **"Whatsoever a man soweth"** strongly set forth human responsibility. Every man is sowing seed for which he shall reap a harvest. That harvest is determined by the kind of seed he sows at the present. A man cannot blame his harvest on God, or the Devil, or some other person, for the sower is the reaper and vice versa. **"He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully"** (II Cor. 9:6).

Every man has his own sowing time, his growing time, his weeding time, his irrigation time, and his own harvest time. All human life is sowing. Whether we consider it or not, every time we think and exercise our wills we are sowing. The ideas put into our minds in youth and middle age remain until old age. All our acts are forces which unite to form character, and the kind of character that we are will determine our harvest in another world. Sow a wicked thought, reap a wicked deed. Sow to the wind and reap the whirlwind (Hos. 8:7). Sow to yourself in righteousness and reap mercy (Hos. 10:12).

If a man does not want a harvest of corruption, then he must sow to the spirit. It is worse than foolish to suppose that you can sow to the flesh and then somehow reap everlasting life. This is impossible. It is equally impossible for

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A Dose of Reality

"Common Sense Comments"

by Joseph Harris

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Stupid Politicians

Today a premium is placed on being sensitive, understanding, and tolerant. For those of us in the know, we recognize this malady as political correctness. This disease of PC softens truth with the goal of changing it, or at least rendering truth ineffective. Softened words are to be used to protect the feelings of individuals. Words such as "stupid" are looked down upon with disdain, yet what better word could be used to describe the sorry mess in government today. Let's face it, politicians make STUPID decisions, say STUPID things and pass STUPID laws. It is only fair to point out that not all politicians consistently show stupidity, so to the only one I personally know who is actually a statesman and not a politician, you may now leave the room, Senator Chris. (I have to point out that the spell check on my computer marked my use of the gender specific word "statesmen" and suggested I use something else. Even my computer is infected with political correctness!)

The word "stupid" according to THE source, Mr. Webster, gives this definition of stupid- 1. In a state of stupor; dazed; stunned; stupefied. 2. Lacking normal intelligence or understanding; slow-witted; dull.

Well, there you have it. Whether you want to say most politicians are in a stupor or that they are lacking understanding, both are correct. Most are in a drunken stupor of power and greed and most are lacking basic understanding, judging by the words from their mouths and the results of their legislation.

Below are some general stupid policies that come from specific laws and regulations. Many more could be listed. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

Stupid! Laws and prohibitions that restrain US oil companies from drilling for oil in ANWR and other coastal areas. This is stupid because to not drill here means higher prices for oil and continued dependency on foreign oil. We have an abundance of oil.

Stupid! Laws and regulations that afford more protection to animals than humans, especially those in the womb. God created animals for man and not man for animals. Pass the fried chicken.

Stupid! Laws that dole out millions upon millions of dollars annually to illegal aliens who are breaking the law

by being here. What is intelligent about rewarding those who break the law while punishing those who keep the law?

Stupid! Back-breaking taxes, regulations and mandates from government agencies that kill profits for businesses, small and large, running some out of business and causing others to cut employees. This hurts America and individual Americans. Government seems bent on ruining private business, yet private enterprise pumps money into the economy while government adds nothing, but sucks it out faster than it comes in.

Someone needs to blow the trumpet and begin calling a spade a spade. STUPID is the most descriptive word that can be used, even if it offends the sensitive. Had enough change yet America? Wake up! What stupid laws have YOU seen lately?



Men Reap As They

(Continued from page 8) ◊

a man to sow to the spirit and reap corruption as Arminians teach. The harvest is determined by the seed we sow. God holds every man accountable for his conduct, and so **"Then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God"** (Rom. 14:12). Truly **"Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor"** (I Cor. 3:8).

AN IMMUTABLE LAW

My text states an unchangeable law: **"For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."** The same cause always produces the same effect. There is no exception to the law of causation; there is no possible evasion of it. Man cannot reverse God's natural or spiritual laws. In both the natural and the spiritual realms the sowing of the seed is followed by a harvest. The crop is going to be according to the seed that we put in the ground.

"For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." These words are the voice of nature repeating the voice of revelation. Actions and their consequences are linked together. Human conduct draws after it results corresponding with its nature and intent. This is God's immutable law. Neither man nor angel can change it. It is as firm as the pillars of Heaven and as immovable as the throne of God.

1. The assertion of these words is literally true. The figure is taken from agriculture and expresses a fact which we all know to be true. If a man sows corn in his field, he reaps corn. If he sows cotton, he reaps cotton. If he sows wheat, he reaps wheat, not tares. Every kind of grain brings forth after its kind. The quantity produced, as well as the kind, corresponds with the quantity and kind sown. This is God's immutable law of nature. No man nor beast can change this law.

2. This principle is seen in the culture of the mind. In this case whatever a man sows he also reaps. The mind might be compared to a field, committed to its possessor for its cultivation. If the right seeds are sown at the proper season, it will produce healthy plants which yield an abundance. I mean that if the human mind is enriched with proper knowledge and useful habits it will make an excellent character. But if the possessor neglects the proper sowing and cultivation, the field will be overrun with grass and weeds. I speak figuratively. I mean if the human mind is neglected in its formative years, or falls under bad training, it is darkened by ignorance and becomes a prey for ungoverned appetites and passions. This train is the difference between a pious citizen and a degraded outlaw, a civilized man and an ignorant savage.

3. This principle is true in the acquisition and use of property. The moral law of accumulation is but little understood, but its outward workings are often manifested. When a man gives himself up to laying up money for his own selfish purposes, to gratify love of gain, or to heap up treasures for his children, he is sowing to the flesh. He comes more and more under the control of covetous influences and selfish habits which bear him further and further from God and his moral responsibilities. His avarice and worldliness increase, grasping propensities constantly grow upon him, and he is finally born away into a cold, barren region of selfishness, where no good seed can grow. This man sows the world and he reaps the world. His harvest corresponds to the seed sown. On the other hand, there is a man who realizes he is a steward of God. He labors and toils according to this principle. He is benevolent and generous in the use of his gains. All is done to the glory of God and the good of mankind. He tithes his income to the local church and uses it to make the work of God prosper. He sows many good seed along his course in life, which are certain to yield a plentiful harvest both here and hereafter. He sows bountifully and he reaps bountifully.

4. The maxim declared in my text is illustrated in rearing a family. Whatsoever parents sow in the training of their families they shall also reap. If they sow virtue and honor, if they sow the seeds of the gospel of grace, they may rest assured that sooner or later they shall reap the joy of seeing their children grow up to walk in the fear of God. On the other hand, if they sow pride and vanity, self-indulgence and worldliness, they shall reap a harvest of blighted hopes and blasted expectations. **"...they that...sow wickedness reap the same"** (Job 4:8).

5. This principle of reaping and sowing is seen in our growth in grace. A converted man is responsible to add to his faith. He must, so to speak, sow virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly

kindness and charity (II Pet. 1:5-7). His growth in grace is contingent upon the amount of his cultivation of character. A man grows as much in grace as he wants to grow. If he sows much, waters much, and cultivates much, he will reap what he sows: **"The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"** (Eph. 4:13). He can look forward to reaping **"praise, and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ"** (I Pet. 1:7).

6. The truth of sowing and reaping is fully illustrated in the retribution of eternity. This present life is preparatory to a life to come. What men sow here, they are to reap hereafter. The consequences of men's actions pass with them into the state beyond the grave, and they have a most decisive influence on their condition, as happy or miserable, during the endless ages of their future being. Men are forming character in which they are to appear before God's judgment bar. There the results of human character and of human conduct will be fully developed. The harvest will spring from the seed sown in this life. The harvest will be everlasting life or eternal torment!

THE TWO KINDS OF SOWING

It is plain in my text there are two kinds of seed that we sow in life. First, there is a sowing to the flesh. This does not refer to seeking to preserve our bodily health by proper food and clothing. Sowing to the flesh is to make provision for the indulgence of fleshly appetites and passions (Gal. 5:19-21). It is doing what is right in our own eyes, without regard to the will of God. It means to pamper the flesh and mind the things of the flesh. It means to live a carnal life and spend all your time running after fleshly things.

The flesh is the unregenerate nature in man. Every act is to gratify that nature, if a man is sowing to the flesh. The man who "sows to the flesh" is the one who "walks after the flesh" (Rom. 8:4), who **"mind the things of the flesh"** (Rom. 8:5), who is **"in the flesh"** (Rom. 8:9), who **"live after the flesh"** (Rom. 8:13), who **"mind earthly things"** (Phil. 3:19), who fulfill **"the desires of the flesh"** (Eph. 2:3), and who uses his body as an instrument of unrighteousness (Rom. 6:13).

Second, there is a sowing to the spirit. This is the Holy Spirit, not the spirit in man. To sow to the Spirit is to live under His guidance and influence, to live a spiritual life devoted to God and His service. This man lives and walks in the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25). He prefers **"spiritual blessings"** (Eph. 1:3) to carnal blessings. He sings **"spiritual songs"** (Eph. 5:19) and delights in the law of God which is spiritual (Rom. 7:14). He compares **"spiritual things with spiritual"** (I Cor. 2:13) and offers **"spiritual sacrifices"** to God (I Pet. 2:5). He spends his time in sowing spiritual things while he awaits his **"spiritual body"** (I Cor. 15:44).

THE TWO KINDS OF REAPING

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Can a person be saved yet unaware of their salvation until they get to Heaven?

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No. When someone is born of the Spirit they immediately receive the gifts of repentance and saving faith. Spiritual life always results in the exercise of spiritual graces. When babies are born in the physical realm they know they are alive when they take the first draw of breath. They cry, they squeal, they squirm. Not only do babies know they are alive at birth, everybody around them knows it as well. In the spiritual realm as soon as the Spirit performs the work of regeneration the child of God sees what he is and what he needs. He sees himself for the first time as a sinner that must repent and believe that Christ died, was buried, and rose again.

Several Scriptures bear this truth out:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Cor. 5:17). The moment I was saved by sovereign grace I knew that a radical change had been made in my life. I didn't know much about doctrine or Scripture but I knew that God had done a mighty work in my heart and shed His love upon me.

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:12-14). When I was translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear son, I knew it! I rejoiced in the liberty and forgiveness of sin I had in Jesus Christ.

“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” (John 10:27-28). God's elect hear the call of the Good Shepherd and they follow Him in service.

“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...For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:9-10, 13). When I was saved by God's sovereign grace I confessed my new relationship and testimony of grace before others.

“He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD” (Psalm 40:2-3). When I was saved I knew that He had brought me up out of the pit of my depravity. I knew that He had delivered me and had set my feet upon a Rock. I had a new song in my heart and a new desire to praise the Lord. Other people saw the mighty work that God had done.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (I John 5:11-13). I am not the sharpest tool in the shed, but even I know what this verse means. If God has given you the gift of saving faith to believe the record of the Gospel message how that Christ died, was buried, and rose again for you, then you know you have eternal life.

Spiritual life is followed by spiritual activity and growth in grace. **“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious”** (I Peter 2:2-3).

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Absolutely not and this is why! **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”** (Eph. 2:10). The children of God cannot but do good works unto God, and He has ordained that we walk in them. **“This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise”** (Isa. 43:21). **“Even so faith, if it hath not**

works, is dead, being alone” (Jas. 2:17).

The very thought that one may be saved and unaware of his or her salvation is foreign to the Bible, in fact the Bible is replete with verses demonstrating not only the joy of salvation but the need to please God. **“But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God”** (John 3:21). **“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”** (Phil. 2:13). **“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”** (Heb. 13:21) **“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement”** (Rom. 5:11). **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith”** (Gal. 5:22). The fruit of the Spirit does not, and could never go unnoticed by a believer.

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“And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:3-6).

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood” (Gal. 1:15-16).

The above Scriptures are the account of what Saul (Paul) experienced and to let us know that he knew immediately (Galatians 1:15-16) what had happened on the road to Damascus. In fact, in the Book of Acts which Luke wrote Paul gives this same account three times (Acts 9:3-9; 22:6-11; 26:12-20). So, “Can a person be saved yet unaware of their salvation until they get to Heaven?” No, and anyone who would tell you different is either an infidel or being just plain silly.

I knew the very instant when God

saved me, I might not have known exactly what had happened, but I knew I could no longer live my life without God and I saw for the first time in my life that I was a sinner before a Holy God and I needed Jesus as my Saviour.

I was asked by a real close Brother once, “How do you know you're saved?” and after my feeble attempts trying to explain my experience, he asked me for Scripture to prove how I knew I was saved. As I fumbled for Scripture, he graciously led me to 1 John 3:14 which says, **“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”** Before God saved me, I didn't care about God or His people and I was tired of those who were trying to tell me about Jesus, but on that day, there was no doubt that my life was changed forever. I will have more to say about this when we answer the second question for this month. God Bless!

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I'm reminded of the story of the evangelist that led a lady to 'salvation' via the modern 'Romans Road'. After giving all the right answers to the earnest fellow, he pronounced her 'saved'! She looked at him and asked, “Is that all there is to it? Now I'm saved?” He was quick to assure her, that indeed her life had been changed forever, she was now on the road to Heaven, and gave her several verses to 'prove' that she had accepted God's promise and was now forever transformed into a child of God... As she looked doubtfully at him, I also must entertain doubts that she was saved. Beloved reader, if she doesn't KNOW that she's been changed, altered, transformed, and rescued- then, honestly, she probably isn't...! Selah! Think about it!

The Bible teaches a salvation unto something, as well as a salvation from death, sin and Hell. **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”** (Eph. 2:8-10). We are saved by the good pleasure of God for the good pleasure of God! We will have fruits showing that we are saved for the Master's meet purposes...! **“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The**

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Is God dependent upon man for Him to bestow salvation upon him, furthermore, can man refuse God and decline His offer of salvation?

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No, God is not dependent upon man for Him to bestow salvation upon him! Nor "can man refuse God and decline His offer of salvation." The man who believes different is one who believes in the "Free Will" of man which the Bible is more than clear on! There are NO teachings in the Bible concerning man's "Free Will" and his salvation. Also, this has been a subject that has been argued for centuries and I will not get into a discussion with any over it anymore because I have found it to be a waste of time, but I will point out a few facts because in my younger years I did argue the point and have since learned the "Free Will" believer hasn't a leg to stand on. Many godly and scholarly men much better learned than me have written great and wonderful books on the Grace of God, why should I try to improve on them? With that said, allow us to point out a few things.

I have worked with many who are of the "Free Will" persuasion. One man in particular stands out. He said to me one time and I quote, "I rejected the Lord three times before I finally decided one day to open up my heart and let Jesus in." Where is the thus saith the Lord in that, I want to see Bible proof and they don't have it. The Arminian wants to always use Revelation 3:20 to prove their point, but they don't want to read the rest of the chapter.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 3:22).

Verse 22 says, **"Let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."** The Lord is talking to the churches, saved folks, those that were saved before the foundation of the world; I can't for the life of me understand how they can't see that!

Then we have those of the "Free Will" persuasion who believe that in order to

be saved you must pray through, "pray the sinner's prayer." What is the sinner's prayer? Where is that in the Bible? We have read from Genesis to Revelation and we have yet to find the sinner's prayer! A dead man can't pray, for he is dead! I am sure the reader has been to a funeral home and seen the body in the casket. Have you ever seen that dead body speak, open their eyes, or move a muscle? Man is dead spiritually and spiritually he can do nothing, that is why Christ told Nicodemus, **"Ye must born again."** Please read John 3:1-21.

I would like to make two more points before I close. First, a man that says he can "refuse God and decline His offer of salvation" is saying that he has more power than a Holy, all powerful, Sovereign God. Man does not have power over God, to tell God what He can and cannot do.

Lastly, I would encourage the questioner and the reader to prayerfully, asking the leadership of the Holy Spirit, read the first three chapters of Ephesians, and if you can walk away and still believe that "God is dependent upon man for Him to bestow salvation upon him, and that man can refuse God and decline His offer of salvation" then you may as well tear those three chapters from your Bible because they will not benefit you, and if that be the case, I would have to question one's salvation, because Ephesians tells us plain and simple that salvation is by the "Sovereign Grace of God." The difference between a true "Born Again" believer and the "Free Will" believer is the true "Born Again" believer gives God all the glory for his salvation, the "Free Will" believer does not. According to the first three chapters of Ephesians and the testimony of Paul in Acts, Salvation is ALL of God! May God be pleased to reveal this truth to those who do not have it. Also the reader may want to pick up a copy of "Sovereign Grace and Man's Responsibility" by C. H. Spurgeon. God Bless!

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We have to understand first of all the answer to the question--What is Salvation? The simplest answer to that question is found in John 17:3, **"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee**

the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." So salvation is a knowledge of Jesus Christ as the One sent from God as a propitiation (full payment) for our sins, and the justifier of such an one to the extent that they might stand acquitted of any blemish before a thrice-Holy God.

So salvation is actually a "revealing" of the **"Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,"** as John the Baptist preached in John 1:29. That is the truth that Isaiah is talking about in his chapter 53, verse 1, **"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?"** Selah! Think about it!

So, our question before us today, asks whether God is dependent upon man exercising his free will to either accept or reject the proposed "offer" of salvation. Let me start my answer by saying that, yes, man can reject God---and he does so on a universal basis. **"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one"** (Ps. 14:1-3). This is the universal truth of total depravity. Every son and daughter of Adam and Eve will unanimously, without exception reject God as Lord and also as Saviour.

However, that is not the question. The question is whether God is restrained in any way by individual men in the free act of grace in bestowing upon men the gift of salvation. That's different, as I hope you see now. You see, the Bible is clear that man is dead in his trespasses and sins. He cannot will (or purpose) to do good! **"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil"** (Jer. 13:23). **"And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God"** (Matt. 19:17).

So, what we must understand is that salvation is not really an offer of God, so much as it is an act of God. Now, stay with me here! The gospel really and truly is an offer of salvation, and it goes out every time God's people witness to someone about the person of salvation, namely Jesus Christ. But the gospel, in and of itself, is doomed to failure every time it goes out (because of universal depravity) unless it is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit of God Almighty! **"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance"** (I Thess. 1:4-5). When God's elect are involved and the time has come for another lost sheep to be saved,

the following testimony will always be successfully manifest! **"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me"** (Gal. 1:15-16). Christ was already there in election, but revealed by his actual, timely conversion. So the election is true and eternal, but the salvation must come down to us in time by the irresistible grace of God! And that salvation is effected through a regenerating, quickening power of the Holy Spirit! **"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins"** (Eph. 2:1). A dead man cannot choose to live, beloved reader! Jesus knew this and so told Nicodemus, **"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"** (John 3:3). In what way does a newborn child dictate to the mother their desires in the matter of the first birth? The baby doesn't "accept" the gift of life, but they "do receive" it! WOW! Isn't that great! And so, too, does everyone that Jesus Christ died for---at some point in their mortal life of living death, become quickened by the awesome power of the Holy Spirit, and are regenerated (reborn!) with the knowledge of life and Jesus Christ, and receive life eternal! Selah! Think about it!

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"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (Jas. 1:17-18).

God is not dependant upon man in any way, shape, or form. Man is not, nor ever has been, involved in a co-op with God. **"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD"** (Isa. 55:8).

God has done all things to the pleasure of His own will. He has determined the outcome before the foundation of the earth. **"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure"** (Isa. 46:10). God has created His elect to eternal life and therefore has created the reprobates to eternal torment. **"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and**

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Forum #1

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Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (II Tim. 2:19-21).

The question posed is a doctrinal tenet of Hardshell Baptists (among others). They claim that God's sovereignty in election supercedes the necessity of preaching the gospel via the outward call. They maintain that God the Holy Spirit can make an inward call effectual without the need of human responsibility to present the Word of God evangelistically. One of the many reasons this theory is false, is that salvation is an experience, not a plan. That's why I mentioned the opposite extreme starting out my answer (which is Arminianism, or Easy Believisism). You can't either walk through a plan, or skip forward into glory and claim salvation in either case, because they have both missed the person of salvation---Jesus Christ! They haven't either one met Jesus! Selah! Think about it!

"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. ...Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:10, 12). There is no "plan" of salvation, but there definitely is a person of salvation, and without an intimate knowledge of Him, no one will "wake" up in glory. Without a personal, transforming relationship with Him no person can claim a ticket to Heaven for anyone. **"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them"** (Matt. 7:16-20). If you're saved---you're a Christian. And not only will you know it, others will know it, too... Lord bless us all...

MATTHEW STEPP



Forum #2

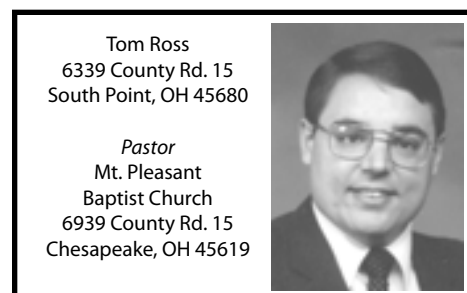
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another unto dishonour (Rom. 9:21)?

Salvation is of Spirit, not carnal flesh. **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"** (John 3:6). Carnal man is dead in trespasses and sins and is not capable of doing spiritual things **"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature"** (Gal. 6:15).

"And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou" (Dan. 4:35)?

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The answer to the first question is a simple no. God is not dependent upon man for any aspect of salvation. Like Jonah of old every person who has ever been saved must confess that **"Salvation is of the LORD"** (Jonah 2:9). God the Father elected us before the world began, God the Son redeemed us by His precious blood, and God the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual life by way of His work of regeneration. The new birth, justification by faith, sanctification, and glorification are all of the free and sovereign grace of God apart from the works of man. **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"** (Eph. 2:8-10). Man is in no way saved by his own power, will, or ability. John 1:13 declares: **"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."** Romans 9:16 reiterates this truth: **"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."**

The answer to the second question is yes, with some qualifying statements. In his natural, fleshly, depraved condition the unsaved man will always refuse and decline the proclamation of salvation for several reasons. The natural man is dead in trespasses and in sins (Eph. 2:1). He is captivated and blinded by Satan (II Tim. 2:24-25, II Cor. 4:4). He cannot please God in any way in his fleshly state (Rom.

8:7-8). He cannot see or understand things pertaining to the kingdom of God or spiritual truth (John 3:3-5; I Cor. 2:14). Jesus made it plain that the natural man cannot and will not come (John 6:44, 65). In short, all a dead, deaf, ignorant, blind, captive, unholy, unwilling sinner can do is reject the Gospel message.

The only exception to the above is if God is pleased to give spiritual life in regeneration and effectually call the sinner by His sovereign grace. John 6:44 declares: **"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day."** In that case, the enmity of man's will is slain, his spiritual eyes and ears are opened, and he is given the gifts of repentance and faith to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. When God comes in power to save His elect no one can or will want to resist. The difference is the effectual working of God. Everyone that God determines to save will be saved, not one of them will be lost because they declined the offer. John 6:37-39 declares: **"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."** Daniel 4:35 states: **"And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"**

If man could resist the power of Almighty God in the effectual call and decline salvation by the exercise of his will, what would prevent that same sinner from exercising his will to decline God's judgment at the Great White Throne? It is illogical and unscriptural to entertain such a blasphemous thought. I will believe the truth of Psalm 115:3 when it comes to the power of the effectual call unto salvation: **"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."**

TOM ROSS



Men Reap As They

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According to my text, **"he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."** Sowing to the flesh produces its own natural harvest---corruption in body and soul. The life of worldly interests, the life of the lower self, is itself a life of corruptible things. Its soil and nourishment are earthly and cannot survive death. When the grave opens all is gone for ever. Even before death,

thieves and moths rush to eat into these corruptible things. So all of one's care in sowing comes to nothing, one way or another.

Punishment under the Divine government is in line with the offense. The sensualist reaps in this life disease and death in his body. **"For to be carnally minded is death"** (Rom. 8:6). Beyond the death of the body his soul will be debased and corrupt. Everything in Hell is debased and corrupt. Such a lost soul shall live for ever in an evil state of moral rottenness and death. How dreadful the thought that a man **"shall utterly perish in"** his **"own corruption"** (II Pet. 2:12). Sowing to the Spirit produces its own harvest of eternal life. In this life the Holy Spirit will, by regeneration and progressive sanctification, fit such a man for everlasting life and at Christ's appearing this man shall have such life in his body. Oh, my friend, spiritual things are eternal things! They outlast death and no grave will ever claim them! When finance is gone faith will remain! When pleasure vanishes away the peace of God will never fail! So sow to the Spirit and reap life everlasting!

We cannot expect more consequences than the law of reaping and sowing justifies. He who sows to the world reaps worldly gains and ultimate corruption. He who sows only to the Spirit has no right to expect more than spiritual returns. His harvest will be everlasting life, not carnal pleasure and profit.

AN UNALTERABLE FACT

"God is not mocked." The word **"mocked"** means "to deride, to insult, or to scoff at." Men cannot impose on God. His principles of moral government are settled and immovable. What a man sows he will surely reap. God sees through all disguises, and He will deal with men according to their practice, not their profession. You will not be able to convince God you were sowing to the Spirit when you were sowing to the flesh. Long prayers and loud professions will not impose on God.

Here is seen the folly of hypocrisy. The hypocrite labors to appear what he is not, nor would be. He is making preparation for his own disappointment and confusion. How foolish to labor to make God believe he is exceedingly zealous and devoted while his heart is with the world. Such a man attempts to mock God. Foolish, deluded man, it will soon appear what you really are and what you have been doing. Then you will reap as you have sown and eat for ever of the bitter fruit of your own doings.

A SOLEMN WARNING

"Be not deceived" in regard to your character and your hopes for eternity. This solemn warning implies there is a danger in a man being deceived. False teachers may deceive you as they did the Galatians. Your own corrupt heart may deceive you as it has countless thousands. Sometimes

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Men Reap As They

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carnal seed may look like spiritual seed! Beware! A deceived person does not know that he is deceived.

No man is more deceived than he who thinks he can sow to the flesh and reap everlasting life. You cannot break God's laws with impunity. You cannot sin and have the beauty of holiness. Sin works deterioration and destruction; it produces corruption. Thousands believe that they can live a sinful, wicked life and yet make it to Heaven at last. If you entertain such a notion you are a victim of **"deceitful workers"** (II Cor. 11:13) who are energized by **"that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world"** (Rev. 12:9). You are among those who will believe a lie and be damned (II Thess. 2:11-12).

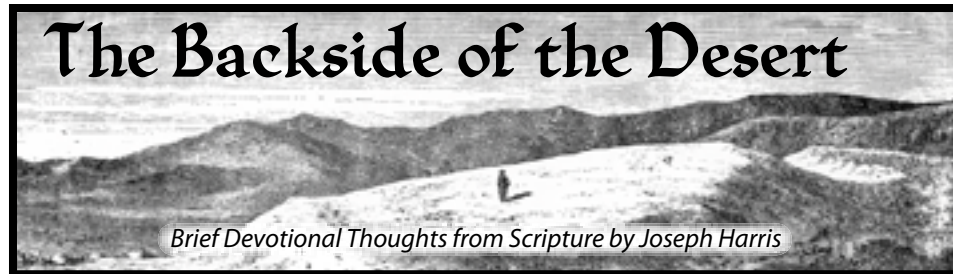
CONCLUSION

1. The law of sowing and reaping is a warning against insincerity. It is vain to shut our eyes to this immutable law. This moral law is as rigid as the law of gravitation. God knows us for what we really are. He knows whether we are sowing to the flesh or the Spirit. Any man who thinks he can ignore this law is attempting to mock God and is self-deceived. A fearful reckoning awaits him not far down the road.

2. There is a time lapse between spring planting and the fall harvest. The delay makes the harvest no less certain. If a man sows a good crop of wild oats, he shall ultimately have a bountiful harvest. If he sows to the Spirit, he shall finally have everlasting life in his body.

3. We cannot do any action and be done with it when it is done! As sure as there is sowing there is also reaping. The deed done is said in my text to be received back. The act corresponds to its reward or punishment. **"Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord"** (Eph. 6:8). **"But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons"** (Col. 3:25). What seed are you sowing for eternity, and what harvest shall you reap in that world in which you are to dwell for ever?

4. Toil on, Christian brother and sister! You have chosen the good part which shall not be taken away. Joy and peace will be yours as you sow to the Spirit in this life. Do all for the glory of God. Seek His kingdom and righteousness first. Go forth bearing precious seed, for you **"shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,"** bringing your sheaves with you (Ps. 126:5-6). **"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"** (Gal. 6:9). An abundant harvest of everlasting happiness awaits you in the kingdom of God.



Brief Devotional Thoughts from Scripture by Joseph Harris

The Word of Truth

John 8:31-32

"Honestly, I didn't say that about you."

"No, really, I think your hair looks great."

"Of course that dress doesn't make you look fat."

"I'm sorry, but she isn't home right now. I'll tell her you called."

No one likes being lied to. It insults us and usually results in broken promises, hurt feelings, and mistrust. Satan is a liar and the father of lies. He can never be trusted to tell the truth. Jesus, however, not only speaks the truth always, He is the truth (John 14:6).

One of the greatest things about truth is its power to liberate. Freedom is precious and always greatly desired and sought after. No one wants to be enslaved. The Bible verse above tells us to not only embrace the truth, but to continue in truth and it will liberate.

Truth Frees From Sin.

Lies produce bondage and the worst are often the so called "white" lies and "little" lies that are told. But a little poison is all it takes to kill. And stealing only one dollar is certainly not as bad as stealing one thousand dollars. Yet a thief is a thief, regardless of the amount stolen. A white lie does not seem too awful, but it binds you to telling other lies in order to save face, and not get caught. The truth liberates because it recognizes the harm in a little sin. Every small indulgence will create an appetite for a larger indulgence.

Truth Frees From Death.

Lies produce death. Lies can kill long term relationships. Trust is the foundation of every relationship. When the foundation is undermined by dishonesty, the relationship can crumble. Lies can also kill our spirituality. Believing anything contrary to what God has stated is a sin. When Adam believed Eve and the serpent instead of God, his fellowship with God came to an abrupt and definite end. He also lost his immortality. Believing and obeying the truth sets free from death.

Truth Frees From Self.

Some of the lies we accept the easiest are the ones we tell ourselves. Everyone lives with a certain degree of self deception. Leonard Ravenhill once said: "There are three people living inside each of us. (1) The person we think we are, (2) The person others think we are, and (3) The person we really are." When we think

we are spiritual, we probably really are not. When we think we have humility, we just lost it at that point, if we really had it. Humility is not recognized by the holder, but by the beholder. To believe we live without sin is to believe one of Satan's biggest lies, and fall into pride.

Knowing the truth is the first step. Continuing in the truth results in freedom.



On Reading the

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and controlled and inspired by what we draw ourselves out of the Word of God! I have come to speak to people who want to study the Bible, who do study the Bible, who love the Bible, and would fain love it more and know it better. I am not to speak to Biblical scholars, though such are present, no doubt, I am not to speak to persons of great leisure, who can spend hours every day over their Bible; but to busy workers, most of them busy with the ordinary pursuits of human life, in their homes or places of business, and all of them busy, I have no doubt, in the varied work of Christian people in the world, and they wish to know how busy people, often interrupted in their daily reading of the Bible, and often limited for time, can make the most of this daily reading. Therefore, they will be willing, perhaps, to listen.

I am to undertake, by request, to set forth one of the many ways of reading the Bible, which I think may have special advantages, which is often too much neglected, and which may contribute to give us intellectual interest in the Bible, and to make its study spiritually profitable. I want your kind aid in doing this, my friends. I am going to speak of an intensely practical matter in as thoroughly practical a manner as I know how, and when I am done, I shall be exceedingly glad if one and another of you will ask me questions about the subject, or about anything that has been said.

The Bible is one book; but the Bible is many books. It is an interesting subject of reflection to look back upon the process by which men ceased calling it books and began to think of it as a book. You know that the Greek name for Bible, *Ta Hagia Biblia*, means the sacred books; and when they borrowed the Greek term into the Latin *Biblia Sacra*, it was still plural---the Sacred Books. How has

that *Biblia* come to be a singular word in our language? When the various writings of inspired men had all been completed and began to be thought of as one collection, complete in itself, and when men began to know that singular and beautiful harmony which pervades so wonderfully all this great collection of books, written by so many men, through so many long centuries, perceiving that it was not only a complete collection of books, but that they were all in perfect harmony with each other, then the idea grew upon the Christian mind that this was really one book. A very noble thought that is, to be cherished and made plain to each successive generation---the internal harmony of all these various writings of inspired men.

But then we must not forget that, after all, it is many books. They were written separately; they were most of them published separately; they were originally read separately from each other; they had a separate character, a substantially separate meaning and value, a practical influence over those who read them, and they ought to be read as separate books.

Then each one of them must be read as a whole if we would understand them well. You cannot understand any book if you read it only by fragments---I mean the first time you read it. A cultivated gentleman of this city remarked at dinner today that he was reading for the third time that beautiful book of piety, *"The Memorials of a Quiet Life,"* ---reading it for the third time, fifteen minutes of every day, he said. That is very well when he is reading it for the third time; but if he had read it fifteen minutes of every day the first time, he could not have entered so fully into the meaning of the book. The celebrated John Locke has a saying on this subject in the preface of his commentary on the Epistles of Paul. He said he had found from his experience that in order to understand one of the Epistles of Paul, it will not do to take it in fragments. Why, suppose a letter from an absent friend, whom he loves very much---a letter full of valuable instruction to him, and that he reads a page today and then lays it down; the next day he takes another page and begins at the beginning of the second page, and does not notice much what was at the end of the first page; the third day he begins at the top of the third page and reads that. How much will he know about the letter when he is done? He tells you, perhaps, "I have been reading a letter from So-and-so---a letter full of valuable instruction," and you ask him what it is about; he does not quite know what it is about, and no wonder, with such a process of reading. You must take the Epistles, says Locke, as you would take any other letter. You must take them each as a whole, and sit down and read each from beginning

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to end, and see what it is about. And then, if it is very valuable, you will take it afterwards in parts, not necessarily in pages, but in parts according to the subject of which it treats, and you will see what it says about this subject, and what it says about that subject, etc. That seems to be very plain common sense, and yet what a pity that the idea has not struck more widely into the minds of the Christian world!

Let us just take up together, now, some books of the Bible, and by your very kind permission, I will address myself to the average reader, the person of average intelligence.

Take the First Book of Samuel. You want to read that book through at a sitting. How long will it take you? Forty-five or fifty minutes. Read it as you would read a Sunday-school book that one of your children brought home from Sunday-school, right straight through before you rise. Say to yourself, "What is this book about?" You find it is about Samuel, and presently it passes on to tell about Saul. Samuel continues to be his contemporary. After awhile young David came into the history, and it goes on so till Samuel passes away and you reach the death of Saul with the end of the book. So that book has treated about Samuel, Saul and David, and you have got some idea of the general history of each of these persons, up to the death of Saul, and the time when you know that David succeeded him. Then you go to reading it again, the next day we will suppose, for you are a busy person. You take the book the next day, begin at the beginning and say, "Well now, the first part of this book is about Samuel. Let me look over it here, and see into what portions of Samuel's life it divides itself." You see pretty soon that you have first an account of Samuel's birth and childhood; secondly, you have an account of Samuel's active life as ruler of Israel; and then, thirdly, you have an account of Samuel's old age, when he had anointed Saul as King of Israel, and lived on as Saul's prophet, and finally came in contact with the youth of David. Those are the three periods of Samuel's history presented---his youth, his active life as ruler, and his old age as a prophet. You take up the account of his youth, and you purpose to read as much as you can of that for this first reading. Now the best way would be to read the book three times, if you are patient enough. I know this is a terribly impatient age, and I am afraid you will not do that. I am afraid you will wish to make only two readings of the book, and we will suppose that you adopt that course, although the other is better. While you are reading this life of Samuel, then, in its several portions, you will be studying Samuel's character as a

prophet, a ruler and a good man. You will be paying some attention to Samuel's mission and office in the unfolding of the history of the people of Israel; for he occupies a very unique and interesting position. You will at the same time be attending, paragraph by paragraph, without bothering yourself much about chapters, to the practical lessons which are presented to you. "What is there here for me to imitate? What is there here for me to learn? What is there in this trait of Samuel's character, what is this experience of Samuel's life that I ought especially to lay to heart?" You are now getting the lessons out of one portion of the life, but with a reference to the other portion, taking it all as a whole. When you have completed the life of Samuel in that way, you pass to the life of Saul. You find you have Saul's early years and Saul's later history as a division into two parts. Perhaps you mark down on a bit of paper with a pencil, or you mark down on the fly-leaf of your Bible itself, the divisions in this way. Then you take one after another and study them. And so with the history of David as it comes in; the struggles of David's early years; then passing as you would have to do into the other book, Second Samuel, the history of David's prosperity in middle life, and finally, the history of his sore adversities in his later years. You will thus see how the struggles of his early years prepared him for his day of prosperity, and how the sins of his day of prosperity brought on his adversity and bitter sorrow, and you begin to take David's life as a whole, and see the connection of the different parts of it---see how the different traits of character, good and evil, come out one after another, and apply each, one after the other, to yourself. Now, I suppose that this would be a much wiser way of reading the First Book of Samuel, than just to read one or two chapters today, and the next day begin to read at the next chapter, and not stop to see what there is in the former, which is the way (present company, of course, excepted!) a great many people read their Bible.

But let us turn to another kind of book. Take one of the Epistles of Paul. You will find that the books of the Bible must be treated, for our purpose, in a great variety of ways, according to their peculiar character. Take, now, the First Epistle to the Corinthians. We will suppose that you sit down and read it straight through, and just let the chapters go. What are the chapters, and who was the chapter-maker? Not the inspired writer, as everybody knows. Chapters and verses are convenient enough, provided we use them as servants and do not allow them to be masters. You read it straight through and see what it is all about, and you will find as you read that Epistle that it treats of a number of entirely distinct subjects. They have nothing to do with each other so far

as you can see. You take your pencil and mark them down as you go along. You find there are four chapters---for the chapter-maker made but one grave mistake in that epistle, which is saying a good deal to his credit, more than can be said in other places---there are four chapters which treat of the divisions among the Corinthians, and the fact that they made these divisions with reference to the several preachers. This leads Paul to speak of his own way of preaching. He would not accommodate himself to their notions of preaching, a lesson which preachers sometimes have to remember in this cranky world. Then you find two chapters in which he speaks of special evils that existed among them---evils of licentiousness, and evils of getting their personal difficulties settled by heathen judges, instead of getting them settled by their own brethren for the honor of Christianity. He said, in the first place, that they ought not to have personal difficulties to settle, and, in the next place, if they had them, they ought to get them settled by their own brethren and not go to the heathen for it. Then you find the seventh chapter treats of questions pertaining to marriage, about which they had written inquiring of the apostle. Then you go on and you will see that chapters, 8, 9 and 10 talk about the question of eating meat which had been offered to idols. That was a grave practical question among them, far graver than many questions that we dispute about now-a-days, though to us it is dead and gone, just as many of our questions of dispute will be dead and gone in the coming centuries, and men will wonder what in the world made those good people of the nineteenth century spend so much time over matters that will seem to them of no consequence whatever. Those three chapters treat of the eating of meat offered to idols, and in connection with that the apostle indicates the right course by the course that he pursued.

Then, to proceed with the Epistle, you find that chapters 11 to 14 treat of abuses that had arisen at Corinth in connection with their public worship. A variety of abuses are mentioned. Most of them refer to the disorderly conduct of their public worship, when ever so many of them would want to speak at once, and they would not sit down as gracefully as I saw gentlemen do this afternoon in the social meeting. They would go on talking together, and were not willing to give up to each other. Some of them were proud that they had special gifts, and others jealous because they did not have the like, and the apostle tells them that all this must be managed in decency and in order, and that Christian love is a far brighter, sweeter, nobler thing than all the special gifts. Just here please let the chapters alone, for what you call the 13th chapter of I Corinthians comes right in as

a part of his teaching about this matter of the displaying of gifts, the ambition, the jealousy, etc., and you have no business reading the first portion of that chapter without noticing how it links on with what precedes at the end of the twelfth chapter, and without noticing how the end of it is connected with the chapter that follows. It blazes like a diamond on the bosom of Scripture, but then it fastens Scripture together.

The fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians treats of the Resurrection, and the sixteenth contains some practical information, etc.

Now you have half a dozen entirely distinct subjects here. You have observed that, and you have marked it down. Then you take the subjects up one at a time, and study them.

You will find some other epistles in which you cannot make that sort of absolute division---this topic, and then another topic, and then a third topic---but the writer goes from one thing to another, and then perhaps comes back to the first subject. Still, in a good many of those cases, you can find that there is some one thought that is the key-note to the whole. Take the Epistle to the Philippians, for example. It is quite short; you can read it all through in less than half an hour. You ask yourself, What is this all about? What is the main idea here? for you perceive that you have not here several topics, as in First Corinthians. The main idea, however, is Christian joy. "**Rejoice in the Lord.**" Wonderful idea, when you remember that the man who wrote the letter to the Philippians was a prisoner chained, his life subject to the caprice of the most terrific tyrant the world has ever seen. And he was writing to a church poor and persecuted, which had sore trials awaiting it in the future. Yet, in the midst of all this, Paul writes to his persecuted brethren, and the key-note of what he says is, "**Rejoice in the Lord.**" It is true that, in the middle of the Epistle, he apologizes for saying it so often. He says, "**To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous.**" He thought it might be grievous to them. Before he gets through with it he says it two or three times more, and at the end he breaks forth, "**Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!**" Our beloved brother Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, was yet a man of like passions with ourselves, and as our Saviour Himself showed humanness none the less genuine because so blended with the Divine nature, in the unity of His one person, and that humanness of His sweetly draws us toward the Divine; so it is with the humanness of the sacred writings, too, and we may feel the touch of human thinking, and the glow of human feeling, and not lose at all our reverence for the divinity that is in it all.

Now, I have just two or three remarks

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to make in conclusion. If we read the Bible by books, first taking each book as a whole, then seeing how it is divided up, then taking the several divisions and treating them, and so coming down to details, we shall learn in that way, and learn for ourselves how to interpret the several parts of Scripture with reference to their connection. Everybody will agree that you ought to look at the connection of a passage of Scripture. I remember one day my father said he did not like to find fault with preachers, but he wished some of them would pay more attention to the connection of the text, as the preacher that morning did not do. I suppose they have grown wiser since that day, and always do pay attention to the connection now. But in talking about it my father said, "Now, I can prove to you out of the Bible---it was an illustration to a little child---that there is no God." He got his Bible, opened it to a certain place, put his finger down and said, "Come here and read," and the boy read, "**There is no God,**" and it began with a capital T, too, as if it were a complete sentence. Then my father lifted his finger and said, "How is that? **The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.**" "Now," he said, "don't you see, you must always attend to the connection." That was a very simple lesson, certainly. What is the connection of a passage of Scripture? Only the other part of the sentence? Well, there are preachers sometimes who do not attend even to the other part of the sentence, and it may be true of some other persons besides preachers. But is that all the connection, only a sentence before or after a particular passage you are considering? Sometimes that is all, but in other cases it is a page or two that is the connection, and, as I have said, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in the book of Job, it is the whole book that is the connection; you cannot be sure that you are getting the precise point of view and the real meaning of any one of the sentences, unless you take it as a part of the whole, and with reference to the whole line of thought and practical design. You see how important it is that we should learn to study every particular expression of Scripture in its connection. It is a very beautiful thing to pick out the passages of Scripture that treat of some particular subject, as you can do with the help of a concordance, and put them together in a mosaic. It is like taking many pebbles and combining them, as the Romans were fond of doing, into a mosaic. That is a very delightful thing, only be sure about your material. Take care that you see where these things come from, and that you have got them right. No man would be so unwise as to take out of the Epistle of Paul, "A man

is justified by faith without the works of the law," and then take a fragment out of James, "We know that a man is justified by works and not by faith only," and lay those two together and say, "How beautiful is the harmony of Scripture!" We know we must see what Paul was talking about and to whom he was talking, and to what sort of persons James was talking, and what he was talking at, in order to judge what each meant by this particular form of expression; we dare not put those two passages side by side and neglect the connection. Now in many other cases the difficulty and danger are not so obvious, but they may be just as real. So often, when a man with his concordance is picking out passages that all contain a certain word or refer to a certain subject, and laying them all together in a beautiful picture to please the eye, it is as if he made a mosaic in this fashion: Here is a pebble and there is a diamond; here is a crumb of sugar and there is a flower bulb; and those make a mosaic, do they? A mosaic is a beautiful thing, but your materials must be harmonious. You must know where these things come from. You must understand their connection, or else you will break living things all to pieces, in order to build up the dead fragments into a dead thing.

Then another remark. Each of these sacred books has its special aim and practical value, and we ought to try to get the practical impression that each of them is designed to make. For instance, each of the Gospels presents certain aspects of the life, character and work of our Lord. You read one Gospel to see how that presents Jesus, and each of the other Gospels to see how it presents Him, and if you have done that and then try to blend them all together in your loving faith, and reverence and humble desire to live like Him, God being your helper, and to bring others with you to follow Him too, you have made the most beautiful harmony of the Gospels that ever is made in this world. So as to other portions of the Scripture. We ought to get the devout and practical inspiration which each particular book is designed to give, and these, one after another, will unite themselves together in the symmetry of a complete Christian character, and the fullness and power of a true Christian life.

I have spoken with the hope that I might by God's blessing awaken in some of you at least a greater desire to read the Bible attentively, and I pray God that we may all turn away with an earnest promise in our own souls, before Him who knows the heart, that in the remainder of our lives we will try to love His Word more, to read it more wisely, and to live more according to its blessed teachings.



- A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS -

By Timothy Hille
of Ashland, Illinois

Chapter Ten – The Death of Nadab and Abihu

In the previous chapter, we saw Aaron and his sons entering into their holy office work as priests unto God. The character of true worship of God is holiness, and God is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth (Ps. 29:2; 96:9; John 4:24). We note that false worship is anything contrary to the revealed will of God in the Scriptures. We are to serve the Lord consciously and intently and in obedience to His Word.

Chapter Outline

- i. Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire: vs. 1-3
- ii. Aaron and his sons forbidden to defile themselves: vs. 4-7
- iii. A Prohibition against intoxicating drinks given to the priests: vs. 8-11
- iv. Moses instructs the priests in the eating of their portions: vs. 12-15
- v. The Sin Offering not eaten – Aaron's answer to Moses: vs. 16-20

I. Verses One through Three.

Nadab and Abihu were the eldest sons of Aaron, and therefore doubtless held a prominent place. They were priests with their brethren, and had been sanctified to that office, and were clothed with holy garments made for them according to the command of God (Num. 3:2-4). These two **offered strange fire before the LORD.** They did that **which he commanded them not.** They presumed to offer incense of a kind, or at a time, or in a manner which God had not commanded. The result was that **there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.** They came before God in a way of their own making and according to their own thoughts, and they died – were struck dead by God. There is much **“strange fire”** in the world today. People are seeking to do what they want and think is right according to their own feelings and desires, and they want it to be said that they are worshipping God. They are sinning presumptuously against God.

We note that the same fire which had so recently signified God's acceptance of the sacrifices that were offered on the altar now slew these two offenders (Lev. 9:24). If we are not saved by the offering of Jesus Christ, then we shall be consumed by the wrath of Almighty God. The next thing which appears should have been done was to eat the remainder of the meal offering (vs. 12-13). That which completed the picture of Christ's saving work by showing the believer living by Christ had not yet been completed. The offerings were on the altar. The fire of God had consumed the offerings. Jesus has died for sin, and

borne the judgment of God against sin. Yet, unless a person believes on Him, that person is condemned (John 3:18, 36).

Nadab and Abihu were not saved by being sons of Aaron. They were not saved by being priests, or by having on the holy garments. They were coming to God in a way that was not connected with the altar, the sacrifice that was offered on the altar, and the high priest-mediator who had offered the sacrifice on behalf of the people (John 14:6; I Tim. 2:5-6). Children are not saved because they have saved parents, though this may afford them greater privileges of hearing the gospel and being made mindful of scriptural truths. People are not saved because they practice religion, however close their religion may come in form or manner or time to the true worship of JEHOVAH by true saints.

“Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified” (Read also Ex. 19:21-22). Those who serve God publicly are to exemplify the truth. Nadab and Abihu misrepresented God through false worship. The service of the priests was designed to teach the people the holiness of God. The death of these two shows the unimpeachable and immutable holiness of God, and serves to warn others against approaching God any way but His way. Our worship is to be directed in all respects by the Holy Spirit according to the scriptures. **“And Aaron held his peace.”** Aaron did not speak against what God had done. Aaron took God's side against his own sentiment and natural affections. He placed God's glory and truth above his own feelings and thoughts.

II. Verses Four through Seven.

Aaron's cousins were called upon to remove the bodies of Nadab and Abihu from before the sanctuary, in order that Aaron and his sons might not defile themselves and thus mar the services of God that were now being inaugurated. Sin and human pride had not taken long to encroach upon the worship of God (Lev. 21:1-4, 20-12; Matt. 10:37; 8:21-22). The service and the cause of God is more important than a funeral service. Many Baptists put their Christianity on hold whenever a loved one or an acquaintance dies. If we do not serve God when death is involved, then when do we? When is the difference between a lost person and a saved person more evident than at death? Are we supposed to have a testimony pleasing to God except where death and sorrow are involved? Is the care of a corpse more important than the service and the worship of God?

“And ye shall not go out from the door

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of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: for the anointing oil of the LORD is upon you. Aaron and his sons were separated by the anointing they had received. Believers are separated to God, and they are to separate themselves to God, from dead works and from those who are dead in sin. The service of God is more important than sentiment and natural affections. Aaron and his sons were teachers and examples to the people of the truths of God. They also stood in the place of the people to God-ward. Thus they were forbidden to mourn, lest they die as their brethren had, **“and lest wrath come upon all the people.”** Therefore Aaron and his sons were not to mourn, or defile themselves ceremonially by contact with the dead (which speaks in type of spiritual defilement), or abandon the service of the tabernacle. By God’s grace, they obeyed. **“And they did according to the word of Moses.”** So, too, can you.

III. Verses Eight through Eleven.

Special instructions are now given by God to Aaron prohibiting the use of intoxicating beverages by the priests when they went to perform their sacred duties. As this prohibition is here given, many suppose that Nadab and Abihu were under the influence of wine when they offered strange fire before the Lord. The purpose of this prohibition is to keep the priests from pollution and from corrupting the service and the teachings of God. **“And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.”** The priests were not to have their spiritual judgment impaired. Many today are under the influence of the flesh and the world, and so they neither put difference between holy and unholy, nor do they teach people the statutes of God aright (Isa. 28:7; Eph. 5:18; Tit. 1:7).

IV. Verses Twelve through Fifteen.

Moses now instructs **“Aaron, and . . . his sons that were left,”** in the eating of the meal offering. This was their portion, and portrays how that those who partake of Christ by faith do live by Him (John 6:53-57). The handful of this meal offering had been offered upon the altar, along with the burnt offering, and the remainder was the portion of the priests, to be eaten in the tabernacle (Lev. 9:17; 2:2-3). They were to **“eat it without leaven beside the altar: for it is most holy.”** Bereavement or the failure of others was not to keep these things from being fulfilled. The portion of the meal offering was to be eaten by the high priest and his sons **“in the holy place”** as their due from God.

“The wave breast and heave shoulder,” which were **“of the peace offerings of the children of Israel,”** were to be eaten by the priests and their families. These were to be eaten **“in a clean place”** (Lev. 7:34). These things spoke of fellowship with God and joy in the Lord with thanksgiving (Deut. 12:6-7; I Pet. 1:8-9). These things, all taken together, spoke of Christ and the blessings of God which believers have in Him. These things were not to be changed or altered by man. **“It shall be thine, and thy sons’ with thee, by a statute for ever; as the LORD hath commanded.”**

V. Verses Sixteen through Twenty.

“And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt.” This was the sin offering that was offered on behalf of the children of Israel. Moses, as the mediator, was responsible for the introduction of this system of worship, and he carefully observed all that was done. Now he seeks to find what was done with the goat that was offered for the sins of the people, to see what had been done with that part that remained after the fat of the inwards was offered upon the altar. This sin offering was to be eaten by the priests (Lev. 6:24-30). The sin offerings whereof blood was brought within the holy place were to be burnt with fire outside the camp; whereas all other sin offerings were to be eaten by the priests. The blood of this particular sin offering had not been taken within the holy place, and therefore this offering should have been eaten.

The reason for which this offering was to be eaten was that God had given it to the priests **“to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD.”** The sin offering spoke of substitution and the pardon of sin through the atoning sacrifice of the sinless One, Jesus Christ. The priests, in eating of the sin offering, were representing Christ, who bore our sins in His own body on the tree as the propitiation for our sins, as our sinless, sin-bearing Substitute.

“ . . . they made the sins of the people, for whom the offering was, in some sense their own; and they bore them, and made a typical atonement for them; in which they were types of Christ, who was made sin for his people, took their sins upon him, and by imputation they were made his own, and he bore them in his own body on the tree, and made full satisfaction and atonement for them.”

Therefore, finding that the sin offering had not been eaten in the holy place according to the commandment, Moses **“was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron which were left alive.”**

Aaron gives answer as to why the sin offering was burnt. On this same day in

which the children of Israel had offered their offerings, he had lost his two sons in a most terrible display of God’s judgment against sin and God’s immutable holiness. Aaron said, **“And if I had eaten the sin offering to day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the LORD?”** Aaron had a mind that in his sorrow he could not fitly eat of those things which spoke of the sin-bearing office work of Christ. He had a mind that more than mere ceremonial and ritual observance was required in worshipping God (Hos. 6:6; Matt. 12:7; Ps. 51:6, 16-17). Aaron had a heart that was for the honor and glory of God. He did not do that which

pleased himself, as Nadab and Abihu had done; but he sought to please the Lord. Therefore Moses was content with his answer. Many today will do what they want, and then say, **“Well, God knows my heart.”** He certainly does, and He knows when people are doing the things that they please rather than seeking to please Him. None can please God apart from Jesus Christ and being washed in His blood.

NOTES

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



From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



The Unpardonable Sin

“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come” (Matt. 12:31-32).

“Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation” (Mark 3:28-29).

“And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven” (Luke 12:10).

Much of what is found in the Bible is **“plain to him that understandeth”** (Prov. 8:9), but the verses I have just read contain **“some things hard to be understood”** (II Pet. 3:16). The sin against the Holy Spirit has never been fully explained by the greatest of theologians of all time. It is not difficult to show from Scripture what the sin is not, but it is difficult to show what it is. Of one thing we can be absolutely certain. According to the verses that I have just read, there is a sin which never has forgiveness.

A LOOK AT THE CONTEXT

No text should be separated from its context. In Matthew’s account I see a man possessed of a demon who had inflicted him with blindness and dumbness (v. 22). Christ healed the man so that he both spoke and saw. The common people were amazed and pronounced Christ as the Messiah (v. 23). When the scribes and

Pharisees heard this they accused Christ of being in league with the Devil: **“This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of devils”** (v. 24). Beelzebub (sometimes spelled Baalzebub) was the fly-god of Ekron (II Kings 1:2-6, 16), or Baal of the fly, or lord of the fly. Here it is doubtless a reference to Satan himself.

Our Lord answered their lies by pointing out that a divided kingdom or house would fall: **“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand”** (v. 25). He then went on to say that Satan is not divided against himself, and he and his demons do not fight each other: **“And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall his kingdom stand?”** (v. 26). The fault of fight against each other is reserved for the servants of a better Master.

In verse 27 Christ makes a reference to Jewish exorcists: **“And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.”** The Lord wanted to know if their children had dealings with the demon-prince. Their very sons would not agree with what they had said.

After this the Lord delivered the death-blow to their lies: **“But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house”** (vv. 28-29). In verse 30 Christ declared that there was no compromise with Satan: **“He that is not with me is against me; and he**

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that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” Immediately after saying this Christ spoke the alarming words about the unpardonable sin.

A NECESSARY DISTINCTION

Before I proceed farther I must distinguish between an unpardoned sin and the unpardonable sin. All the sins of the wicked who die in unbelief will be unpardoned. The final impenitent will suffer eternally in the lake of fire for these unpardoned sins (Rev. 21:8). Any sin not repented of is unpardoned, but all sins may be pardoned upon repentance except the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

In the text Christ clearly distinguished between the sin that **“shall not be forgiven unto men”** and **“all manner of sin and blasphemy”** which **“shall be forgiven unto men”** (Matt. 12:31). It is so very good to know that every sin can be forgiven to those who repent, save just one. Even blasphemy against Christ can be forgiven: **“And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him. . .”** Before conversion Paul blasphemed the Lord Jesus Christ, but he obtained mercy because he **“did it ignorantly in unbelief”** (I Tim. 1:13). God always forgives those who truly repent, and no sin is in itself of too great a guilt to be pardoned.

WHAT THE SIN IS NOT

1. It is not every sin against the Holy Spirit. There are numerous sins committed directly and specifically against the Holy Spirit. The Third Person in the Godhead can be insulted (Heb. 10:29), vexed (Isa. 63:9-10), resisted (Acts 7:51), tempted (Acts 5:1-9), quenched (I Thess. 5:19-20), and grieved (Eph. 4:30). All of these sins against the Holy Spirit are pardonable. One may even attack the deity and personality of the Spirit and still be forgiven, if God is pleased to grant him repentance.

2. It is not a sin against Christ. Some say the Spirit in Matthew 12:32 refers to the Divine nature of Christ, and that the verse has no reference to the Third Person of the trinity. But the term “Holy Ghost” is never employed in Scripture of the Divine nature of Christ. It is universally applied to the Holy Spirit, the Third Person in the adorable trinity. The first part of the verse reveals the reference is not to the Son of God: **“And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him. . .”** (Matt. 12:32). A person may deny the deity and virgin birth of Christ, deny the blood atonement, despise His Divine person, ignore His lordship, yet still be granted repentance and forgiveness.

3. It is not the final rejection of Christ. This is the most commonly held view. In my humble opinion this is a great and grievous error. According to Matthew

12:32, just one act of speaking against the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin. **“ . . . whosoever speaketh (just one time) against the Holy Ghost. . .”** If just one committing is unpardonable, how can time after time rejecting salvation be it? Would not the final rejection be the same as the first?

4. It is not unbelief in Christ as Savior. If rejecting Christ as Lord and Savior is the unpardonable sin, then every person in the world almost is guilty of it. **“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all”** (Rom. 11:32). Seeing that all men by nature are unbelievers in Christ, this cannot be the sin, otherwise nearly all of Adam’s race is guilty of it. This is not to say that if men die in unbelief that they shall be pardoned. Unbelief, like any other sin a man may commit, is an unpardoned sin if it is never repented of. **“ . . . he that believeth not shall be damned”** (Mark 16:16).

WHAT THE SIN IS

The unpardonable sin is an act of speech: **“ . . . but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come”** (Matt. 12:32). **“But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation”** (Mark 3:29). **“ . . . but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven”** (Luke 12:10). Looking at all of these verses, the unpardonable sin is to speak malicious words against the Holy Spirit. According to the context, it is to ascribe the miracles wrought by the Holy Spirit to the agency of the Devil. This is what the Pharisees did. One can blaspheme the Father and the Son (Acts 13:45; 26:11) and be forgiven upon repentance, but he cannot blaspheme the Holy Spirit and be forgiven.

Why is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit rather than the Father and the Son? The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the trinity who imparts spiritual life to the sinner. The blasphemy has never forgiveness, for he who thus blasphemes sets himself in direct hostility to that Holy Spirit who is the only source of spiritual life. By blaspheming the Spirit, the blasphemer shows God has given him **“over to a reprobate mind”** (Rom. 1:28) and never designed him to receive forgiveness through Christ. In God’s sight the sin against the Spirit is more heinous than the sin against the Father or the Son. If the Spirit is condemned as the agent of evil, what power is left to move the heart toward God?

The sin is said by scholars to be unpardonable because of the consequence connected to one single act of blaspheming the Spirit. Look again at the verses. **“ . . . shall not be forgiven unto men. . . shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the**

world to come” (Matt. 12:31-32). **“ . . . hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation”** (Mark 3:29). **“ . . . it shall not be forgiven”** (Luke 12:10). The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is a sin of eternal abiding guilt. It is a sin whose guilt is never removed from a soul by a pardon. If some sins are forgiven they are forgiven to eternity, and if unforgiven they will eternally remain so.

No man can blaspheme unconsciously. Blasphemy of the Spirit is the act of one who, in defiance of light and knowledge, opposes after due deliberation, the work of the Spirit. The unpardonable sin involves an obstinate, persevering, and malicious rejection of the Holy Spirit to the point of ascribing His work to the Devil. Practically this person pronounces Jesus Christ an imposter, His blood an unholy thing, the Spirit worthless, the Bible a fable, death a sleep, the judgment a dream and eternal realities a mere illusion.

WHY IS IT UNPARDONABLE?

It is not because the sin is too great for the blood of Christ to atone for. The blood of Jesus is efficient and sufficient to atone for every sin it was designed to make atonement for. The teaching about the unpardonable sin proves the doctrine of a definite atonement. Christ did not die for the sin of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, for if He did it would be forgivable. The blood of Christ would have been sufficient to atone even for the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit if God had designed it to be so. We must not limit the sufficiency of the blood of Jesus Christ.

“The unpardonableness of sin must be attributed to the sovereign will of God. And He has sovereignly (I do not say arbitrarily) determined that there is one sin He will not forgive. He could if it pleased Him to do so. We believe with Job that **“what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.”** There is one kind of sin for which there is no provision of pardon. Therefore, there is one kind of sin for which Christ made no atonement. There is one sin of which the Holy Spirit will not convict, and from which He will not convert. There is one sin God will not pardon. The Bible calls it blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and we dare not call it by any other name” (C. D. Cole in *Definitions of Doctrine*, Vol. II, pp. 25-26).

MISTAKES CORRECTED

A saved person cannot commit the unpardonable sin. The condemnation is not only upon the word spoken, but it is also upon the heart that prompts the blasphemy. Note Matthew 12:33-34: **“Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”** Christ spoke these words immediately after He uttered the words about the

unpardonable sin. Since a saved man has a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek. 36:26) he cannot commit this sin. The new nature within him **“cannot sin,”** (I John 3:9) and, therefore, he is incapable of committing the unpardonable sin.

Any person who sincerely desires salvation has not committed the unpardonable sin. The fact that he still desires to be saved and is penitent is evidence that he has not committed this terrible sin. The person who commits it is indifferent to all good and all spiritual things. He is in a deadly impenitence. His conscience is seared as with a hot iron. A troubled conscience, a concern about one’s soul, and a desire to escape the wrath of God, will never be found in the heart of the person who has blasphemed the Holy Spirit.

Some theologians say the unpardonable sin could only be committed in the age when Christ was personally present on earth in the flesh. They say that when the Pharisees saw the evidence of our Lord’s miracles, and refused to believe in Him as the Messiah, they committed the unpardonable sin. Their assertion that our Lord worked miracles by Beelzebub, was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. They point out that the word for “world” in Matthew 12 is the word in the Greek text for “age,” and they confine the sin to the age of our Lord’s personal ministry.

I believe this is wrong for at least two reasons. First, the word in the Greek text is the word for “age,” but this word included the whole period of time from the days of Christ to the millennium. I say this because **“this age”** must have this meaning, seeing the millennium is **“the age to come.”** Second, this idea is erroneous because the sin is against the Holy Spirit, not against Christ. The Holy Spirit has always been in the world to regenerate sinners from the days of Adam to the present hour. Therefore, the sin could have been committed in any age since the beginning of the world, and it may be committed even today, or even in the millennium.

It is not our business to go around and judge who has, or who has not, committed this awful sin. Christ did not even judge the Pharisees here. He warned them of the possibility of this terrible sin. All of us have far less sense than Jesus Christ. Hence we are not qualified to judge who has, or who has not, committed this sin. A merciful God has so ordered things that man can never decide positively if any man has committed the sin which has never forgiveness.

ADDITIONAL TEACHINGS

Will some sins be forgiven in the age to come? Note again the words of Matthew 12:32 of the true rendering: **“ . . . neither in this age, nor in the age to come.”** As I have already shown, **“this age”** is the present dispensation, and the **“age to come”** is the millennial age. We

◊ (Continued on page 18)

Unpardonable Sin

(Continued from page 17) ◊

know from the words of Christ that all sins are pardonable upon repentance, save the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. The verse implies that in the age to come all sins are pardonable, save one. This means that God will forgive sinners in the millennium with one exception; therefore, Matthew 12:32 proves some people will be saved in the 1,000-year reign of Christ.

How can a minister preach to a mixed congregation and invite sinners to receive the gospel, if there may be present some who have committed the unpardonable sin? Let the minister preach the gospel to all, invite all to repent of sins, and believe on Christ, for this is his duty. Preach the truth to all men and leave the results to God. There is no danger of getting one saved who is guilty of the unpardonable sin, for those who commit this terrible sin have a hard and impenitent heart that will never desire to be saved.

Sin is sin, but there are some sins worse than others in God's sight. Christ told Pilate: ". . . he that delivered me

unto thee hath the greater sin" (John 19:11). According to Scripture, there is a "greater sin" which deserves "the greater damnation" (Matt. 23:14). Some sins are worse than others. There is a sin unto physical death which a Christian can commit (I John 5:16). There is an unpardonable sin which a lost sinner can commit. All sin is sin, but there are degrees of sins and degrees of punishment for these sins.

Here is a serious warning to lost sinners. Be careful what you say. Be very cautious about any remarks about the Holy Spirit which are of a slanderous nature. You may go too far and sin against the Holy Spirit and put yourself in an unpardonable state before God. The very thought of one being guilty of this sin brings before my eyes screaming, dying, doomed, and damned men and women who shall never have forgiveness. Will you be one of them? Remember the words of Christ: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men" (Matt. 12:31).



requiring churches to obtain conditional use permits, fined the Fromms twice for refusing to get one. "The city has now rescinded those fines, completely reversed its direction, and made a commitment to no longer be oppressive toward families having Bible studies in their homes," said Pacific Justice Institute President Brad Dacus.

VANDERBILT POLICY THREATENS CHRISTIAN GROUPS

(WNS)--Four Christian groups at Vanderbilt University soon could be kicked off campus as school administrators quietly adopt a policy that prohibits student organizations from holding members or leaders to any standard of belief or behavior. Representatives from Beta Upsilon Chi, Graduate Christian Fellowship, Christian Legal Society, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes are negotiating with school officials in hopes of persuading them to reverse their decision. But Jim Lundgren, director of collegiate ministries for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, said they are preparing themselves for the likelihood of becoming "third-class citizens" at Vanderbilt: "We all see the handwriting on the wall." What's happening at Vanderbilt is part of a national trend. Last year, only two InterVarsity chapters faced challenges from university administrators over the groups' right to pick leaders, or remove them, based on their beliefs. This year, 15 chapters have run afoul of school nondiscrimination policies.

NEW JERSEY HOSPITAL RELENTS ON ABORTIONS

(WNS)--The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) appears to be relenting on its policy of forcing pro-life nurses to help perform abortions, but a lawsuit waged by the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) is going forward nonetheless. "No nurse is compelled to have direct involvement in a procedures to which she or he objects based on his/her cultural values, ethics and/or religious beliefs," UMDNJ spokesman Jeffrey Tolvin said in a Dec. 2 statement. "At the same time we needed to find a solution that is in the best interest of the patients we serve. We are therefore hiring additional staff who will provide care to our full complement of patients." Until the hospital agrees in court not to discriminate against its employees, however, ADF isn't relaxing in its fight for 12 nurses who said rights were violated when their administrator told them earlier this year they either had to assist with abortions or face losing their jobs. One hearing took place on Monday, and another is scheduled for Dec. 22.

CDC REPORTS SHOW INCREASE IN ABSTINENCE

(WNS)--Two reports recently released by the Centers for Disease Control show teens are embracing abstinence, despite the prevalence of promiscuity portrayed in music, movies and on television. According to a report on teen sexual activity released

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 11-1-2011 to 11-30-2011

Beginning Balance\$3,050.27

RECEIPTS:
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY100.00
Anonymous 50.00
TOTAL475.00
TOTAL3,525.27

EXPENDITURES:
Radio Time 670.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES \$670.00
..... \$2,855.36
Interest +.09
..... 2,855.36
Less Corbin, KY des.-763.72
ENDING BALANCE\$2,091.64

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance\$963.72
RECEIPTS:
TOTAL963.72
EXPENDITURES:
WCTT200.00
ENDING BALANCE\$763.72



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 11-1-2011 to 11-30-2011

Beginning Balance\$1,446.13

RECEIPTS:
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX25.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL 20.91
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS200.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL 60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX 50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV300.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY150.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL 25.00
Eve Knowles, Scarborough, ME200.00
Faith M. B. C., Lynn, AR 25.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY100.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC 50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL 50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK 35.00
Harold Flynn, Craigsville, WV100.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV 100.00
L. H. Farrell, Des Allemands, LA 80.00
Landmark M. B. C., Moncks Corner, NC75.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC 50.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH400.00
New Testament B. C., Bristol, TN 10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN 50.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR 50.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS 25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX 30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA 25.00
Subscriptions 26.00
Dividing checks150.00
Anonymous \$1,686.00
Sub Total\$4,447.91
TOTAL\$5,894.04

EXPENDITURES:
Printing 581.00
Postage 779.40
Wages 2,300.00
FICA 175.96
Dividing checks 150.00
Supplies116.81
Total Expenditures \$4,103.17
..... 1,790.87
Bank Charge 13.00
ENDING BALANCE \$1,777.87

THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

STUDY: LESS THAN HALF OF ALL KIDS IN INTACT HOMES

(WNS)--A study released in November by the Family Research Council's Marriage and Religion Research Institute (MARRI) says only 46 percent of children will reach the age of 17 in intact homes with married biological parents. "We have never faced anything like this in human history," said co-author Pat Fagan, director of MARRI. "The foundational relationship of marriage has quite an impact on the wellbeing of children, and on the welfare of both the states and the nation." According to the Second Annual Index of Family Belonging and Religion, there are regional differences in the number of intact homes: Minnesota (57 percent) and Utah (56.5 percent) have the highest rates, while Mississippi (34 percent) has the lowest. Overall, the rate is highest in the Northeast (49.6 percent) and lowest in the South (41.8 percent). Correspondingly, child poverty rates rise as the percentage of intact households falls.

FEDERAL BILL BANNING SEX-OR RACE-BASED ABORTIONS INTRODUCED

(WNS)--On Nov. 29, U.S. Rep. Trent

Franks, R-Ariz., introduced a bill that would hold abortionists accountable for the deaths of preborn babies targeted for their race or gender. "We see a clear anomaly in the birth statistics (among some populations)," Franks said. "If it's a first child, the boy-girl ratio is about what it should be, about 50-50. If it's a second child, then the boy statistics go way up. If both the first two children are girls, it goes way, way up. There is no question sex-selective abortion is a horrifying reality in the land of the free and the home of the brave." The Prenatal Nondiscrimination Act, which Franks introduced for the first time in 2009, has 49 cosponsors.

CITY DROPS FINES AGAINST BIBLE STUDY HOSTS

(WNS)--A California court case that drew national attention was settled in mid-November. The city of San Juan Capistrano agreed to pay back the \$300 it had fined a couple hosting a popular Bible study in their home and amend a city ordinance requiring them to get a permit. Chuck and Stephanie Fromm's weekly Bible study has been known to draw up to 50 people — which prompted an atheist neighbor to complain to the city this summer. The city, citing an ordinance

◊ (Continued on page 19)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Grace Baptist Church of Winston-Salem, NC has called Brother Andy Proctor of Citrus Springs, FL as pastor, and Bro. Proctor has accepted the call and will be coming at the end of this current school year.

The church covets your prayers for them and Bro. Proctor during this time of transition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sigworth at (315) 677-3819.

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

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

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

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

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



Bible & the Newspaper

(Continued from page 18) ◊

in October, the number of girls having sex between the ages of 15 and 19 dropped 8 percent between 1988 and 2010, from 51 percent to 43 percent. The number of boys having sex dropped 18 percent, from 60 percent to 42 percent. The rates of abstinence were highest among 15- to 17-year-olds, with only 27 percent of girls and 28 percent of boys reporting sexual activity. In 1988, 37 percent of girls and 50 percent of boys in the same age range told researchers they already had started having sex. Another report released earlier this month showed birth rates for teens also are declining. In 2010, the number of babies born to mothers between 15 and 19 years old dropped to the lowest level ever recorded in the United States, a 9 percent decrease from the previous year. Births to teens younger than 20 declined 10 percent, reaching the lowest level recorded since 1946.

HOUSE COMMITTEE INVESTIGATES RELIGIOUS BIAS IN GRANT-MAKING

(WNS)--Members of the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform spent more than an hour on Dec. 1 sharply questioning two representatives of the Department of Health and Human Services about how a Catholic organization was denied a grant to work with sex-

trafficking victims. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) worked with trafficking victims for several years with the aid of a federal grant, and was rated by HHS reviewers as the second-best applicant for the grant this year. But after the Obama administration issued a new edict this year, saying it would give "strong preference" to applicants who provide or refer women for abortion, contraception and sterilization services, USCCB lost the grant.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS INCOMING SPANISH PRIME MINISTER PROMISED TO REPEAL ANTI-FAMILY POLICIES

(WNS)--Spain's Popular Party won a historic conservative victory in November's election and the ruling Socialists suffered their worst defeat in 30 years. While acknowledging that the dismal state of Spain's economy was a factor in the election, World Congress of Families Managing Director Larry Jacobs noted the significant impact of family issues. "Over the past eight years of socialist misrule, the Zapatero government painted a symbolic bulls-eye on the Spanish family and moral virtue," he said, "liberalizing and promoting divorce, instituting same-sex marriage and adoption, creating easy access to abortion, lowering the age of consent, eliminating parent's rights, and mandating pro-homosexual education in the schools." Jacobs added, "We hope the revolution which started in Madrid will spread to other Western European nations. Their economic woes are rooted in anti-family policies, resulting in some of the lowest birthrates in history."



Decisions, Decisions, Decisions!

By Nathaniel Hille
of Caldwell, Kansas

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16).

Have you ever heard a minister make the statement, "You need to make a decision for Christ"? Would it surprise



you to know that that statement is foreign to the Scriptures? Not only the statement itself, but the concept is not taught in the Bible at all. On the contrary, it is quite the opposite that is taught. There are several things that are inherently wrong with the statement "make a decision for Christ".

First, Christ never asked you to make a decision for Him. Christ clearly taught repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Luke 13:3-5

Jesus is recorded as saying, "I tell you, Nay: but, except you repent ye shall all likewise perish." Jesus also stated "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

A decision is the work of the mind. The Bible teaches that the mind of sinful man is corrupt and totally depraved. That man will choose darkness rather than light because "men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil" (John 3:19). Furthermore, that sinful man will not come to the light, because if they did, their evil deeds would be reprov'd (John 3:20).

The Bible also teaches us that we are not saved by works of righteousness which we have done, but by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Titus 3:5; Eph. 2:8-9). A decision is merely an operation of the mind. There are many who have a head knowledge of facts about Jesus. They know facts concerning His birth, His life, His death, and His resurrection. This is well and good, but it does NOT amount to saving faith. We are told by Scriptures that the "devils also believe" in the existence of God: and they tremble, but this does not mean that they are saved by His grace (James 2:19). You see, it is the goodness of God that leads unto repentance and faith is the gift of God (Rom. 2:4; Eph. 2:8-9). Repentance and faith are not decisions made by people, but are the result of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit of God in regeneration.

Second, Jesus clearly taught that He is the One who made the choice. In John 15:16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," tells us that wonderful truth that God has elected whom He is going to save! The Scriptures declare that God will "have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Rom. 9:15; Ex. 33:19). There are many who claim that one must choose to be saved...and yet the Bible declares that before the world was, God had already chosen whom He would save (Rom. 9:11; I Pet. 1:2). There is no decision that God has left up to man, for "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).

God's election, however, has in nowise removed your responsibility to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15). Rather, Luke records for us the command of God, "And the times of this ignorance winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). Beloved, the Bible is clear on this subject: do not make a decision for Christ, but repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!



A Great Invitation

By Rosco Brong
(1908 - 1985)

“Whosoever Will” Is Invited to Follow Christ---But on His Terms, Not Ours

“And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul” (Mark 8:34-37).

This is a great invitation because it comes from a great Source: because of its great extent; because of what it offers; because of the simplicity of its conditions; and because it meets a great need.

A GREAT SOURCE

Men consider it an honor to receive an invitation from a person occupying in this world a more exalted station than their own. Even in this supposed-to-be “democratic” country of ours, every community has its more or less well separated social groups; and sometimes one person feels slighted because he did not receive an invitation to some party or social gathering where he thinks he ought to be admitted, while perhaps another person feels honored because he has been included in the list of guests. Of course, distinctions between men in this world are mostly artificial and frivolous.

The fact remains, however, that in the opinion of most people the cook is honored when invited to eat with the family; the precinct politician is honored by an invitation from the governor of his state; the congressman is honored by an invitation from the president; and even small boys have been known to feel honored in receiving a dime each from a multimillionaire.

Yet, after all, a man is only a man; in the light of greater things there is little difference between the beggar and the millionaire, much as the poor man would feel honored by the rich man’s friendship or by an invitation to his house. Consider, then, how greatly we are honored when the Almighty God, Creator, Preserver, Ruler, and Judge of the universe, comes down to dwell in mortal flesh and invites us---poor, fallen, sinful, weak, insignificant creatures that we are!---to join His company!

A GREAT EXTENT

When the great of this world issue invitations, their lists of guests are limited. A governor, president, or king, being human, could not, if he would entertain



all who would like to be his guests. His resources are limited, and so he must of necessity limit his guests; and naturally he invites only those who are nearest his station of life, those whose

company he most enjoys, and those whom he must invite for political reasons. But the infinite God is able to provide for any number of guests, and He freely offers to do so. There is no limit to this invitation except the limit of men’s willingness to accept it. “Whosoever will” states the extent of the invitation.

It is true, of course, that no man is willing to accept the invitation until he has been born again, born of the Holy Spirit by the Word of God; but the fact that sinful men refuse the invitation is their own fault. God has freely offered to save all who want to be saved.

A GREAT OFFER

This is a great invitation because of what it offers: namely, salvation, rewards, and divine approval.

“When he had called the people unto him with his disciples also.” To the lost people Jesus offered complete salvation; to His disciples He held out the hope of rewards and divine approval. **“Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it”** (Mark 8:35). And speaking to His disciples He said: **“The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works”** (Matt. 16:27). And again, **“Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels”** (Mark 8:38).

Is it possible that our Lord will be ashamed of any of His redeemed? Can

He say in that day, “Yes, I died for this man; I sent him the gospel message; the Holy Spirit enabled him to believe in Me as his Savior, and yet he did not love Me enough to do My will. He was ashamed to be known as My disciple, he was ashamed to stand for My truth, but here he is. I am ashamed to admit it, but I died to save even him”? Can you imagine the Saviour thus speaking of you?

But if we have met the conditions of this invitation, we are promised not only salvation which is free and rewards which will be proportioned to our works, but the assurance that our Lord will approve the lives we have spent in His service. **“Well done, 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. 25:23).

GREAT SIMPLICITY

The conditions of this invitation are thus stated: **“Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”** Remember that this is not only an invitation to salvation, but also, and especially, an invitation to the hope of rewards and divine approval.

The invitation is to come after Christ in His deliverance from death, Hell, and the grave, and in His subsequent inheritance and exaltation to the right hand of God the Father. The conditions to be met by him who would accept the invitation are, **“Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”**

Sometimes we hear people talk about “paying the price” for salvation, or for revival, or for other blessings of God. But we cannot pay God any price for any of His blessings. We are invited to buy **“without money and without price”** (Isa. 55:1).

The merchant invites us to buy his goods if we have money to pay him, the politician invites us to receive his favors expecting in his turn to receive our votes, and so it goes in this world; but God needs and wants nothing of the lost sinner’s life or possessions, neither does He profit from the most faithful service of His people: He invites us to come denying that we are worth anything,

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crucifying our own lives that we may receive and live the life that comes from Him through faith in Christ (Gal. 2:20).

In other words, the conditions here stated are: (1) denying self, that is, any supposed merit of our own; (2) dying to sin, that is, separating ourselves from sin; (3) following Jesus as our Master and Example.

A GREAT NEED

Finally, this is a great invitation because of the great need of those to whom it is addressed. Lost men need to escape from their lost condition and from the everlasting punishment which they have heaped up for themselves; saved men need the fellowship of their Lord, the joy of His service, the assurance of His approval.

With this invitation, Jesus gives warning of great loss to those who reject it: complete loss without compensation or remedy. **“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”** He has lost everything in losing his soul. Whatever he may have gained in this world is no compensation, for he must leave it all behind. And then he has no remedy. **“What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”** All his wealth, tears, prayers, and labors cannot buy it back.

We **“were not redeemed with corruptible things,”** but **“with the precious blood of Christ,”** and the man who is not willing to lose his life for Christ’s sake and find it again in Him, the man who tries to save his own life, and rejects this great invitation, must perish eternally---or, if he is saved by the grace of God, he will be in Heaven without any rewards.



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