

The Berea Baptist Banner

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

The Mystery of the Union Between Christ and the Church

By Philip C. Parks
of Flint, Texas

INTRODUCTION:

I don't know much about love. But what I do know from the experiences of loving my wife, and being loved by her, has proven to be fascinating.

1. That which generates an attraction between a man and a woman remains unexplainable. Apostle Paul actually states this in Ephesians, chapter five, and verse thirty-two: **"This is a great mystery."** Modern science still remains unable to explain what causes two individuals to become attracted toward one another. To some degree, the cause of this attraction may be explained by genetics, anatomically produced chemicals and hormones, as well as other physiological causes. Yet much more



must be involved since God divinely created us in His image.

2. The following are just a few questions that the contemplator may formulate:

(A) *What causes a man and a woman to be singularly attracted to each other?*

Usually, attraction is initially generated by a person's physical appearance. That person's physical beauty or handsomeness leads each of them to steal glances, which progresses from introductory conversations, to holding hands and ultimately vowing "I do" at their marriage ceremony. Hopefully, the marriage will

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A Dying Church

By Jesse C. Hille
of North Canton, Ohio



"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I know thy works, and thy labours and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. But this

thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitians, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that over-cometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:1-7).

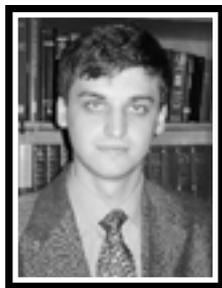
The study of the New Testament Missionary Baptist churches of the Lord throughout the New Testament is a most outstanding one. And certainly it is a wonderful thing to know that the true church of the Lord is the **"pearl of great price"** that the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of in Matthew 13:45-46. But what is tragic is that many true Baptist churches today are dying churches.

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The Way To Eternal Life

By Raul Enyedi
of Bocsia, Romania

"And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they



that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:18-27).

From the most ancient times, ever since man began to leave a trail in history, he asked himself questions about what happens after death, about the "life beyond," the eternal one. This turmoil of his led to the forming of different religious beliefs. The belief in eternal life dwells in the heart of man without palpable proof of its existence.

These lines are not designed to prove by various evidences what is beyond our eyes, our mortal body, our world defiled by evil. The existence of this eternal life is only stated, having as a foundation the Holy Scriptures alone. The rich ruler from our text does not ask the Lord, "Is there an eternal life, is it worth my

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The Well of Bethlehem

By John Martin
A Sermon preached July 1, 1849

"And David longed, and said, O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate" (II Sam. 23:15).

The psalmist David was a true type and figure of all the mystical body of Christ. His troubles, his trials, his conflicts, his battles, his victories, all set forth the path that the Lord's people have to pass through, and the enemies they have to encounter, whilst traveling through this waste howling wilderness: **"O that one would give me drink of the water of Bethlehem."**

We shall notice, first, in these words what they imply. What this longing implies. Secondly, what the word **"give"** implies; and then speak a little of **"the well."**

I. First, then, the text implies "life," because you know a dead man cannot long. Secondly, it implies "helplessness." Thirdly, "freeness."

1. Now, David **"longed."** The wise

man says, "the dead know not anything" ---and they do not. While man is dead in trespasses and sins, he has no appetite for the things of eternity. We can look back when we longed after the pomps and vanities of this wretched, dying world; when we longed after profits; when we longed after sin; but if the Lord, in His infinite mercy, has quickened our dead souls, we can look back upon what we have been, and that we now long for other things. If the Lord Jesus Christ has taken up His abode in our never-dying souls, we long. When a child is first born, it will begin to cry. God has no still-born children in His family. Saul, after the Lord unhorsed him, and brought him to the ground, and planted eternal life in his soul, the Lord told Ananias that he prayed; and O how he cried. He ushers it in with a **"Behold!"** as something wonderful: **"Behold, he prayeth!"** We might say, "Did not the apostle pray before?" He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; nevertheless, he never

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"Take my yoke upon you, ... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29,30)

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

"Yoke-bearing and cross-bearing may not be identical,

but when we are familiar with one, we are not strangers to the other." - T. L. Griffin

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Editor: Christopher Cockrell

Staff: Sheron Cockrell, Marsha Kiser, Virginia
Cockrell

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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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Mystery of the Union

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lead to a life-long physical and emotional union shared by the two (see verse thirty-one): **"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."**

(B) *What makes their initial attraction grow into love?*

Their love for one another causes both to overlook the other's faults and shortcomings. Each believes the other to be the most desirable person in all of God's creation. This is stated in the description of Christ's wife, the church (v. 27): **"not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; . . . and without blemish."**

(C) *Why does each of them lose all affection for all others?*

Every man, beholding the woman he has chosen to love, will admit that other women may be more beautiful, more talented, and may possess far more desirable attributes than the one he loves. But this simply does not matter for they do not possess that mysterious and often unknown quality that is possessed by the object person of his love. Therefore, he loves her in a manner he cannot and will not love others (v. 28): **"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself."**

(D) *Why do they commit to one another, marry, and live the rest of their lives together?*

All others are ignored and forsaken when the wife becomes the member **"of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones"** (v. 30).

(E) *How and why are we born with the ability to love?*

Apostle Paul surmised this attraction and bonding between a man and a woman thus (v. 32): **"This is a great mystery."** One of the great mysteries known to man is that love is an emotion that cannot be seen, felt, or handled. Yet, it is arguably the greatest factor that drives all human behavior in one way or another.

3. The union between a man and a woman cannot be fully explained or appreciated in its biological setting. Describing the mysteries of the physical and emotional union based on love between a man and a woman will prove to be a mind-boggling and frustrating, although enjoyable and profitable venture. Compare that with attempting to explain why God has successfully ventured an eternal union based on love between His divine and perfect Son, Jesus Christ, and the imperfect human church. Christ is the church's betrothed Husband; the church is Christ's betrothed bride (v. 32): **"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."**

Of the multiplied aspects that surround this mystery, three will be

considered.

I. JESUS CHRIST'S LOVE FOR HIS CHURCH IS A GREAT MYSTERY (Eph. 2:1-3).

Ephesians 2:1-3 describes the type of people our Lord chose to love. This text does not present a pretty picture of the collective people called the church, whom Christ has chosen to be His bride. Why does Jesus Christ love a people who are so inherently repugnant and disgusting?

(1) **WE HAD NOTHING TO OFFER OR TO BRING INTO OUR UNION WITH CHRIST (V. 1): We "were dead in trespasses and sins."**

A normal emotionally mature man will choose a woman that will compliment his life by contributing to its liveliness and vigor. Yet, she whom Christ chose to marry was "dead." This English word is translated from the Greek root word, pronounced "nek-ROS," from which we derive the English prefix *necro-*, "meaning 'dead,' 'corpse,' and 'death'" (*Random House College Dictionary*, 1988, p. 890). This prefix conjures images of human lifelessness resulting in putrid rotteness.

A man will not seek out, love, and join himself in marriage to a woman so repulsive---but Jesus Christ will!

(2) **WE WERE SPIRITUALLY PROMISCUOUS (v. 2): "Wherein (in trespasses and sins; v. 1) in time past ye walked according to the course of this world."**

The word **"course"** is used synonymously for the word "tendency," meaning the world will take the so-called "path of least resistance." The occupants of this world, where the church once was a part, will think and do according to their fallen nature. It is entirely natural for them to trespass and sin against the holy standard God requires according to His law. It is impossible for them to please God, for the flawed cannot achieve the flawless based on their limited abilities. The **"dead"** cannot do that which requires life to achieve.

A man will not seek out, love, and join himself in marriage to a promiscuous woman---but Jesus Christ will!

(3) **WE WERE SPIRITUAL IDOLATERS (v. 2): "ye walked. . . according to the prince of the power of the air."**

This **"prince"** is none other than Satan, the devil. He is titled **"the prince of the devils"** (Matt. 9:34 and 12:24), and **"the prince of this world"** (John 12:31; 14:30; and 16:11).

He is the father of all lies (see John 8:44), especially those spiritual and religious idolatries that result in the murderous deaths of all who follow the **"doctrines of devils"** (I Tim. 4:1). The **"power"** that this prince has over spiritual idolaters in aptly described by Apostle Paul in II Timothy 2:26, for they are caught in **"the snare of the devil,"** and also **"are taken captive by him at**

A Word from the Editor

It has recently been brought to my attention by a dear brother that an article previously printed in the *Banner* may have led some to believe that the editor and/or Berea Baptist Church has changed our position on the King James Version of the Bible. Let me assure you that we have not. Although we feel that the KJV is the best English translation, we do not believe that its translators were inspired. This is evident by weak translation errors in the KJV. We do believe that the original manuscripts that were penned by their writers were inspired, but how can any translation of modern man be perfect and without error?

To quote my late father on the matter, *"I believe the KJV is a faithful translation of the preserved Word of God in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. It is the best we have for the English speaking world in this generation. As long as any translation follows the the Textus Receptus and the Masoretic Hebrew text, they are inspired. When they choose to do other wise, they are in error. This rule applies to the KJV as well as others. I believe that only the original autographs were perfect or inspired. God has preserved His Word in Hebrew and Greek, but no translation has come down to us from inspired translators, and this includes the KJV."*

The editor regrets and apologizes for any confusion that this article may have caused.

his will." These idolaters will believe and commit to practically every false religious belief put before them. From this depraved situation, Christ separates unto Himself a church that He loves.

A man will not seek out, love, and join himself in marriage to a woman that loves another man more---but Jesus Christ will!

(4) **WE WERE BY REPUTATION, REBELLIOUS (v. 2): We were "children of disobedience."**

Like all natural human children, none of us had to learn how to be rebellious for we were born that way. This is also true of humanity in the spiritual sense as well. We are born naturally and spiritually depraved and will rebel against God as described by Apostle Paul (review Romans 3, especially verses 9-18).

A man will not seek out, love, and join himself in marriage to a woman, who by reputation is lawless and rebellious---but Jesus Christ will!

(5) **WE WERE VOID OF SPIRITUAL SENSES (v. 3): "we all had our conversation (lifestyle; behavior) in times past in the lusts of our flesh."**

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Mystery of the Union

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Before Christ Jesus revealed Himself to us as the object Person to Whom our faith belonged, our sole motivation for living was to pleasure our selves at the expense of any holy spirituality.

A man will not seek out, love, and join himself in marriage to a woman who lived as if he did not even exist--but Jesus Christ will!

(6) OUR BEHAVIOR WAS UNRESTRAINED (v. 3): “. . .fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.”

This description may be negatively compared to the synonymous activities of the antediluvians as recorded in Genesis, chapter six, and verse five: “**GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**” We spent our time conjuring up illicit thoughts in our minds and then manipulated our resources to carry out our thoughts in real and actual behavior. Nothing was withheld that promised to fulfill pleasure to our flesh.

A man will not seek out, love, and join himself in marriage to a woman, who is well known for her blatantly soiled, promiscuous reputation--but Jesus Christ will!

(7) OUR HERITAGE WAS LESS THAN DESIRABLE (v. 3): “**We. . .were by nature the children of wrath.**”

The very fact that we are human beings under the curse of our fallen and depraved nature should be more than enough to prompt the reasoning of the Divine Being of Scriptures to reject and remove such unworthy ones.

We must all confess our unworthiness that should prohibit any purposeful attention from the Thrice-Holy God of the Bible. King David spoke for all of us: “**I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me**” (Psa. 51:5).

A man will not seek out, love, and join himself in marriage to a woman, who is incapable of expressing gentleness and love--but Jesus Christ will!

In all our repulsiveness, God still has chosen a people to love and betroth to His Son Jesus Christ. We can only agree with Apostle Paul when he stated, “**This is a great mystery**” (Eph. 5:32).

II. THE CHURCH’S LOVE FOR HER SPIRITUAL HUSBAND IS A MYSTERY (Isa. 53:1-3).

Here, we change our Scriptural text to Isaiah, chapter fifty-three for another aspect of this marital union mystery.

This second point must be taken in the context of our attitude toward God and Jesus Christ while we were still in our rebellious and unregenerate state. The spiritual husband is the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Scripture (see II Cor. 11:2). The mystery must be explored

to discover why any would choose the One whom the world has rejected. The mystery is solved when we, as a church, discover that through our regeneration, we are given a new perspective to evaluate Jesus Christ, our betrothed.

(1) WHY DOES THE CHURCH LOVE THE LORD JESUS WHO IS SO UNATTRACTIVE TO THE WORLD?

VersetwoofIsaiahfifty-three describes Him as having “**no form** (attractiveness) **nor comeliness** (honor; respectability); **and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire** (take pleasure in; delight in) **him.**” First of all, in the physical sense, a woman seeking a prospective husband will evaluate the most obvious attributes in a man: his physical appearance, his wealth making potential, and his professional and social status and stability. In the world’s eyes, Jesus, Who is called Christ (Matt. 1:16) probably did not fit these attributes in the physical sense and most certainly does not fit them in the spiritual sense.

Why does the church find Christ so attractive? The worldling will not purposefully seek out, love, and join in marriage with an ugly person. This is also true in the spiritual sense as well. To the world, none is more repulsive to the spiritual eye than Jesus Christ. The world certainly would not marry Christ--but the church will! This is a great mystery.

(2) WHY DOES THE CHURCH LOVE JESUS CHRIST EVEN THOUGH HE IS HELD IN SUCH CONTEMPT?

The world’s contempt for Jesus Christ is described in verses three and seven: “**He was despised** (treated contemptuously as worthless). . . **he was oppressed** (lorded over as by a ruthless despot), **and he was afflicted** (humiliated through abuse).” None came to His rescue but rather, all agreed to His ignominious demise.

Why does the church find Jesus Christ so admirable? The worldling will not honor, much less desire to marry the One held in such contempt--but the church will! This is a great mystery.

(3) WHY DOES THE CHURCH LOVE JESUS CHRIST WHILE THE WORLD REFUSES AND IGNORES HIM?

The world’s refusal is recorded in verses three and eight: Christ was “**rejected of men. . . he was cut off** (culled out to be exterminated) **out of the land of the living.**” This is exactly what Christ’s own people did by proclaiming, “**Away with him, away with him, crucify him**” (John 19:15). The world has collectively followed in kind throughout the centuries.

The mystery is that the church embraces this very same Christ through betrothal. The worldling will never accept the One Whom the church is betrothed. This is a great mystery.

(4) WHY DOES THE CHURCH

LOVE JESUS CHRIST WHOM THE WORLD CAUSED SO MUCH SUFFERING?

Christ’s sufferings at the hands of a hateful world are succinctly described in verse three: “**A man of sorrows** (describes Jesus’ lifestyle) **and acquainted** (intimately experienced) **with grief** (describes Jesus’ usual emotions when confronting the masses).” Verse five provides two additional descriptive sufferings: “**wounded** (the defamation of Christ’s character). . . **bruised** (Christ’s physical abuse).”

Jesus Christ’s inglorious end at the hands of the world is recorded in verse nine: “**He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.**” Even after Christ died, He was buried without honor among “**the wicked**” (those found to be guilty and punished for their crimes), and “**the rich**” (those known to oppress the weak.).

III. THE GREAT MYSTERY IS THAT EACH IS BETROTHED TO THE OTHER (Eph. 5:31): (Paul) “**They two** (Christ and the church) **shall be one flesh.**”

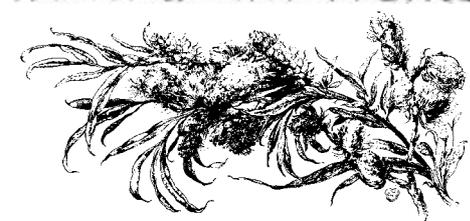
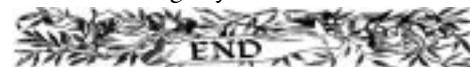
The mystery is the union that will transpire when Jesus Christ and His bride, the church, consummate their marriage. This consummation is described in the wonderful context of Revelation, chapter nineteen, verses seven through nine: “**Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb** (the Lord Jesus Christ) **is come, and his wife** (the glorified church) **hath made herself ready.**”

“**And to her was granted that she should be arrayed** (clothed) **in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.**”

“. . . **Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.**”

This mysterious union has been anticipated since Adam’s union with his wife Eve, as recorded in Genesis, chapter two, verse twenty-three, when Adam said: “**This** (Eve) **is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.**” The theologian, Robert Jameson, wrote of that union stating how God united Adam and Eve “so intimately in heart and affection, and with a bond so undissolvable, that the man and his wife became as it were one” (See Jameson’s *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical*, Genesis 2:24).

That same indissolvable mysterious union with our Lord Jesus Christ awaits the church in glory.



Way to Eternal Life

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efforts to gain it?” Eternal life exists? The Scriptures state it, they do not prove it; and our heart, with its turmoil and questions relating to the matter, also tells us it exists.

All religions are founded on what is “beyond.” All religions, starting from a common point, promise the existence of a Heaven, and most of them also preach a Hell, created for the wicked. However, the many differences among religions are also reflected in this matter of eternal life, in regard to the way it is obtained and also the way it is experienced. Every religion is ready to give countless “salvation-giving-prescriptions,” being ready to answer to the question asked two thousand years ago on the road to Jerusalem, “**what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**”

The multitude of answers received to this single question, common to all men, make us ask, naturally, “Who is right?” “Where is the truth?” Every religion, or, in our case, every denomination of Christianity offers you its own prescription that will “surely” take you to Heaven if, and only if you respect it entirely, in its tiniest detail.

Hence, you are told to go or to come, you are told to take or to leave, to do or not to do, you are told to give or to receive, to accept or to reject, to be or not to be, to try, to will, to be honest, to pray, and these are only a few examples, all accompanied, of course, by the omnipresent “MUST.” Undoubtedly you also have heard this, you also have received such prescriptions! And what wouldn’t you do, what wouldn’t you give only to be sure that you save yourself, you save your soul. After all, “**For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?**” (Mark 8:36).

The common denominator of all these prescriptions that have eternal life as a consequence is YOU! All are addressed to you! You must go. You must come. You must give, take, will, etc. Do you expect to receive another prescription in this article, a new MUST? Well, you might be surprised by what you shall hear. Christ said YOU cannot do anything to inherit eternal life, this matter is not in your hands, the decisive factor is not YOU!

Do only one thing: open the Bible, the only authority by which all teachings of men must be measured and evaluated, the same Book to which most of the authors of the above prescriptions refer, more or less – and check for yourself what you are told.

Do you want to go to Heaven, to inherit the eternal life? Then you must know that no sinner will live eternally on the new earth or in the New Jerusalem

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Way to Eternal Life

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(Rev. 21:8, 27). It was for sinning that Adam was driven out of Paradise, not being allowed to eat from the tree of life. But who is a sinner, and what does it mean to sin?

Sin is disobedience, rebellion against the commandments of God. Sin is transgression of the holy law of God (I John 3:4). But even this sin, in the multitude of forms in which it manifests itself, is only the fruit of our inheritance from Adam, namely, the sinful nature. This nature is found in our instincts, common to the whole race, and our individual character is molded after the pattern of this nature. This governs every aspect of man's life, every faculty of his soul. Nothing remains untouched, uninfluenced by it. It is the pedagogue of our reason, the counselor of our will and the model after which our heart is sculpted. This nature is the tree that brings forth the fruit of sin, it is the bitter spring of all wicked and selfish impulses, of all the rebellious acts against God (Matt. 15:19; Luke 6:45; Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 8:7-8).

This nature is possessed by every individual man, without exception. No one can say he never sinned, **"For all have sinned"** (Rom. 3:23) and **"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him [God] a liar..."** (I John 1:10). We all are guilty of sin, and the perfect justice of God requires that every sin that was ever committed be punished. Every sin brings a debt before God. Eternal life can be enjoyed only by those whose debts are paid.

How can these debts be paid? The answers you receive to this question vary. Some will tell you that you must come to church and go through some rituals. Others will advise you to give alms and do different acts of charity, while others will tell you about a public sorrow for your sins, manifested by diverse signs made to a preacher. Or perhaps they will insist upon a "supreme act of courage" coming from "the bottom of your will," manifested in coming forward in front of an entire assembly.

Many of the answers you receive to this question come from a totally wrong, unbiblical idea, that of the scales. Man imagines that when he is called to judgment God has before Him a set of balances. All his wicked works, words and thoughts are set on one scale and on the other are set all his good works, words and thoughts and his eternal destiny will depend on which side weighs more.

Do not be deceived! God does not use such scales? One wicked act cannot be annulled by a good one, not by ten, not even by one hundred. A wicked act remains a stain that cannot be washed clean through the effort of man's will, no

matter how much he would try. A wicked word cannot be wiped out by a thousand songs of praise and a dirty thought cannot be covered by ten thousand times ten thousand prayers. Sin remains a sin, and cannot be covered by a good work, and all the alms in the world cannot cover one single transgression of the most holy God.

What could you offer to God to make Him wink at even one of your sins? Do you think you can bribe God? Your good works represent also a duty you have as man before God, your Creator. Can you cover your debt with another? Can you patch your garment with a patch cut from the same garment?

God decided that the wages of sin is death? Neither good works, nor acts of charity, nothing that you do can cause God to determine to spare you. The wages of sin is and will remain DEATH, as long as there will be divine justice. The justice of God cannot be appeased and your sin cannot be altered by good works, or religiosity. It can be erased only through death!

Death is the only way to pay for sin. Is the punishment too cruel or unjust? God forbid? If we could only see what is hidden behind every sin, regardless of how "innocent" it might look. If we could see through God's eyes the flood of iniquity amassed behind a lie. If we could know the rebellion, contempt and disdain toward God that is discharged by a biting word. If we could see the volcano of iniquity that erupts and floods our soul with one thought condemned by conscience. If we only had eyes to see, for the space of a second, the immensity of wickedness that lies in our sinful nature, and see sin the way God sees it, then we would hate it and proclaim God's justice in punishing this plague.

But our mind cannot know and our heart is incapable now of fully feeling the gravity of sin. Our tongue does not have words that are expressive enough to describe God's abhorrence of sin. Do you still think that the punishment is too rough? Oh, no? It is appointed according to the measure of offence brought to the King. His justice cannot wink at sin, cannot leave it unpunished, cannot tolerate it, but being justice, cannot exaggerate it either.

Therefore, the perfect justice of God requires death as the wages for sin. There is no other way of payment or trade. Anything less is a currency incompatible with the nature of the debt. Money and fortunes cannot buy the freedom of your soul. Morality and goodness cannot save you from the punishment. A religious life, even one fully dedicated to monasticism cannot replace the death you owe. Nothing that you have can save you, but everything that you have, everything that you can offer, everything that you are, is too little, far too little, to cover such a great debt.

Tune in to the Berea Baptist Broadcast

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WFAM, Augusta, GA.....	Sunday 4:00 - 4:30 p.m.....	1050.....	5,000 AM
WFTA, Tupelo, MS.....	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.....	101.9.....	3,000 FM
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Hence, there remains one price, the supreme but well deserved punishment for your sins, and that is death. Only this death that the sinner must suffer for eternity, called the second death, in a place referred to in the Bible as **"the lake of fire,"** a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, with Satan, his angels and all the evildoers that ever lived on the face of the earth – only this is the way you will pay for your sins. This is the only way you can satisfy the justice of God.

Once the Judge declares the sentence **"depart from me, ye that work iniquity,"** then, without possibility of appeal and with no delay, the decision will be executed. The lake of fire, the furnace that burns with fire and brimstone, that place prepared for the first rebels, the devil and his angels, will open its mouth to swallow you. That place of suffering will be the place where you will spend all the eternity. It is the place where you will stay to pay your eternal debt. A terrible, miserable eternity is the consequence of rebellion against the Master of the Universe. It is the punishment for the disobedience of the creation against the Creator.

This is the place of those who followed false "prescriptions," of those deceived, who believed until their last moment that they were on the way to Heaven. This is also the place of the deceivers, who prescribed false ways of reaching God. Here is what the Savior says: **"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"** (Matt. 7:21-23).

How great is the difference between the place in which they thought they were going and the place to which they came. They thought they were going to Heaven, a place where there is no death, tear or pain and experience its eternal life and the indescribable joys found in

the presence of God. But instead they came to a place described as **"the second death," "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"** (Mark 9:44). The deceived and the deceivers will meet in the same kingdom of death.

So far we have stated the existence of eternal life and the impossibility of any person to save himself, we have stated the impossibility of anyone paying for his own sins in any other way than the one decreed by God – death. But in this case we can ask ourselves like the disciples in our text, **"Who then can be saved?"** Who will inherit eternal life, and how?

The Lord's answer, just as true and meaningful today, is: **"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."** Yes, salvation is of the Lord, and the glory for it He shares with no one! God does not work with half-measures! God does not have His share in salvation while you have yours!

No man can give you salvation, not even a church? Salvation comes from the Lord. Only with God all things are possible, for He alone is all-powerful. Only He can pluck the sinner from the claws of death. Only He can set him free from the slavery of sin. Only He can renew him and make him a new creation. Only He can sanctify him through His Spirit and keep him faithful to the end. Indeed, **"the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"** (Rom. 6:23).

The only payment for the debt is death. This is the natural consequence of sin. But eternal life is **"the gift of God."** Since we cannot do anything to deserve it, God gives it freely; but just because we do not have to pay anything to have eternal life, does not mean it is cheap, worthless or insignificant or that it did not cost God anything. The verse continues, **"eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."** Here is the good news, the Gospel – Christ paid the debt of the sins of His people by the death He suffered. Nothing remains to be paid; the debt of the child of God is totally and eternally erased. God paid an enormous price, even the death of His beloved Son, for His justice to be satisfied, and the

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Way to Eternal Life

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proof of His incommensurable love to be made visible in the life of every child of His.

But how can you know if you are a child of God, an heir of eternal life? Look into your heart. What do you see? Do you see the satisfaction of a fulfilled life? Do you see self-contentment for your lifetime achievements, for the choices and decisions you made? Do you see the all-sufficiency of a self-confident person? If such is the case, your eyes are hindered to see your real need – your need of salvation; for this very sight is the beginning of salvation. For Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. If you do not see yourself as lost, you prove by this that He did not come for you, neither to seek you, nor to save you. You give evidence that you are excluded from the favor of God, absent from His blessings, deprived of any promise, encouragement, comfort and hope for the future.

If you see yourself as God sees you, then that is proof that He has begun a work in you. You look in your soul, you see your sin, its causes and consequences, the state to which it brought you. You try to stop sinning, but find that impossible. You are defeated. You look at this picture and tremble. There is no way out. You are locked in this dark world whose just end is the lake of fire and brimstone. In such moments you see that you are lost, unable to satisfy the demands of God's justice, that your state has death as its end. But look toward Him that came to forgive sinners, to bring the good news to the captives of sin, to the prisoners of vice. Look toward Him that came to heal the sick in heart, and to give spiritual sight to those who live in darkness.

Now you can look toward Christ and see Him differently than others around you. He is the Savior, the One who came to seek you, to pull you out of your state. He is the only hope, the only way, He is light and life. Come to Him with sorrow for your sins, prostrate yourself at His feet, totally dependent on His mercy.

Do not hesitate to come and do not look back, because it does not matter how great your debt is, how numerous your sins, the blood of Christ washes away all spots and impurities. He levels mountains of sins from your path, dries up oceans of iniquities, erases huge debts. He, the conqueror of death, gives eternal life to all those that come to Him.

Coming to Him in repentance, believing that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior for all those that come to Him, you bring proof that you are a child of God. For you, this is the beginning of a new life that will never end – eternal life. It is a walk with God, your Father, Who gave you life through the power of His Spirit.

He will nourish, educate and discipline you. He will protect you until everything mortal in you will be swallowed up by immortality, until you will be ready to fully experience that which now, in our present condition, cannot experience – ETERNAL LIFE.

In conclusion, before you start again to run your life's race, analyze your way and the end of it. Ask yourself, "What is my condition? What is my situation?" There are only two camps, only two ways. To keep from being deceived, you must know for sure your position. Therefore, look inside yourself, search yourself. Are you presently following a salvation-giving "prescription?" Do you trust in this matter the precious advices of a "servant of God" who interprets the Bible for you? Undoubtedly, much of the advice you receive is good. Much advice will make you a better person, more moral, more careful, more sincere. But does such advice have as an end eternal life? Can this life be earned by keeping a set of rules, or certain ethical and moral principles, observing certain religious rituals and routines, or the duties you fulfill to certain ecclesiastical institutions?

What do we need to do to inherit eternal life? Do we need human laws, commandments or traditions? Do we need prescriptions for salvation (many of them being only effects of salvation, not causes)? Do we need stereotypical gestures and prayers? NO!!! We need renewal, we need a change of mind, a total transformation of our intellect, emotions and will. All these lead to eternal life. We need the birth of the Spirit, without which we cannot have spiritual sight. We need repentance, without which there can be no forgiveness. We need faith, without which we cannot come to God! Only with Him these things are possible!

"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It would be impossible for you to do anything to merit or earn it, for it is **"impossible with men."** But life is given freely, being a gracious gift of God. You do not have to pay anything for it. In your present condition call upon Him, and He shall hear you and answer you. Come to Him, and He shall receive you. Listen to the Spirit that says **"come;"** listen to the invitation of those that have already come and tasted how good the Lord is. Come in repentance and He, in the joy of the entire Heaven, shall receive you as you are, and shall give you eternal life!



From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



God's Ideal Woman

PART 1

The identity of King Lemuel, mentioned in Proverbs 31, is unknown. We know from verses 1-9 of this chapter that he was blessed with a godly mother. After giving him warnings about intemperance and the duties of his office, she told him about God's ideal woman. We may safely conclude that she was such a woman herself, and her wish was that he should marry such a woman to be his queen. When divested of its local and temporary peculiarities, it presents a virtuous woman, the perfect housewife, the chaste helpmeet of her husband, the model matron.

This description of God's ideal woman is a poem well worth being committed to the memory of every mother and her daughter in the world. Proverbs 31:10-31 is an acrostic constructed of 22 verses. Each verse begins with a different letter, according to the order of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 seems quite old-fashioned to this generation who seeks liberation from decency and the Divine order. This picture cannot be admired by the brazen, painted, cigarette-smoking cocktail-drinking, man-chasing, Bible-denying, liberated woman of the Hollywood type which populates our present society. But the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is the kind every Christian young man hopes to lead to the marriage altar some future day. She also calls to the mind of a young Christian boy a woman at home he delights to call his mother.

VIRTUOUS (V. 10)

God's ideal woman is a virtuous woman: **"Aleph---Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies"** (Prov. 31:10). **"Virtuous"** means more than merely "chastity" as can be seen from the words that follow. The thought of chastity is certainly included, for God's ideal woman is free from unlawful sexual activity. The word "virtuous" include such things as dependability and ethical conduct of all kinds. The word combines the ideas of moral goodness and bodily vigor and activity. In all ages "virtue" has stood for the highest and greatest strength of character.

Verse 10 gives a challenge: **"Who can find a virtuous woman?"** The way this question is asked suggests that such a woman is rare, but not impossible to find. She exists not just in books, or on TV, or

in the imagination.

She exists in real life. One of the reasons for her rarity is she is so seldom sought in the modern world. Too many young boys are more interested in sex and social advantage than virtue.

The word "virtue" (Heb. chayil) can also mean "strength," as I have already pointed out. Though she is the weaker vessel (I Pet. 3:7), she is to be strong in grace and the fear of God. She has command over her own spirit. As a mother she remains calm and in control, even when her children act like little monsters. Weakness of heart is found in a whorish woman (Ezek. 16:30), but not a virtuous woman. She knows what is good for her household, and she has the strength to stand up for what she knows to be right. Public opinion and the temptations of the world do not frighten her away from moral values.

The modern world puts little stress on virtue. Things have greatly changed for the worse since I was a young boy. In my youth nice boys and girls seldom kissed each other, much less had sex on their first date. The Pill and condoms were new notions, and abortion was murder. Unwed pregnancy had the ugly consequence of social ostracism. Marriage was the only way boys and girls could have sex without scandal.

Virginity has been made a dirty word. The media flashes images of premarital sex, but they seldom explore the realities of this. You can become a family or develop a life-threatening disease by premarital sex. Worse still, premarital sex is a violation of the Seventh Commandment, and God will not allow violators to go unpunished. Another thing about premarital sex is that it breaks down confidence. The boy and girl who have sex before marriage will always wonder with how many others was this done that each other doesn't know about. There is no trust in such a marriage, and most end in the divorce court.

Because the virtuous woman is so scarce, this makes her worth far above rubies and all the fancy ornaments in which worldly women may adorn themselves. No treasure is compared to her. Many a wealthy husband would part with his riches for a virtuous woman to be his wife. Only a first-rate fool would marry a wicked woman for the greatest of fortunes.

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TRUSTWORTHY (V. 11)

The model matron is known for her trustworthiness: **"Beth---The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil"** (Prov. 31:11). Her husband can go forth to his daily occupation, having full confidence in her. This was certainly not true of some women in Solomon's day, for he speaks of a woman taking a young man to her bed when her husband was away from home (Prov. 7:6-23). In this generation some wives seek extra-marital affairs as soon as their husbands go out the door to the job.

The husband who has a virtuous wife has no need to be fearful of his wife having an extra-marital affair. He has no need to be jealous of her. She will be as virtuous in his absence as in his presence. When he comes home from his day of work she will welcome his return with a sweet smile and kind words. She does not have any wandering affections. To her, there is no man on earth like her husband. She loves him so much that she will stay miles away from everything which might stain her character, knowing this is easily done and not easily cleared.

The words, **"so that he shall have no need of spoil,"** can be rendered "he shall not lack gain." The ideal wife can be trusted to manage domestic affairs in his absence to the best advantage. While he is away she will not plunge the family into excessive debts to disgrace and ruin him. Her husband does not need to be crooked in his business dealings to supply his exhausted coffers.

One thing which ruins many modern-day marriages is excessive debts. Most newly-weds want to live above their income. They think they must have a new house, a new car, a new colored television, and a new everything. Time payments eat up all their income and little money is left for food and fun. This breeds domestic quarrels which turn the marriage knot into a slip knot. After divorce there are alimony payments due to the first marriage, and this makes it certain that the second marriage will also end in failure for the same reason.

HONORS HER HUSBAND (V. 12)

A virtuous woman honors her husband: **"Gimel---She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life"** (Prov. 31:12). She studies his character---his likes and his dislikes---in order that she may accommodate herself to them. In all things she seeks to please and gratify him. I Corinthians 7:34 says: **"The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband."** A godly wife aims to advance

her husband's honor and reputation---his temporal and spiritual benefits---his best interests. This she does out of cheerful delight and real affection.

The virtuous woman does not just do this when company comes or at church. She does it constantly---**"all the days of her life."** She is consistent in her conduct, and she is not said to do it only occasionally when she is in a good mood, or when they first get married. She marries him for life, and she keeps her wedding vows till the end of her life. She is the same today, and she will be the same tomorrow that she was yesterday. Neither sickness, nor poverty, nor old age dampen her in persevering in her duty to her husband. Her love for him knows no change from the springtime of youth to the waning years of declining age. When his black hair has turned white and his upright form is bent---when others see in her husband nothing but decay and coming death---she sees her handsome bridegroom of earlier years. She does him good out of love which the years have mellowed and the changing circumstances of life have tested and confirmed.

A wife can be a hindrance to her husband instead of a helpmeet. A wife can vex her husband by her ungodly and perverse behavior every day of his life. This will make him the most miserable man on earth. Then there are some wives that do some good to their husbands, but they mix much evil conduct with it (Gen. 27; 31:19; 35:1-4; I Sam. 19:12; II Sam. 6:20-22). In either case such wives are not virtuous.

Eve tempted Adam to sin (Gen. 2:18; 3:6). Job's wife called upon him to **"curse God and die"** (Job 2:9). Solomon's wives turned away his heart from the Lord (I Kings 11:1-5). Jezebel stirred up Ahab to abominable wickedness (I Kings 21:25). Proverbs 21:19 declares: **"It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman."** Proverbs 21:9 tells us: **"It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house."** Proverbs 19:13 says: **"The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping."**

As long as a husband and wife do each other good all the days of their life, they will have a happy marriage. But this seldom happens in the present evil world. The husband comes home from work tired and upset at the way things went on the job. He takes his anger out on his wife in such a way as to make her fighting mad. She then uses her tongue to lash away at her husband. The kids begin to act like little monsters and demons. This results in a hot time around the old house in the evening. The evening is spent shouting and screaming at each other with four letter words. It sounds like a barroom brawl and a Hell on earth. This goes on from day to day until the

home is destroyed by Satan.

The words, **"all the days of her life,"** do not allow for divorce. God intended that marriage be for life. What God joins together man must never put asunder. The words in the marriage ceremony "till death do us part" do not mean "till divorce do us part." In our time when one out of two marriages end in divorce the words, **"all the days of her life,"** seem to have lost their meaning. But it ought not to be so. If the virtuous woman survives her husband, she will care for his children, his estate, and his good name so long as she lives upon earth. She shows kindness to the children for his sake.

CHEERFUL INDUSTRY (V. 13)

The model matron pays attention to materials for clothing and domestic uses: **"Daleth---She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands"** (Prov. 31:13). She does not wait until such materials as wool and flax are brought to her by another, but she goes forth to seek them out at the cheapest prices. In Old Testament times the clothing of the family and even the tent were manufactured at home by the wife. Her husband and her children were entirely clad by her labors; a practice which must have gained her considerable respect from her family.

This woman is a working mother, but she works not at the manufacturing plant. Her sphere of labor is confined to the home. She works **"willingly with her hands."** She works with willing hands, feeling that manual labor is not below her dignity. She puts her heart where she knows her hands should be. A virtuous woman knows nothing of pride and laziness, for she considers that labor is a duty for all and that idleness is a transgression of a universal law. Please also remember the woman in Proverbs 31 was a king's wife, but even a king's wife is to engage in manual labor.

Things have surely changed in the last few years. Most young wives do not make the clothes of their family. Some could not do it if their life depended upon it. To sew a button on a dress, or a shirt, would be mission impossible. Many would not have the time as they are away from home all day, working in some office or plant to make a buck. The family clothes come from Wal-Mart and Kmart, not from the mother of the house.

I witnessed the change the Industrial Revolution made in the home. My parents were cotton farmers in Northeast Mississippi when I was growing up. The whole family worked in the fields and at home. We were together day and night. To me, this was an ideal situation for a family. This was before drugs and rock music. Right and wrong were taught in the home and in the public school. I knew what a switch was at home and a paddle in public school. Virtue in boys and girls was a high priority. Divorce was almost unknown.

Uncle Sam cut the amount of cotton we could grow and reduced my family to hard times. Jobs were scarce and hard to find as farming was the main business in our area. My parents were driven from the home to public work. This separated the family from home. This happened all over our area. Most mothers left the home, and home work went mostly undone. Married women began to spend the day on the job with men who were not their husbands. The results were broken homes and juvenile delinquency. This was followed by filthy movies, rock music, TV, drugs, teenage pregnancies, unwanted babies, and barnyard morality. During these times families made material gains, but the spiritual and moral losses outweighed the gains by far.

EXTENSIVE ACTIVITIES (V. 14)

"He---She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar" (Prov. 31:14). The virtuous woman buys in the best markets without regard to the distance she must travel. She goes to the city and shops around for the best quality goods at the cheapest prices. What she does not have at home she will get even from far away places. She enjoys the fruits of other people's labor so that her household has no want of any good thing.

AN EARLY RISER (V. 15)

"Vav---She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens" (Prov. 31:15). It is not said that she sat up late playing cards, or dancing till the break of day. Nor is it said she laid up in bed till noon from a hangover. Nor is it said that it has been so long since she saw the sun rise she does not even know if it does any more or not. No! No! The virtuous woman is an early riser who loves her family more than her bed. She sees that her husband and children have a good breakfast so they can go about their business when the day breaks. Although a queen, she makes sure that her servants are well fed before they go to work that day.

The modern mother must rise early to see that her family is properly fed and clothed. The children must be dressed for school. After they are gone, she must wash the dishes, make the beds, and clean the house. Early passers-by will see a light and realize she is up before the sun is up. Being a good mother requires early rising.

THRIFT (V. 16)

"Zayin---She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard" (Prov. 31:16). The order of events are important in this verse. First, she considers a field, and second, she buys it. The ideal wife considers whether it is worth the money, whether the title is valid, whether it has good soil, and whether she has the money to pay for it. She does not spend

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her money on vain and foolish things of vanity. Rather, she makes useful purchases which are for the good of her family. The model matron wants something valuable and permanent for the use of her family.

What she buys she improves to advantage: **"With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard."** Her prudent management got her the means to buy vines and to plant a vineyard. This vineyard will supply her family in days to come with the convenience of life. God's ideal woman has good business sense.

Some modern-day preachers put an awful twist upon this verse to try to make the woman of Proverbs 31 a career woman. I heard one who said this meant that she was a real estate agent who ignored her husband's wishes. But the modern independent career woman engaged in her own business and complete in her isolated life is not found in Proverbs 31. It would seem from what has gone before that her husband is away on business. She comes upon a good bargain and purchases it. No where is it said she sold the field as a real estate woman. This is the figment of a liberal mind.

PHYSICALLY FIT (V. 17)

God's ideal woman is physically fit: **"Kheth---She girdeth her loins with strength and strengtheneth her arms"** (Prov. 31:17). This at first seems to be language inappropriate for the weaker sex, but it is not. Her many labors give her health and vigor. This wholesome soul is free from all the habits that would injure her physically, mentally, and spiritually. With great ease she goes about things which appear impossible to other women. Idle woman, who spend their time murmuring over minor ailments, speak contemptuously of her; "She has the strength of a horse and can bear anything." They do not know, nor even care to know, that she is the author of her own strength. Her critics cannot understand how she keeps her house so clean and dresses her children so well.

ECONOMICAL (V. 18)

The clothes she makes to be sold are of good quality: **"Teth---She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night"** (Prov. 31:18). The virtuous woman makes garments and girdles for the merchants in addition to taking care of her own household. This woman is a good judge of the merchandise she has to sell. When the shades of night fall and outdoor work ceases, she works by the light of a candle in the early hours of darkness. This must not be taken to mean she denies herself necessary refreshment and rest. It means she never wearies of laboring for the good of her family.

LABORIOUS HANDS (V. 19)

"Yodh---She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff" (Prov. 31:19). The word "spindle" is the Hebrew word (kishor) which probably means "the distaff," or the staff to which is tied the bunch of flax from which the spinning wheel draws the thread. Her hands spin her flax into thread. The word translated "distaff" is the Hebrew word (pelek) which means "spindle," the cylindrical wood on which the thread winds itself as it is spun. The verse might best be translated: "She stretches her hands toward the distaff; she manipulates the spindle."

Some justly reject this view. There was an ancient custom in the East of spinning without the use of a wheel. Women should hold the distaff in one hand and twirl their long wood spindle with the other, stopping to wind the thread upon them as fast as it is drawn out.

The thing that especially strikes me in this verse is that she was a wife as well as a queen. God's law does not forbid even queens from making clothing

for their household. Augustus Caesar wore no garments except those made at home by his wife, sister, daughter, and granddaughters. Alexander the Great wore no clothes but such as were made by the members of his family.

The overall picture in verse 19 is of a wife spinning the clothing for herself and her family. This brings precious memories to me. I can remember my mother making my sister dresses out of cloth feed sacks on an old Singer sewing machine with a foot pedal. Sometimes she would make me some shirts. My sister and I wore these with a great deal of pride and joy. I also recall with considerable pleasure my wife making shirts for me and all sorts of clothing for our four children. We wore these with pride, for they were made by loving and industrious hands. Now most of us wear bought clothes. It seems to me we have lost something by this in the way of family pride.

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- A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF HAGGAI -

Holiness and Obedience Requirements for God's Blessing

By Timothy Hille
of Ashland, Illinois

Haggai 2:10-19

The application of the truths presented by the prophet Haggai to our own time and to our own selves is very appropriate. Haggai lived in a time when much work needed to be done. We also live in a time when much work needs to be done in the service of the Lord and in the cause of Christ. Haggai lived and preached in a time when there was only a remnant of people to do the work. We seemingly have only a remnant in our churches today to carry out and carry on the work of the Lord. Haggai prophesied in a time when backsliding was common. We have many backsliders in churches today. Haggai lived in a time during which God was willing and able to bless His people and their work for Him. I believe that God will bless us if we labor for Him – only let our labors be according to His Word. We do not need to wonder if God is with His kind of church, for He has said, **"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"** (Matt. 28:20). We need only look about us and see that there is a great and a large work that needs to be done, and that the laborers are few. Who will work for the Lord? Who will take up their crosses and follow Christ? Who will obey the voice of the Lord and put their necks to the work of their Lord and King?

The most neglected thing during Haggai's time was the house of the Lord. The people had previously been rebuked for their neglect of God's house. They were to be building the temple, but



they had instead been primarily concerned with their own houses, their own earthly lives and possessions and pleasures, and not with the condition and the progress of the house of God. You and I who are saved need to be primarily concerned with God's house as long as we are living on this earth (I Tim. 3:15). Every one of us ought to know what is supposed to go on in the house of the Lord. Every one of us ought to know what the work of the Lord is, and be busy in that work. There is much building – yea, and much rebuilding – that needs to be done in this very hour. Many things have been allowed to fall down which need to be built up again. I am not speaking of earthly buildings, human programs, or so-called "ministries." One of the most outstanding needs of the hour is the return of Bible reading and Bible studying to the homes of church members. We need to see a return to fervent prayer, in our closets, in our homes, and in our churches. We need to see an interest in the work of spiritual building, building up one another in the faith – the belief of the truth, and in being built up in the Lord. We need to see an interest in working for Jesus, for the advancement of the gospel, fishing for men, and the increase of the Word of God in every place. Much of the work that is needed today will have to begin on our knees before anything can be accomplished with our hands,

feet, or lips.

In this lesson, we note that God uses a spiritual comparison to teach a valuable lesson to the people. No one can be said to be truly spiritual who is not obeying the Word of God. I know that many want to have it said that they are serving the Lord. If they are not following the commands of the Lord as revealed in the Scriptures, then what they are doing is not spiritually profitable, is not of God, and will come to naught in the judgment.

Vs. 10-12 – God once again speaks to the people. They had been working from the time of the first message of rebuke to now three months. God here sends a series of questions to the priests, who officiated over the religious life of the Jews in Old Testament times. They were the ministers of God for the people under the law. God now asks them a question regarding the ceremonial law. **"If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat [food], shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No."** The question was one of ceremonial cleanness and purity. If a person was carrying holy food in his pockets or in an apron, such as was offered to God by a peace-offering and was eaten by the priests, and his clothing or garment in which he was carrying this food touched some other object, did that object which was common then become holy? Did something that otherwise would not be regarded as holy and was therefore unfit for sacrifice or use in the services of the Lord become holy by being touched with the garments that carried the holy meat or bread (Lev. 6:24-29)? The things which were offered upon the altar were holy to the Lord, set apart from that which is common or profane. The holy food was to be eaten only by holy persons, who had been set apart to the Lord, as the priests had been. They had been first of all chosen by God; then washed all over in clean water; clothed with the holy garments of the priest's office; and anointed with the holy anointing oil that was manufactured according to the instructions of God. These outward things all symbolized the sanctification of a believer in Jesus Christ. He or she has been chosen by God unto salvation through the belief of the truth. He or she has been washed from all sin in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He or she has been clothed with the righteousness of Christ, making one acceptable to God. He or she has been anointed with the Holy Spirit, who leads and guides believers into all truth and enables them to serve and worship God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The question before the priests which was posed by the Lord through His messenger Haggai was whether that which is not sanctified, set apart to God, is made holy or sanctified by

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Study in Haggai

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contact with the garments which carry holy things. Are you made holy and acceptable in the sight of God for service and blessing tonight because you have come into this building which is used to house the spiritual building of the Lord's kind of church? Are you sanctified from your uncleanness and made useful to the service of the Lord and able to be blessed by Him because you are sitting on a pew where someone who was saved, was sanctified, and was serving God did once sit? **"And the priests answered and said, No."** Simply because God's house, which is His church, meets in this building, does not mean that because you came to this building at a time of meeting you are sanctified or holy in God's sight.

Vs. 13 – The next question which Haggai did pose to the priests from the Lord was thus: **"If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean?"** If someone who, according to the Mosaic law, was ceremonially unclean through contact with a dead body touched the aforementioned common items, **"bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat,"** were those items then to be considered unclean? (Num. 19:11-13). The law of contamination by contact with a corpse or dead body was given to teach and to symbolize the corruption that is caused by sin (Rom. 6:23). Sin and death are forever linked. Every time you hear of someone dying, or someone whom you know dies, it should remind you of sin. Men die because of sin. Every human being is spiritually dead already, dead in trespasses and sins; and the only thing that can make any person spiritually alive is the saving power of the Son of God. Sin defiles. Sin makes you unclean. Sin makes you disgusting in the sight of God. When any of the children of Israel came in contact with a dead body, then that man, woman, boy, or girl, was made unclean, and was not allowed to come into the house of God until he or she was purified by the divinely appointed ordinance. The only thing which God has appointed for the removal of the uncleanness of sin is that you should be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. The only thing that will remove the contamination of sin is Jesus sin-cleansing blood (Isa. 1:18, Rev. 1:7, Heb. 10:19-22). His blood has continual cleansing power (I John 1:5-9).

If someone who came into contact with a dead body touched any other object, did that object, whether it was food, clothing, or whatsoever that it might be, become unclean? **"And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean."** The answer was, "Yes." If someone who was defiled and corrupted by death touched any object, then that object became defiled. We see that the

corruption of sin is communicable by human contact. Someone else's sins can rub off on you (Lev. 22:4-6, I Cor. 15:33, I Tim. 5:22). If you go somewhere with sinners, and they are engaging in sinful activities, then you are corrupted along with them. If someone tells a dirty joke, or speaks with bad language, or acts disrespectfully, and you take pleasure in the actions of that other person – you laugh at the joke, or at the bad language, or at the disrespectful conduct – then you are taking part in that person's sin. You are also unclean.

Vs. 14-18 – Haggai now gives the interpretation and the application of these questions to the people of his time. God did not ask these questions for curiosity's sake. These questions had a spiritual meaning to the people, and they were meant to correct the bad thinking and the bad acting of the people, and to teach them the truth. **"Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean."** God was telling the people that they were, up to this point, unclean in His sight. They were not holy. They were not right before Him. They had come to Jerusalem, the city where God was worshipped. They had been practicing the outward manners of right religion, offering sacrifices, and burnt offerings to the Lord. Yet God said that the people were unclean, and so everything that they did was unclean. They were not sanctified, set apart to the honor and glory of God in their hearts and lives, and so what they did was likewise not to the honor and the glory of God.

God goes to reasoning and pleading with the people. We see here the tender mercies of God, that not only does He not leave us to ourselves, but He comes to us, shows us our backslidden condition, and reasons with us out of love that we might be turned from the error of our ways and the hurt we are causing to ourselves. **"And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD."** God calls the attention of the people back to when the work of building had begun (Ezra 3:1-11; 4:1-5,24; 5:1,2). The foundation of the house of the Lord had been laid, and religious service was being performed; but the building ceased for fourteen years, until God sent a message of rebuke and revival by the prophet Haggai. All during those years, the people had suffered leanness. **"Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty."** The produce of the field and of the vine was greatly diminished. That which promised much delivered but little. **"I smote you with blasting**

and with mildew and with hail in the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD." God had caused their personal and worldly labors to be profitless, in chastisement for their leaving off the building of His house; but they did not repent and return to the work during all those years. What will it take for some people to repent of their forsaking of the work of the Lord? When we are being chastened of the Lord, will we not search and see if the cause be not with us, and whether or not we need to repent and draw closer to the Lord?

"Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider it." As in a previous message, so now, God calls upon the people to lay to heart the lesson of the fourteen years of famine and want. Will we not examine our lives, and see if the seasons of unfruitfulness are not because of our not working in the work of the Lord as we ought? If our lives are unhappy, unfulfilled, and unmeaningful spiritually, will we not see if the hand of the Lord is against us in chastisement, and seek His face in humble repentance?

Vs. 19 – **"Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth."** Because of their disobedience and God's chastening hand upon them, their harvests had been lean, and there was no promise of future prosperity as far as could be visibly seen. There was nothing in the barns, whether of grain laid in store for future food, or of seed for future planting. Nevertheless, God gives the people a promise of blessing. **"From this day will I bless you."** We read here of the "I will" of God. The people were now obedient to God, and so He would bless their labors and would supply their needs. No matter what anyone else would do, God said, **"From this day will I bless you."** Without the blessing of the Lord, all of their selfish labors had been unfruitful. With the blessing of the Lord, their labors in building the house of the Lord would be blessed, and He would bless their houses as well, in supplying all their needs (I Sam. 15:22).



A Dying Church

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They are dying in the same sense that the church of Ephesus was, for they, too, have left their first love, who is Christ Jesus. Because the church at Ephesus had left off loving Christ, Christ here states, **"Remember therefore from where thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick (or lampstand), out of his**

place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5). Simply put, Christ told them that if they did not repent of the sin of not loving Him as they once did, He was going to remove their lampstand, and they would no longer be one of His churches.

We tend to think that it is when a church has gone into error and begins practicing false doctrine that she has quit being a church of the Lord. The root cause of this is a lovelessness of Christ. God's Word says a church that stops loving Him and continues in not loving Him, is no longer one of His churches. This is why I state that there are a lot of dying churches of the Lord today.

A church of the Lord is only a church so long as God says it is a church of His. And God is ever merciful and gracious to warn His churches when they are starting to die. He did so with the church of Ephesus. And He does so to all His churches in the letter unto the angel (or pastor, or messenger) of the church of Ephesus: **"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"** (Rev. 2:7). We should not be so foolish to think that this commandment and exhortation to hear "thus saith the Lord through his Holy Spirit" refers solely unto the blessed reward in the latter half of verse seven of Revelation chapter two, but unto all that God's holy and Spirit breathed Word says.

The reason a church of the Lord goes an erroneous way is because she has quit loving Christ and continues in this grave sin. This is a fatal sin for any church of the Lord. For when a church stops loving Christ, she will start loving other things in the place that belongs solely to Christ. Christ deserves nothing less than first place in the believer's heart, and in His true New Testament Baptist churches.

Lovelessness is the reason adultery exists in many marriages today. Is not the scriptural marriage union of one man to one woman emblematic of the Heavenly Bridegroom (Christ) and His Bride (the true New Testament Baptist church)? **"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but noruisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; For we**

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are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:22-32). A lovelessness on the part of a church toward her head, the Lord Jesus Christ, will cause her to be unfaithful to Him. This is spiritual fornication.

The church is espoused to Christ. **"For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"** (II Cor. 11:2). Continued unfaithfulness prior to a marriage often results in the marriage never taking place. And I believe there are many Baptist churches that will find at the marriage supper of the Lamb, that because of their continued unfaithfulness to Christ, they are not in the Bride of Christ. **"And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"** (Rev. 22:19). This does not speak of one losing their salvation, but of losing their reward. In Revelation chapter two and verse 7, the Holy Spirit stated that whosoever within the church would overcome by Christ would have the right to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God. Faith in Christ is that which overcomes, and unfaithfulness will cause one to lose the things they have been promised on a condition of their faithfulness. Are not church members that are unfaithful to the church in the grossest ways disciplined, or excluded, from church membership? The same is true of an unfaithful church; Christ says she is no longer one of His, and has none of the rights of His bride.

This age, or what we sometimes call the "church age," is the engagement period of the church of the Lord to the Lord. Prior to marriage there is a courtship that takes place. And during this courtship, the parties promised to one another in marriage are to remain faithful to the one they have been promised to. It is truly sad, that many human marriage engagements, even those among Baptists, do not picture the God-honoring engagement of the church to Christ.

"And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those who hate them. And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took

Rebekah, and went his way. And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (Gen. 24:59-67).

The espousal of Rebekah to Isaac is a beautiful type of the espousal of the church to Christ. Abraham sending his servant forth to find a wife for his son, Isaac, is a picture, though only more fully understood in the fulfillment of it, of God sending His Holy Spirit into the world to find a virgin bride for His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Let us note a few truths about this Biblical picture, for they are relevant to our text and subject.

First, a God-honoring espousal must be an engagement full of faithfulness between the bride-to-be and the bridegroom. There can be no unfaithfulness on the part of either. If one becomes unfaithful, it endangers the coming marriage of being called off. Concerning the espousal of the church to Christ, Christ is always the faithful one. And Christ expects His church to be faithful to Him.

Secondly, a God-honoring espousal will not have any act of fornication in it. Fornication is defined as being "an illicit sexual relationship outside of wedlock." And a more defined definition that I would give it is "engaging in any act that is strictly reserved to a marriage by those who are not married, whether they plan to be married or not." In other words, a betrothed couple (or simply an unmarried couple) has no right to engage in acts that have only their proper place in a marriage; such as living together, spending the night together, or engaging in sexual relations. Yet this is the way many human espousals are, full of fornication. Notice that neither Rebekah nor Isaac dwelt with each other prior to their marriage. Rebekah dwelt with her family (Gen. 24:55), and Isaac dwelt in the south country (Gen. 24:62). Until they were brought together to be married, they dwelt apart, and after that they dwelt together. Christ and the church do not dwell together in their espousal either: the Lord is in Heaven, seated on the right hand of God; the church is in the world, upon the earth. During this time, they have a limited fellowship with one another, yet it is a pure and God-

honoring one, for they commune with one another through the Holy Spirit.

And lastly, a God-honoring espousal will be between a man and a woman that believe the same thing and also practice the same thing. God is no way honored by the unequally yoked marriage of a believer to an unbeliever, despite whatever people or society find acceptable. Christ is not going to take a bride unto Himself that is not a believing bride. This is an example unto His people as well, seek ye a spouse that is also a believer.

It is no wonder marriage is ill thought of by many today, for even before the marriage takes place, the relationship is full of unfaithfulness, fornication, and compromise with ungodliness. Beloved, let us not let these be so with our churches. They are already rampant in the physical lives of many. And the way we live physically is often a manifestation of how we live spiritually. Does your life show a love for Christ as it ought to?

Our churches are nigh unto death because Christ is not loved by His bride as He ought to be. And if we do not heed the admonishment to repent, and **"do the first works,"** or turn away from the things we have substituted for Christ's place in our hearts, and put Christ in His proper place in our churches, they will die!

The current condition of many churches of the Lord is like the condition of the church of Ephesus; they are full of very good things: works, patience, doctrine, a disdain of evil and false ministers, and even the deeds of those who seek to cause divisions within the church are hated by these. But they are missing the most important element: they do not love Christ. It may outwardly appear that some of the churches of the Lord are doing some very mighty spiritual works (and many are), and yet, inwardly, these things are important to them having a love for the Lord.

Some churches and preachers love a particular doctrine of the Word of God more than they love Christ. There is no loss or want of teaching of God's sovereignty, God's divine election, and God's sanctification of His saints, in true Baptist churches today. What's missing is the practical application of these teachings and doctrines. God is certainly sovereign in our teaching, yet we do not let Him be sovereign in our daily lives. For if we did, there would be more Baptists dressing godly and modestly, talking like children of God, and abstaining from all appearances of evil. We need to manifest Christ in every aspect of our living.

Every doctrine of the Bible is good, and every one of them needs to be believed and proclaimed; but they must also be practiced. If there is no practical application of doctrine, it cannot profit, for faith without works is dead (James 2:26). Churches are dying, not for a lack of truth, but a lack of practicing every

truth. The ancient landmarks are being removed because few are "suring" them up. **"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall"** (II Peter 1:10). What are the things we must do to establish or sure up our faith? Simon Peter lists seven Christian virtues in II Peter 1:5-8; that if they are added unto one's faith will give assurance.

Practical Christian living is all but dead in many churches of the Lord today. Not for a lack of spiritual life, but of a lack of love for living as Christ commands His people. If we do not sure up, or establish our faith, and the only way this is done is by practicing doctrine, we will not live as though we were saved. And many Christians, true born-again believers, live the same way they lived before the Lord saved them. We Baptists must be really afraid of being accused of being a Missionary Baptist! Because we certainly try to live like we are not.

The first name given unto God's people by the world was "Christian" (Acts 11:26). It was a hate term, for it made fun of the way God's people lived, which was like Christ, for that is what Christian means: "Christ-like." Yet, I fear that if Christ were physically among us today, many would not bear a resemblance unto Him in their living. And I dare say also, that if some of the ancient churches of the Lord were in existence today and living as they lived in the days of the Apostles, the fellowship they'd have with some of our day's churches of the Lord would be extremely limited.

A proper diet is essential to health and growth. And the greatest impediment to a church's spiritual growth is carnality (I Cor. 3:1-3). And carnality in the church of the Lord will lead to wars, strife, divisions, and envyings within the church body. **"From where come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"** (James 4:1-4). If carnality in the church goes unchecked, it will tear the church apart. Carnality is a church killer. And its only cure is having the mind of Christ. **"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but**

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A Dying Church

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in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:1-5). If the love of the world is let into the church, there will be no love of the Lord.

There are many churches of the Lord today that love fellowship more than Christ. I say this because churches and church members will gauge who they fellowship with on many things except the truth. I even know of some church members that will go out of their way to have a social intimacy with excluded church members. Sadly, we will oftentimes desire the fellowship of the unregenerate, and those who behave in an unregenerate way, rather than seeking the company of those that walk in truth. **"The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever. Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it"** (II John 1-6).

Proof of love to Christ is to walk in His commandments. And the whole condition of Christian fellowship comes from first loving Christ. And many Baptists do not "love in the truth" those that walk in the truth; but rather just love to have a good time. I, myself, cannot fully fellowship with many of my brothers and sisters in Christ, not because we do not agree on the basic principles of faith, but because they will not fully walk in the truth. And no doubt, there are many who would not walk with me either, for they see my convictions as austere and old-fashioned. I am finding fewer and fewer Baptists and Baptist churches fully committed to the truth once delivered unto the saints as it was delivered unto the saints.

Yet, I am thankful unto the Lord for this, not all his true Baptist churches are in a dying condition. But those that are on a sure track to death, to having the Lord remove their lampstand, heed what the Holy Spirit saith unto the churches, **"Repent, and do the first works."** The

first works are not doctrine, fellowship, mission work, and many other good and needful things, but loving Christ, and loving Him first. All those things can be done, but will be in vain if we have not love for Christ.

I have had the privilege of having much of the Old Testament taught to me. And if one were to compare the spiritual condition of Israel in Old Testament days to the present spiritual condition of the Lord's churches they see this: there are few who are faithful. Israel, too, had quit loving God first. He warned her and warned her. He sent prophet after prophet unto them. But they wouldn't repent, and return unto their first love; so God removed them from being a nation. Israel loved the Temple, but not the Lord of the Temple. And they were in such a condition that they hadn't even realized His presence had long departed. All they did had become a religious formalism. And this is the way many of the Lord's churches have become today.

God keeps warning His churches with message after message. They will sing with their lips "O, How I Love Jesus," but their hearts are far removed. Services are attended faithfully, but only for appearance sake, for there is no want of being convicted at the preaching of the Word of God. The message of God's Word is forgotten nearly as soon as the last "Amen" is said.

Loving Christ first in our lives, in our homes, and in our churches will establish us. Baptist church perpetuity is hinged upon Christ's love for His church. But we need to claim it in reciprocating Christ's love in endeavoring to keep His commandments. May Christ always take first place in what His churches love.



Our Good Shepherd

By Rosco Brong
(1908 - 1985)

**CHRIST OUR
CREATOR AND
REDEEMER
CARES FOR
HIS PEOPLE AS
A SHEPHERD
CARES FOR HIS
SHEEP**

**"When the
chief Shepherd
shall appear . . .**

" (I Peter 5:4). "God . . . brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep . . ." (Heb. 13:20). "I am the good Shepherd" (John 10:11,14).

"The Lord (Jehovah) is my shepherd,"



sang David three thousand years ago, and over a thousand years later the great Son of David according to the flesh declared Himself to be that Shepherd, the everlasting Father (Isa. 9:6), Jehovah God manifesting Himself in flesh (I Tim. 3:16), going before His sheep (John 10:4), and through the sacrifice of His own flesh and blood opening the way for His people into the holy things and places of the heavens (Heb. 9:12, 23; 10:19, 20).

PROPHECY FULFILLED

Inspired prophets during the centuries of Old Testament revelation foresaw the coming of a Shepherd Who in His ministry and office would surpass all other teachers and leaders of all ages. Compare Isaiah 40:3-11 with Mark 1:1-4 and Luke 3:3-6, and Zechariah 13:7 with Jesus' own words in Matthew 26:31.

Finding fault with the unfaithful shepherds or leaders of His people in Ezekiel's day, God spoke of a time when **"I will set up one shepherd over them"** (Ezek. 34:23). So Jesus declared, **"There shall be one flock, one shepherd"** (John 10:16, correctly translated).

As Jesus appeared on the scene over 19 centuries ago at a time when nearly all the spiritual shepherds of God's people had shown themselves unfaithful, so the Bible seems to teach that His second coming will be to a world where iniquity abounds (Matt. 24:12), where there has been a great falling away or departure from the faith (II Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1), where a form of "godliness" or piety goes along with a denial of its power (II Tim. 3:5), and where there has been a heaping up of shepherds or teachers better suited to tickle itching ears than to preach the truth (II Tim. 4:3).

THE CHIEF SHEPHERD

Looking forward to this second coming of Christ, the apostle Peter urged his fellow elders (pastors or bishops) to be faithful in shepherding **"the flock of God,"** adding:

"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. 5:1-4).

In other words, preachers ought to remember that they are only under shepherds and will have to give an account of their stewardship to Him Who is the chief Shepherd (Heb. 13:17; I Cor. 4:1-4). The sheep belong to Him, and **"Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock!"** (Zech. 11:15-17).

THE GREAT SHEPHERD

Our divine Shepherd, however, is not merely chief or first in rank among men otherwise equal. His under shepherds, to be sure, are themselves no more than sheep called to special service – but still just sheep especially favored by and especially responsible to their Master. But He is Almighty God become man without ceasing to be God – partaking of the life and nature of the sheep that the sheep may partake of the life and nature of God.

Well may we agree with Paul that the mystery of piety is great! (I Tim. 3:16). We had better not pretend to understand the mystery, but we had better accept "without controversy" the facts as stated by divine inspiration, including the fact that God was manifested in flesh.

So God (the Father) brought Jesus up from the dead (Heb. 13:20), but He Who could say, **"I and the Father are one,"** could say also of His life, **"I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again"** (John 10:30, 18).

CREATOR AND REDEEMER

"All things came into existence through him" (John 1:3), and this certainly includes His sheep. They belong to Him by right of creation as well as by right of redemption.

As the great Shepherd, Jesus is both Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2), since "the Son makes alive whom he will" (John 5:21). He has given assurance, moreover, that no one is able to pluck His sheep out of His hand – out of the hand of God (John 10:28-30).

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

However comforting it may be to think of Jesus as the chief Shepherd, Who is always faithful to His Word even if many under shepherds are unfaithful, however reassuring it may be to His sheep to see Him as the great Shepherd Who has all power in heaven and in earth, we find Him most precious to our souls when we know Him as the good Shepherd Who **"giveth his life for the sheep"** (John 10:11).

We might wrongly think of the chief Shepherd as concerned too much with higher matters to give attention to individual sheep, and thoughts of the great Shepherd's power and deity might dismay and terrify us when we go astray, if we did not know Him also as the good Shepherd Who calls His own sheep by name, patiently leads and carries us away from all danger, and gave His life that we might have life and have it more abundantly.

Our good Shepherd is good to us and good for us. Best of all, if we are truly His sheep, He is good in us. When He calls us to follow, it is only where He leads; the life He gives us to live forever is only the life He has lived before us – the life He laid down that He might take it again and share it with us.

He is the good Shepherd. He knows His sheep, and His sheep know Him (John 10:14). If you do not know Him, if you are not one of His sheep, hear His voice today, believe in Him, and receive the gift of eternal life. He can be your good Shepherd, too.



Protestant Persecution of Baptists in Early America

A Historical Account of the Brutal Punishment Inflicted Upon Obadiah Holmes, John Clark, and John Crandall

By Joseph Banvard
(1810 - 1887)

(Continued from last issue.)

Part VI: A Great Change---A Dilemma

During the progress of the exercise at Cambridge on the next day, a man was wandering along the shore on the Boston side of Charles River. He was anxious to cross, but unfortunately all the spare boats that belonged to the citizens of the little town were on the Cambridge side, having been used in conveying visitors to the college. Finally an Indian, who had been out fishing in the harbor all the morning, came, on his way home, sufficiently near the shore to be hailed. The man called to him, and by signs engaged him to paddle him across the stream in his birchen canoe.

Having arrived on the other side, the passenger hastened to the college, and placed in the hand of one of the magistrates a letter; it was the offer of Clarke to come to Newport, and engage in the much-talked-of discussion. It was not a welcome document. The advocates of infant sprinkling did not wish to meet Mr. Clarke in an oral argument. They knew that that rite was safe so long as it was protected by the sword of state; but they could not foresee what results would grow out of a public disputation.

Still, as the governor had been the first to propose such a disputation, and the magistrates had assured Mr. Clarke it would be granted, they were in a dilemma what course to pursue so as to avoid the discussion without a compromise of character, or without a tacit implication of the weakness of their own side. The ministers and magistrates conversed upon the subject after the reception of Clarke's letter at Cambridge with great interest. The object of the consultation was to devise some way to extricate themselves from their position without yielding any advantage to the Baptists.

Finally, the minister of Boston, Mr. Cotton, who was more strongly opposed to the public controversy than some of the others, drew up a reply to send back, in which he stated that Mr. Clarke had misunderstood the governor, who had not enjoined or counseled a public disputation, but had simply expressed the opinion that if Mr. Clarke would confer with the ministers upon the subject of infant baptism, they would satisfy him of the propriety of the practice, and he would be able to maintain his own views before them; that this was intended for Clarke's information privately, but by no means as a challenge to dispute publicly upon the subject, "Nevertheless,"



continued this ingenious divine, "if you are forward to dispute, and that you will move it yourself to the court of magistrates about Boston, we shall take order to appoint one who

will be ready to answer your motion, you keeping close to the questions to be propounded by yourself, and a moderator shall be appointed also to attend upon that service; and whereas, you desire you might be free in your dispute, keeping close to the points to be disputed on, without incurring damage by the civil justice, observing what hath before been written, it is granted. The day may be agreed if you yield the premises."

This was signed by the governor, Mr. Endicott; the deputy governor, Mr. Dudley, and three others. Mr. Clarke regarded it as a singular document, and understood its practical bearing. He viewed it as an attempt to change the entire ground of procedure, and shelter the governor from the charge of having proposed the discussion. In the expression of a willingness to grant the discussion, provided Clarke would move it himself to the court or magistrates about Boston, he discovered an attempt to throw the whole responsibility of the disputation upon himself, and to make it appear to result from his "forwardness to dispute."

Two other remarkable features connected with this affair, which increased the cautiousness of Clarke's movements, were: First, that while this letter of Cotton's was signed by five colonial dignitaries, it was not an order of court--it was not an official document. It was signed by them in their private capacity, and had not the signature of the secretary. Mr. Clarke, therefore, did not regard it as a reliable state paper.

The other remarkable circumstance was, that this attempt to throw the whole responsibility of originating the discussion of infant baptism upon Clarke was made, when they knew that there was a law of the colony which ordered that "if any person or persons shall openly condemn or oppose the baptizing of infants, and shall appear to the court willfully and obstinately to continue therein, after due time and means of conviction, every such person or persons shall be sentenced to banishment."

Clarke knew that their unofficial document would afford him no legal protection, and that in case the

disputation went on in the manner that they proposed, it would be an easy thing for someone to enter a complaint against him, and secure his conviction. He therefore wrote the following frank and manly epistle, and forwarded it to them:

To the honored Governor of the Massachusetts and the rest of that honorable Society, those present.

Worthy Senators:

"I received a writing, subscribed with five of your hands, by way of answer to a twice-repeated motion of mine before you, which was grounded, as I conceive, sufficiently upon the governor's words in open court, which writing of yours doth no way answer my expectation, nor yet that motion which I made; and, whereas (waiving that grounded motion), you are pleased to intimate that "if I were" forward to "dispute," and would move it myself to the court or magistrates around Boston, you would appoint one to answer my motion, etc., be pleased to understand that, although I am not backward to maintain the faith and order of my Lord, the King of saints, for which I have been sentenced, yet am I not in such a way so forward to dispute, or move therein, lest inconvenience should thereby arise. I shall rather once more repeat any former motion, which if it shall please the honored general court to accept, and under their secretary's hand shall grant a free dispute, without molestation or interruption, I shall be well satisfied therewith; that what is past I shall forget, and upon your motion shall attend it; thus desiring the Father of mercies not to lay that evil to your charge, I remain your well-wisher,

John Clarke."

To this fair and honorable proposal of Mr. Clarke, the governor and magistrates to whom it was addressed thought it the wisest policy to return no answer. The matter was accordingly dropped by their silent retreat. Thus ended the unfortunate challenge of the governor and the persecution of the pastor of the Newport Baptist Church.

Part VII: Inward Life

It is time that we inquire into the fate of Mr. Clarke's companions. Mr. Crandall, who was sentenced to a fine of five pounds for being one of the company, was released upon promising that he would appear at their next court. But they did not let him know when the next court would sit until it was over; and as he was not present according to his promise, they obliged the keeper to pay his fine.

With poor Holmes, it fared far worse than with either of the others. He had

been sentenced to pay a fine of thirty pounds, by the first day of the next court, or else to be "well whipped," and to remain in prison until he provided sureties for the fine. Sureties he would not furnish, because he was determined not to pay the fine. Consequently, he was kept in prison. At the time of his trial before the court of assistants, when the above cruel sentence was passed against him, he replied:

"I bless God that I am counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus;" at which one of the ministers (Mr. John Wilson) so far forgot the sacredness of his office, and the sanctity of the place, as to raise his hand, and strike him in open court, at the same time saying: "The curse of God go with thee."

During the continuance of the imprisonment of Clarke and Crandall, Holmes enjoyed their company. This was a source of unspeakable comfort. The conversation, the sympathy, and the prayers of his fellow-prisoners assisted to banish the despondency and gloom which would otherwise have oppressed him. But after their deliverance, and when he was left alone, he was greatly distressed in spirit. In his own account of it, he said: "After I was deprived of my two loving friends, the adversary stepped in, took hold of my spirit, and troubled me for the space of an hour, and then the Lord came in and sweetly relieved me, causing me to look to Himself; so was I staid and refreshed in the thoughts of my God.

As friends had paid the fines of the other two prisoners, and had secured their release, it seemed a hard case that he should be left to feel the scourge. Brethren who sympathized with him, resolved that he should not. Strongfaith Bates, Stephen, the brother of the mill, and a few others, raised, by a contribution among themselves, enough to pay his fine. But Holmes would not permit it. In reply to their kind offer, he said:

"I dare not accept of deliverance in such a way. And though I greatly thank you for your kindness, and would acknowledge, with gratitude, even a cup of cold water, yet I desire not that you should yield to the unrighteous demands of my persecutors. Having committed no crime, I will not permit my friends to pay a single farthing for me."

The first day of court was drawing near, when, if the fine were not paid, the substitute would be exacted in stripes, and groans, and blood.

Though Holmes was strongly convinced of the truth of Baptist sentiments, for

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which he was imprisoned, and was conscientiously opposed to the payment of the fine, or to the doing of anything else voluntarily, as a penal requisition, yet he was nowise ambitious of the honors of the whipping post. He shrunk with dread from the sufferings of the scourge. He knew that, when the court of assistants sentence one to be "well whipped," it meant something, and would be executed to the very letter. Yet the night preceding the infliction of the sentence he passed in sweet, refreshing sleep. In the morning, notwithstanding, they knew that they would provoke the wrath of "the powers that be," Strongfaith and Stephen, with several other friends, called at the prison to comfort and encourage the criminal! After appropriate religious conversation and prayer that God would give strength to suffer, and especially that He would open the eyes of the persecutors to see and love the truth, Strongfaith took from a basket, in which he had stowed a variety of comforts for the poor prisoner, a bottle of old Madeira wine. Pouring out some in a glass, he offered it to Holmes.

"No, brother. I thank you for your kindness, but I shall take no strong drink until my punishment is over, lest, if I have more strength, courage, and boldness than ordinarily could be expected, the world should say that I was drunk, or that I was carried through by the strength and comfort of what I had taken. No, let me so suffer that, if I am sustained, God shall have the glory."

Still, the prisoner was by no means certain that he would not shrink, faint, or show signs of physical cowardice, though he thus spoke. Instead, however, of strengthening himself with wine and other luxuries, which had been brought, he left his friends to be entertained with each other, whilst he withdrew into another room, to hold communion with his Lord. So soon as he had retired by himself, he was overwhelmed with the deepest gloom. He was tempted to question his own sincerity and the purity of his motives. A something within, which he attributed to Satanic agency, said: "Remember thyself, thy birth, thy breeding, thy friends, thy wife, children, name, credit. Thou art dishonoring all these by thy public scourging. Is this necessary when others are ready to save thee from suffering, and thy friends from disgrace?"

His heart sank within him. The idea of dishonoring any who were dear to him was more painful than the anticipated punishment; but presently the thought occurred to him, or, as he afterwards expressed it: "There came a sweetly, from the Lord, as sudden an answer: 'Tis for my Lord; I must not deny Him before the sons of men (for that were to set men

above Him), but rather lose all; yea, wife, children, and mine own life also.'" This, however, did not afford him permanent peace; for soon a series of questions rush into his mind, creating confusion of thought, and reviving his disquietude of feeling. "Is it for the glory alone in view? Is it not rather for your own, or some others' sake? Is it not obstinacy or pride? Is it not resentment or bigotry? Is it not selfishness at the bottom?"

These unwelcome, and, as they seemed to him, involuntary queries, increased his distress; but after a jealous and careful scrutiny of his motives, he was convinced, as he said, that: "It was not for any man's case or sake in this world, that so I had professed and practiced, but for my Lord's case and sake, and for Him alone; whereupon my spirit was much refreshed."

He was also greatly comforted by the following passages of Scripture, which were sweetly suggested to his mind:

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

"Although I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

"And he that continued to the end shall be saved."

But anon, the thoughts of the terrible scourge occurred to him, and he feared that the severity of the dreadful punishment would be too much for his sensitive flesh. The disgrace of the punishment he regarded not. That belonged to others, and not to himself. Like his Lord and Master, he despised the shame. But the anticipated pain of the heavy blows made him shrink. He knew his weakness and sensitiveness, and feared that he would be overcome. Again he betook himself to the throne of grace. He prayed earnestly that the Lord would be pleased to give him a spirit of courage and boldness, a tongue to speak for Him, and strength of body to suffer for His sake, and not to shrink from the strokes, nor shed tears, lest the adversaries of the truth should blaspheme and be hardened, and the weak and feeble-hearted be discouraged. His prayer was followed with fresh consolation and strength. It produced a state of truthful submission to God, causing him to yield himself, soul and body, into the hands of his Saviour, and leave the whole disposing of the affair with Him.

Part VIII: An Affecting Scene

When the time arrived for the condemned Baptist preacher to be led forth to punishment, and the voice of the jailer was heard in prison, Holmes listened to it with a degree of cheerfulness. Taking his Testament in his hand he went forth with him to the place of execution. As he approached the whipping post, around which were gathered a crowd of spectators, he calmly saluted them. Two of the magistrates were present to see that

the whipper did his duty---Mr. Increase Nowel, who had signed the sentence, and Mr. Flint. After waiting some minutes in expectation of the governor's coming, Nowel commanded the executioner to do his office.

"Permit me," said Holmes, as the executioner seized him, "to say a few words."

"Now is no time to speak," replied Nowel. But Holmes was unwilling to suffer in silence. He desired to declare to the multitude the grounds of his belief, and the reasons of his punishment. He, therefore, lifted up his voice and said:

"Men, brothers, fathers and countrymen, I beseech you give me leave to speak a few words, and the rather because here are many spectators to see me punished, and I am to seal with my blood, if God give me strength, that which I hold and practice in reference to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. That which I have to say, in brief, is this: Although I am no disputant, yet, seeing I am to seal with my blood what I hold, I am ready to defend by the word, and to dispute that point with any that shall come forth to withstand it."

Magistrate Nowel told him, "Now is no time to dispute."

"Then," continued Holmes, "I desire to give an account of the faith and order I hold." This he uttered three times. But Magistrate Flint cried out to the executioner, "Fellow, do thine office, for this fellow would but make a long speech to delude the people."

In compliance with this authoritative mandate, the executioner roughly seized Holmes, and began to strip off his clothes. The sentence was to be inflicted upon the prisoner, not upon his garments. But Holmes was determined to speak if possible. Whilst, therefore, the whipper was removing his clothes, and preparing him for the lash, he said to the people:

"That which I am to suffer for is the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ."

"No," replied Magistrate Nowel, "it is for your error, and going about to seduce the people."

"Not for my error," said Holmes, "for in all the time of my imprisonment, wherein I was left alone (my brethren being gone), which of all your ministers in all that time came to convince me of an error? And when, upon the governor's words, a motion was made for a public dispute, and upon fair terms and desired by hundreds, what was the reason it was not granted?"

This was a close and significant question. As all the multitude knew that a public disputation had been anticipated, but had not yet taken place, the inquiry of Holmes seemed to demand an answer. Nowel therefore replied:

"It was the fault of him who went away and would not dispute," referring to Clarke; but his, as we have already

shown, was not the case.

Flint became impatient at this colloquy and repeated his order to the executioner.

"Fellow, do thine office."

Holmes, however, would not remain silent. Whilst being disrobed, he said:

"I would not give my body into your hands to be thus bruised on any account whatever; yet now I would not give the hundredth part of a wampumpeague to free it out of your hands."

"Unbutton here," said the executioner, as he gave his jacket a jerk.

"No," said Holmes: "I make as much conscience of unbuttoning one button as I do of paying the sentence of thirty pounds. I will do nothing towards executing such an unjust law."

Faithful to his word, he would not voluntarily assist the executioner in the least in removing his garments from his back.

He was as helpless as if he were asleep, and the executioner had to handle him as though he were a statue. Still he continued addressing the people.

"The Lord," he said, "having manifested His love towards me, in giving me repentance towards God and faith in Christ, and so to be baptized in water by a messenger of Jesus, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, wherein I have fellowship with Him in His death, burial and resurrection, I am now come to be baptized in afflictions by your hands, that so I may have further fellowship with my Lord, and am not ashamed of His sufferings, for by His stripes am I healed."

The executioner having removed so much of his garments as would hinder the effect of the scourge, and having fastened him to the post, seized a three-corded whip, raised his hands, and laid on the blows in an unmerciful manner. Stroke followed stroke as rapidly as was consistent with effective execution, each blow leaving its crimson furrow, or its long blue wale in the sufferer's quivering flesh. The only pause which occurred during the infliction of this barbarous punishment was when the executioner ceased a moment in order to spit in his hands, so as to take a firmer hold of the handle of the whip, and render the strokes more severe. This he did three times. During the infliction of his painful scourging, Holmes said to the people:

"Though my flesh and my spirit fail, yet God will not fail." The poor sufferer did not fail. He found that his strength was equal to his day. Though the lash was doing its bloody work upon his sensitive flesh, yet his spirit was sustained by heavenly consolations. In his own account of his experience during this dreadful scourge, Holmes subsequently said:

"It pleased the Lord to come in and fill my heart and tongue as a vessel full,

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and with an audible voice I brake forth, praying the Lord not to lay this sin to their charge, and telling the people that now I found He did not fail me, and therefore now I should trust Him forever Who had failed me not; for in truth, as the strokes fell upon me, I had such a spiritual manifestation of God's presence as I never had before, and the outward pain was so removed from me that I could well bear it, yea, and in a manner felt it not, although it was grievous, as the spectators said; the man striking me with all his strength spitting in his hand three times, with a three-corded-whip giving me therewith thirty strokes."

After the requisite number of blows had been given, equaling the number of pounds that he was fined (from which we learn that, according to the Puritan standard of penal measure, one blow of a three-corded whip, well laid on, was an equivalent to one pound sterling), the cords which fastened him to the whipping post were untied and he was set at liberty. With joyfulness in his heart and cheerfulness in his countenance, he turned to the Magistrates Flint and Nowel, and said:

"You have struck me as with roses." But not wishing them to imagine that he regarded the punishment as literally light, nor that he was sustained by his own strength, he added:

"Although the Lord hath made it easy to me, yet I pray God it may not be laid to your charge."

The crowd now gathered around him, some from mere curiosity, others inwardly rejoicing that the heretic had been scourged, whilst a third class were filled with mingled emotions of sympathy with his sorrows, and indignation at his wrongs.

Amongst those whose feelings of sympathy and indignation were aroused at the barbarous treatment of Holmes, were two individuals who were so rejoiced that the sufferer had been sustained under his cruelties, and that he left the ignominious post with so much composure, and even with pleasantness of countenance, that they shook hands with him; and one, whose name was John Spur, a freeman of the colony, said, "Blessed be God for thee, my brother," and walked along with him to the prison. The other, who simply shook hands with him, was another freeman, Mr. John Hazel. Many others testified their friendship for him, and glorified God on his account. To some, however, who were present, these expressions of sympathy were extremely displeasing. They looked upon it as a connivance at the crime, and a contempt of the government. As informers, they immediately made complain of what they had witnessed, and a number of warrants

were issued for the apprehension of these sympathizing offenders.

When Holmes reached the prison, his body was found to be in a terrible condition--his body, not simply his back, for the lashes of the whip were so long that they lapped over his back, and left their gory marks upon his side.

Eaton, who had been a spectator of all the proceedings, ran home immediately after the whipping, obtained some rags and oil, and hastened to the prison where, like the good Samaritan, he dressed the wounded man's sores. When it was known that Holmes had received such kindness, the inquiry became general, who was the surgeon. And the report was soon circulated that he was to be arrested.

So severe was the chastisement of the prisoner that for many days he could not endure the pain occasioned by the wounded parts of his body touching the bed. "All the rest that he experienced was such as he obtained by supporting himself upon his knees and elbows!"

The day after the whipping, whilst Spur and Hazel were attending to their business, they were surprised by a constable calling upon them and telling them that they were prisoners. As his authority, he showed them the following document:

"To the keeper of his deputy:

"By virtue hereof, you are to take into your safe keeping the body of John Spur; for a heinous offence by him committed; hereof fail not. Dated the 5th of the 7th month, 1651. Take also into your safe keeping John Hazel.

"By the court, Increase Nowel."

They were accordingly both taken to prison, the "heinous offense" consisting of the act of shaking hands and speaking with Holmes after his punishment and consequently, after he had satisfied the law, and was no longer an involuntary prisoner.

They were afterwards taken to the court, and examined. They had no trial, neither were they allowed to meet their complainants face to face, but were condemned upon the evidence furnished by the depositions of two individuals, the stronger of the two documents being as follows:

"I Cole, being in the market-place when Obadiah Holmes came from the whipping post; John Spur came and met him pleasantly, laughing in his face, saying, 'Blessed be God for thee, brother;' and so did go with him, laughing upon him, towards the prison, which was very grievous to me to see him harden the man in his sin, and showing much contempt of authority by that carriage, as if he had been unjustly punished, and had suffered as a righteous man under a tyrannical government. Deposited before the court the 5th of the 7th month. "Increase Nowel."

They were sentenced to receive ten

lashes each, or pay a fine of forty shillings. The latter they could not conscientiously do. A Mr. Bendal, who was a friend to Hazel, offered to pay his, but he refused, saying---

"I thank you for this offer of love; but I believe it will be no acceptable service for any man to pay a penny for me in this case." Yet, notwithstanding his refusal, the court accepted the proffer, and gave him his discharge. Hazel was upwards of sixty years of age, and died soon after his release.

Spur was kept in prison nearly a week, expecting every day to be taken to the market square, tied to the whipping post, and receive his ten lashes; but, without

his permission, some sympathizing friend paid his fine, and secured his deliverance.

These persecutions were the means of attracting the attention of many to the doctrines of the sufferers. Sympathy elicited inquiry, and inquiry produced conviction. The sentiments of the Baptists spread. Many were convinced of the Scripturalness of their views of baptism, and desired to be buried with Christ in that beautiful and significant ordinance. Their desire could not be refused. The ordinance was administered repeatedly, though with the greatest privacy, for fear of prisons, fines, and scourgings.



THE

BIBLE 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.

PRIMARIES SHOW POTENTIAL SHIFT AMONG VOTERS

(EP News)--Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Arkansas each held primaries May 18. In Pennsylvania, long-time Sen. Arlen Specter was defeated by Joe Sestak. Specter left the Republican Party a year ago to become a Democrat, but the move may have backfired. Sestak won the primary, and Specter gave maybe the shortest concession speech in history. On the Republican ticket, Pat Toomey was able to get a win over Peg Luksic. In Kentucky, Rand Paul took the GOP primary from Trey Grayson with a 24-point victory. Paul, the son of Rep. Ron Paul, attributed the victory to the Tea Party movement. In Arkansas, incumbent Sen. Blanche Lincoln only garnered 45 percent of the vote in the Democratic primary and finds herself in a runoff with Lt. Gov. Bill Halter.

OKLAHOMA LAWMAKERS OVERRIDE VETO OF PRO-LIFE BILL

(EP News)--For the third time, the Republican Legislature in Oklahoma has voted to override the veto of Gov. Brad Henry. H.B. 3284 requires abortion clinics to collect information such as marital status, previous pregnancies and reasons for having an abortion. Sen. Clark Jolley, R-Edmond, said the 37-question survey will help understand why women have abortions. "This is about gathering data so we can prevent future need for women to face this choice," he said. "Whether future Legislatures use this data is another question, but this is not to treat women as second-class citizens. This is to try to prevent millions upon millions of children from extinguishment of their life for an unknown reason except for speculation." The State Legislature has passed 8 pro-life bills. Henry has signed four

of those bills and vetoed three. Another, which prohibits insurance companies from paying for elective abortions in health care, is awaiting his signature.

SENATE GOP LEADERSHIP

ACCUSES HHS OF WRONGDOING

(EP News)--Republican leaders in the Senate have sent a letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, claiming a brochure issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is misleading seniors about the impact of the new health care law. Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kansas, said the letter calls the brochure an "inappropriate and wasteful use of taxpayer funds. At best, you have a situation where you've had a mailer sent at taxpayer expense to thousands, maybe millions, that is very misleading and it is very inaccurate." The brochure claims the new federal health care law will result in "increased quality health care" and tells seniors their "guaranteed benefits won't change." Roberts said Sebelius should learn the facts about the health care law. "It might be a good idea for Kathleen Sebelius to sit down with her own actuary," he said, "and meet him so she could get the truth in regards to these claims."

MEDICARE NOMINEE FAVORS

HEALTH CARE RATIONING

(EP News)--President Obama's nominee to head the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is Donald Berwick, a proponent of government rationed health care. U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kansas, raised his concerns with the White House, and told his colleagues on May 19th that he was disappointed with the response. "Instead of flat-out denials of government rationing, we have excuses," he said on CSPAN. "And if you read between the lines, you will notice

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that for the first time ever in this debate, the Obama White House is admitting that their health care plan will ration health care." Roberts questions why Berwick is also a big fan of Britain's government-run health care system. "Now with cancer survival rates for women 10 percentage points higher in the U.S. (than) the survival rates than in England, and over 20 points higher for men," he said, "why does he think that their government-run system is superior to our system?"

RULE CHANGE COULD FORCE U.S. TAXPAYERS TO SUBSIDIZE PROSTITUTION, TRAFFICKING ABROAD

(EP News)--A new rule regarding HIV funding by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) could undermine U.S. anti-sex trafficking and anti-prostitution efforts. The rule flies in the face of the Smith Amendment, which required funding recipients to explicitly oppose prostitution and sex trafficking. A group of U.S. representatives says the rule will allow U.S. taxpayer money to go to organizations that participate in or deliberately ignore sex trafficking and prostitution. Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., the author of a landmark U.S. anti-trafficking law, said, "The Obama administration is enabling sex trafficking and prostitution all over the world. We're going backwards significantly. The brothel owners and operators and sex traffickers want U.S. taxpayer funds. The administration is practically working hand-in-glove with them."

JUDGE WON'T ALLOW SCHOOL TO USE RELIGIOUS TEXTS

(EP News)--A federal judge has tossed an Idaho charter school's suit that challenged a ban on religious texts in the classroom. Nampa Classical Academy filed the suit after its charter came under threat over the possibility of using religious documents, including the Bible, as instructional tools. Isaac Moffett with the Nampa Classical Academy maintains the issue is about the right to use primary source texts when teaching history and literature in schools. David Cortman of the Alliance Defense Fund said options for an appeal are being discussed with Nampa Academy. He said, "We would be requesting that the 9th Circuit would prohibit the state from enforcing the order that stops all public schools including colleges, from being able to use any of these religious texts."

10TH CIRCUIT COURT SIDES WITH COLORADO CHURCH IN ZONING DISPUTE

(EP News)--Rocky Mountain Christian Church, the largest church in Boulder County, Colo., can expand its campus, thanks to a landmark ruling May 17 from the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The ruling, which upheld a 2008 jury verdict that Boulder County had violated the church's rights under a federal civil rights law, could

influence cases across the nation. The church also was awarded more than \$1 million in attorneys' fees. "Boulder County is learning the hard way that churches have rights, too," said Eric Rassbach, national litigation director of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which represented the church. "Federal civil rights law protects churches from unfair and arbitrary treatment by local governments, and there are real consequences for ignoring those laws."

IOWA PLANNED PARENTHOOD HANDS OUT ABORTION PILL VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

(EP News)--In the last two years, about 1,500 women have aborted their preborn babies through Planned Parenthood clinics in Iowa. But none of them saw a doctor; they received their prescriptions for RU-486 during a videoconference. The system allows a doctor in Des Moines to meet with patients across the state through videoconference. At the end of the teleconference, the doctor presses a button on the computer to activate a drawer at the patient's location that contains RU-486. Operation Rescue says the process violates Iowa law, which says abortions must be supervised by a licensed physician. "We also believe they're violating the FDA protocols for the use of RU-486," said Cheryl Sullenger, senior policy adviser for Operation Rescue. "It's a very dangerous drug."

PRO-LIFE BILL SIGNED INTO W.V. LAW

(EP News)--West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin (D) signed the Ultrasound Option Bill into law in late May, making his state the 20th to enact provisions giving women the opportunity to view an ultrasound before an abortion. "Women deserve to have all of the facts at their disposal before making the life-and-death decision that will affect themselves and their unborn children," said Mary Spaulding Balch, National Right to Life director of state legislation.

LEGISLATIVE TREND MAY ATTRACT EDUCATIONAL GRANTS

(EP News)--More states are adopting teacher evaluation reform in an effort to get a second chance at the federal government's Race to the Top educational grants. The legislative trend ties teacher tenure and pay to student performance. Louisiana is one of the most recent states to take action, approving a value added assessment for teachers. State Rep. Frank Hoffmann, said reform is a positive step. "The concept stands by itself," he said, "whether we had Race to the Top available or not," Hoffman said. Matt Brouillette, president and CEO of the Commonwealth Foundation for Public Policy Alternatives, said it's good to hold teachers to a higher standard.

"This is the kind of accountability that our public education system severely needs," Brouillette said.

MASSACHUSETTS JUDGE HEARS CASE AGAINST MARRIAGE

(EP News)--Lawyers for the Massachusetts attorney general's office were in federal court on May 26, arguing that the

federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is unconstitutional. Massachusetts, the first state to legalize same-sex marriage, claims the federal DOMA interferes with its sovereign authority to define and regulate marriage. Kris Mineau, president of the Massachusetts Family Institute, said that's patently false. "We think it's a fallacious argument," he said. "The DOMA has withstood all previous challenges in federal court and by the rule of law the DOMA should stand."

NOVEMBER ELECTIONS SEE FLOOD OF CANDIDATES

(EP News)--Thousands of people are throwing their hats in the ring in the upcoming midterm election, according to the Federal Election Commission (FEC). The FEC says more than 2,300 people will vie for 471 House and Senate seats, the most candidates in the last 35 years.

Frustration with the Obama administration, the popular Tea Party movement and a general anti-incumbent sentiment may be at the heart of the increase. Bruce Ray Riggs, a candidate for the Florida Senate, said he favors giving the states more powers. "I had to sell my four-wheeler to pay (the filing fee), and I did," he said. "It's worth it. (Congress) has railroaded the American people."

MAJORITY NOW WANT HEALTH CARE DO-OVER

(EP News)--Support for repealing the Obama health care reform law has now reached 63 percent according to new numbers from Rasmussen Reports. Weekly polling has shown most Americans opposed the reform, even during the debate, but this is the first time the number has broken 60 percent. Part of the law includes controversial federal funding for school health centers. Chuck Donovan, senior research fellow with The Heritage Foundation, said although the law forbids the centers from providing abortion services, it does not prohibit them from providing abortion referrals or prevent health providers from discussing it with students. "So parents really aren't protected in a school-based clinic," he said.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD WANTS MORE TELEMED ABORTIONS

(EP News)--Planned Parenthood has revealed a plan to expand its so-called "telemed" abortion process to clinics across the country over five years. The process allows a woman to obtain abortion pills via teleconferencing without an actual physical exam. Derrick Jones, spokesperson for National Right to Life, said that while the "telemed" drug has been touted as an all-in, end-all drug for women to have an abortion, it's anything but safe. "It's a multi-pill, multi-stage process," he said, "and it does have enormous physical risks."

MOST IOWA GAY MARRIAGES PERFORMED FOR NON-IOWANS

(EP News)--Three out every five same-sex marriages performed in Iowa over the last year were between out-of-staters. According to the Iowa Department of Public Health, 2,020 same-sex marriages have been performed in the Hawkeye State since the

state Supreme Court legalized the unions. Bryan English, director of public relations & outreach at the Iowa Family Policy Center, said some of the couples came at the request of gay activists. "They absolutely planned to bring people in from other states," he said, "have them 'get married,' then go back to their home state and after a certain amount of time they will then file lawsuits in those states as well. The idea is that they would find a state where it's extremely hard to amend the constitution and where they didn't think the people would necessarily put up a huge fight."

SCHOOL BAILOUT CRITICIZED AS GIFT TO UNIONS

(EP News)--The Obama administration is seeking \$23 billion in "emergency" funding for public schools, but conservative lawmakers say it's merely a bailout for the teachers' unions. The Keep Our Educators Working Act would purportedly save teacher jobs, retain funding for programs like summer school and generally bail out the public school system. Education Secretary Arne Duncan told Fox News if the bill is not enacted, "millions" of school kids would be affected. "This is a bipartisan issue - politics and ideology, around education, we have to put to the side," he said. But Republicans call the measure a gift to the teachers' unions. Lindsey Burke, education analyst for the Heritage Foundation, said, "More federal funding is not going to solve states' fiscal problems and could in fact exacerbate those problems by really preventing states from making the difficult budgetary decisions necessary to reduce costs and affect long-term systematic education reform."

TEXAS PASSES SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

(EP News)--On May 21, the Texas State Board of Education passed social studies standards it had been debating for over a year. The decision came after some had wanted to remove or diminish references in the Texas textbooks to Christmas, Independence Day, and aspects of America's religious heritage. A majority of the Board stood firm and voted 9-5 to strike down attempts to rewrite history. Jonathan Saenz, director of legislative affairs for Liberty Institute, said it was a satisfying win. "It's been tremendous," he said, "because so many teachers, parents, experts and professors from across the state have been working to send a unified message to the Board of Education that they don't want atheists and the ACLU rewriting their history - and that request was honored."

FEDERAL BILL REQUIRES SCHOOLS TO GRANT LGBT PROTECTIONS

(EP News)--Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., introduced the Student Nondiscrimination Act of 2010 Thursday. The bill would grant special protections to gay, lesbian and transgender characteristics in every public school in America. A similar bill has already been introduced in the House. Neal McClusky, associate director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the Cato Institute, said every student deserves

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protection – not just those in a political subgroup. “It’s frankly wrong to have a law that puts you in a specific class and gives you a protection based on your group identity,” he said. “What should be prohibited is bullying against anybody.”

HEALTH CARE PRICE TAG MORE THAN PROJECTED

(EP News)--The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has released its final price tag for health care reform, and it’s at least \$115 billion more than projected. Much of that is due to authorizations for discretionary spending put in the legislation by those drafting the bill.

The Obama administration said it would cap spending on the initiative at \$1 trillion over 10 years. The new numbers would break that unofficial promise. The CBO said the added costs can be attributed to administrative costs to the tune of \$10 billion to \$20 billion, \$34 billion for community health centers and an estimated \$39 billion for American Indian health care. The CBO also said part of the reason its initial estimate did not include the additional costs was that it did not have enough time to finish running all the numbers before the bill was voted on.

HEALTH CARE TAXES UNDERMINE MARRIAGE

(EP News)--The health care reform law offers tax credits to help people purchase mandatory health insurance under the health care reform law. Those credits are based on income with regard to the poverty level. Ryan Ellis, tax policy director with Americans for Tax Reform, said the problem is the poverty level is not doubled for married couples. “For example, the poverty line for a single person is \$10,000 a year,” he said, “but for two people who are married without any children, it’s closer to \$17,000 or \$18,000 a year, not \$20,000.” It becomes more advantageous, then, for people to remain single.

WASHINGTON STATE HIGH COURT RULES IN FAVOR OF LIBRARY FILTERS

(EP News)--In a 6-3 decision, the Washington Supreme Court has said that public libraries do not have to disable Internet filters, just because an adult patron requests it. The majority wrote in its opinion: “A public library has never been required to include all constitutionally protected speech in its collection and has traditionally had the authority, for example, to legitimately decline to include adult-oriented material such as pornography in its collection. This same discretion continues to exist with respect to Internet materials.” The judges relied heavily on *United States v. American Library Association of 2003*, which upheld the 2000 Children’s Internet Protection Act. The law requires libraries to use filtering software if they want to receive federal money.

DEMINT TO FORCE VOTE ON SUPPLEMENTAL TO FINISH THE

FENCE

(EP News)--U.S. Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) announced in late May that he will seek a vote on his amendment to the supplemental appropriations bill to require the completion of 700 miles of double-layer physical fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border within one year. The amendment is cosponsored by U.S. Senators John McCain (R-Ariz.), Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), David Vitter (R-La.) and Mike Johanns (R-Neb.). Democrats have already twice blocked Senator DeMint’s amendment to finish the border fence from receiving a vote. To ensure a vote on this critical issue, Senator DeMint will now move to suspend the rules of the Senate to allow passage of the border fence amendment, requiring 67 votes for passage. DeMint’s amendment was already approved last year by the Senate in a bipartisan 54-44 vote, with 21 Democrats joining 33 Republicans in support of the measure. However, Democrat leaders gutted the amendment behind closed doors after “the Obama administration had opposed rapid expansion of the fence.”

SMARTER THAN GOD

(EP News--Robert Knight)--Sexual morality is so over.

That’s the conclusion of one of the smartest men in Washington, the estimable columnist George Will.

On ABC’s *This Week* on May 30, Will agreed with colleague Matthew Dowd that apart from a few glitches, homosexuality will soon be a non-issue in the military. They are wrong, but let’s look at their argument.

The men cited young folks’ liberal attitudes and recent polls as evidence that morality is no longer a factor. Dowd: “It’s long been decided in the public’s mind. I think the Republicans are so far out of step on this ...”

Will: “For people of Matt’s son’s generation, being gay is like being left-handed. ... The Supreme Court has a famous phrase it used in some opinion, the evolving standards of decency that mark a maturing society. Clearly these are evolving, and the case is over, basically.”

This plunge into moral relativism could mean that Sodom and Gomorrah had evolved into a more “maturing society” than, say, Jerusalem under King David. Or America under Abraham Lincoln.

Not to be outdone, ABC correspondent Jake Tapper chimed in: “The case is over. But why is there such a fight by Republican officeholders? If you look at polling ... the public is overwhelmingly supportive of lifting the ban. Conservatives support it. Republicans support it. White evangelicals support it. What’s going on with the Republicans in Congress?”

This is based on loaded polls by liberal media. But let’s go back to George Will, who gives the answer: “They’re not being very intelligent.”

Ah, that’s it. Those of us who believe that God created male and female and that sex outside marriage – adultery, fornication and homosexuality – is wrong and harmful, are just not being intelligent. It’s apparently not enough to love friends and family who

are into homosexuality; we have to love the behavior that threatens their bodies and souls.

The four Joint Chiefs of Staff and the 1,163 retired generals and admirals who warn against lifting the ban are similarly not intelligent. Nor are the majority in the armed forces who oppose the change and will be guinea pigs for this experiment in sexual anarchy.

And what about the Creator of the Universe? It is God’s moral code that has undergirded Western society for more than 3,500 years. God’s intelligent design – marriage – is the glue that holds it together. Even Chinese philosopher Confucius called marriage “the foundation of civilization.” What a moron. If only he could have lived in our day and evolved.

What we are witnessing among the intelligentsia is a catastrophic case of groupthink: because they all repeat the same thing, it must be true. They ignore biology, morality, history, common sense, and grim health statistics because they are smarter than anyone.

LOUISIANA PRO-LIFE BILLS MOVE FORWARD

(EP News)--The Louisiana Legislature is taking up two pro-life bills. The Senate Health and Welfare Committee approved one measure that empowers the Department of Health and Human Services to close abortion facilities that are out of compliance with regulations. The committee advanced another bill prohibiting plans in the federal health care network from paying for elective abortions. Gene Mills, executive director of the Louisiana Family Forum, said both are expected to be approved in the state House. “We have continued to move incrementally,” he said, “to prohibit, regulate and oversee this very egregious practice of abortion on demand.” According to Mills, pro-life legislation has decreased Louisiana’s abortion rate from 20,000 to 7,000 a year since the early 1980s.

DEFENSE BILL INCLUDES ABORTION FUNDING FOR MILITARY BASES

(EP News)--Democrats have offered an amendment to the Department of Defense spending bill would allow abortions on U.S. bases. Sen. Roland Burris, D-Ill., proposed the amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act in a closed committee mark-up. It would allow taxpayer funded abortions on both domestic and overseas military bases. Elective abortions have not been allowed on military bases since the Clinton administration.

FLORIDA SCHOOL DISTRICT SQUASHES RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

(EP News)--The Santa Rosa County School District has drafted a policy that prohibits students from asking God’s blessing during high school graduations. The policy also prohibits district employees from participating in privately sponsored off-campus religious events or baccalaureate addresses. And faculty and staff are required to stop prayers at privately sponsored after-

school clubs. The ACLU drafted the model policy, which was agreed to by the district and entered into the legal record by a federal court. Mat Staver, founder of Liberty Counsel, said his group has filed a preliminary injunction to stop the order.

CONNECTICUT SCHOOLS CAN’T HOLD GRADUATION AT CHURCH

(EP News)--A federal judge ruled in late May that Enfield High School and Enrico Fermi High School in Connecticut cannot hold graduations at a church because of the separation of church and state. The school district will appeal. The Enfield Board of Education had decided not to use the church, but the Family Institute of Connecticut (FIC), urged the board to rethink. The ACLU filed suit on behalf of two Enfield High seniors and three of their parents.

“CHANGE IS COMING”

(EP News--Gary Bauer)--One of the major selling points of ObamaCare was the president’s oft-repeated promise that if you liked the coverage you have now, you would be able to keep it. As Obama’s team drafts the regulations for implementing this massive government takeover of the healthcare industry, it’s becoming evident – if not undeniable – that the president and his supporters misled the American people.

As many as 1.5-million Americans may lose their health coverage this year due to ObamaCare regulations. Now we’re learning that new regulations may force tens of millions to lose their employer-provided healthcare plans.

Here’s what happening: Come 2014, the federal government is going to dictate what kind of coverage you must have. We were told that the federal mandates would apply only to policies sold in the new federal healthcare “exchanges.” Polls found that large majorities of Americans (75%) with health insurance were happy with the coverage they have now. So, Democrats reassured a nervous public that employer-provided plans would be “grandfathered in” or exempted from the new requirements. But that’s not what the latest draft regulations from the Department of Health and Human Services suggest.

James Gelfand, health policy director at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said, “These rules are extremely strict. Almost no plan is going to be able to maintain grandfathered status.” Here’s why: According to the *New York Times*, “An employer would also lose its exempt status if it increased co-payments for doctor’s visits to \$45, from \$30 – a 50 percent increase – while medical inflation was 8 percent.”

So, if an employer attempts to offset the increased costs of health insurance by adjusting the co-payments in the policy, it will likely lose its exemption and be forced to cancel the policy entirely. Where’s the incentive for employers to continue to offer health insurance if they can’t protect their bottom lines? There isn’t any. In fact, ObamaCare actually creates a perverse incentive for businesses to drop whatever coverage they do provide, something

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conservatives repeatedly warned it would do.

What is even more amazing is that Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius had the audacity to claim that this rule is intended to keep the president's promise. As she put it, "If you like your doctor and your plan, you keep it." In reality, these new regulations make it far more likely that you will lose your current coverage.

Well over 100 million Americans are currently insured through their employer. The *Wall Street Journal* reports, "The law could leave more than half of employers without a grandfathered plan in 2013, the draft estimated. Its worst-case assumption is that 80% of small-employers will lose grandfathered rights by 2013." Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA) said the rules are "more proof that you actually can't keep what you like. Change is coming for a lot of people, whether they want it or not."

Writing in the *New York Post*, Dr. Scott Gottlieb notes that the HHS bureaucrats who are writing these new regulations are "true believers" in a single-payer nationalized healthcare scheme. He adds, "They are massaging the law's vagueness to give themselves the tight federal control over health care that will bring their vision into practice," by forcing more and more Americans into ObamaCare's government-approved plans.

ObamaCare was supposed to A) save money and B) provide coverage for the uninsured. To accomplish these goals, Democrats created a new trillion-dollar entitlement program that will force tens of millions of Americans to give up the coverage they now have. Does that make any sense to you? Remember that when you head to the voting booth in 140 days.

N.Y. SENATE COMMITTEE REJECTS GENDER BILL

(EP News)--The New York State Senate Judiciary Committee voted 12-11 in June to reject a bill known as the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA or the "bathroom bill"). The legislation would have opened all public accommodations, including restrooms, high school locker rooms, health clubs, dorm rooms and other single-sex residential facilities to both biological genders, dependent upon whether an individual chooses to identify him or herself as the opposite sex. "New Yorkers for Constitutional Freedoms upholds the inherent value and worth of all people — including persons who identify as transgendered," said the Rev. Jason J. McGuire, executive director of the group. "However, there is simply no need to provide special rights and protections to individuals who choose to dress or identify themselves as members of the opposite sex."

YOUTH RISK SURVEY INDICATES TEEN ABSTINENCE

(EP News)--Data released by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), shows a modest decrease in sexual activity among teens since

2007, and the lowest overall percentage of teens that are sexually active since 2001. Approximately two-thirds of females and three in five males have had sex by the time they graduate from high school. Chris Doyle, behavioral research analyst with The Institute for Youth Development, said the decrease in overall activity among teens is "positive news that more teens are choosing to abstain from sex." A decrease of more than 3.5 percent was seen among males. Doyle said young men are increasingly abstaining for moral reasons. "What we're seeing here," he said, "is an increased emphasis on the social responsibilities for young men to abstain from sex."

WORKER DEMOTED FOR DISCUSSING INTELLIGENT DESIGN

(EP News)--The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) has filed a complaint against Cal Tech's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in a case involving freedom of speech in the workplace. A NASA specialist working for JPL was demoted and threatened with termination for discussing Intelligent Design with willing co-workers. ADF Senior Counsel Joseph Infranco said JPL deemed the discussions to be "religious." He says the issue is not whether intelligent design is correct or incorrect. "The issue is the right of an individual to merely have a conversation about something like that with a willing co-worker," he said, "and the frightening potential that someone could be punished for merely having that discussion."

PROP. 8 JUDGE PREPS FOR CLOSING ARGUMENTS

(EP News)--U.S. District Judge Vaughn Walker has released a list of 39 questions for lawyers to address ahead of next week's closing arguments in the Proposition 8 trial, the challenge to California's law protecting the definition of marriage. While some experts say Walker's questions show clear bias toward marriage opponents, Dale Schowengerdt, attorney for the defense team, said they don't necessarily indicate the outcome of the trial. "I don't think it gives any indication about how he will rule," he said. "The questions show that the judge has put a lot of thought into the issue and to the evidence presented in the case." He said that evidence shows that the purpose of marriage is to promote the best environment for raising children. "The state is in the marriage business to benefit children and strengthen families," he said, "and not simply to validate adult relationships."

PRO-LIFE MEASURE MAKES ALASKA BALLOT

(EP News)--The Alaska Supreme Court ruled in June that a ballot initiative requiring parental involvement for minors seeking abortions can appear on the August primary ballot. The measure, which requires doctors to personally call parents to notify them of their daughter's pending abortion, was challenged by Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest. The group claimed petition signers were not fully informed. Jim Minnery, president of the Alaska Family Council, said the lawsuit was an attempt to

slow down the process. "It wouldn't have made a difference either way," he said. "(The Supreme Court) made the right call and we're just happy to be at the polls on August 24." He expects the initiative to pass, but says the constitutionality of the ballot measure will be challenged in court.

CALIFORNIA IRS RULING MAY VIOLATE FEDERAL MARRIAGE LAW

(EP News)--Same-sex couples in California will be recognized as a unit for tax purposes, according to a new IRS ruling. The tax agency said that the nearly 58,000 same-sex couples in the state must combine their income and each report half of it on separate tax returns. Ashley Horne, federal policy analyst for CitizenLink, said the move is a slap at the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). "The IRS issued this ruling trampling on DOMA knowing full well they have the backing of the president," she said, "who has, from day one, wanted to dismantle the definition of marriage."

ADMINISTRATION EXPANDS FEDERAL SAME-SEX BENEFITS

(EP News)--President Obama announced in early June that he would extend more benefits to the same-sex partners of federal employees. The move marks an expansion of a memo he sent last June directing federal agencies to offer long-term care coverage and a few fringe benefits to same-sex couples. Wendy Wright, president of Concerned Women for America, said, "President Obama seems to be going far out of his way to try and keep homosexual activists happy, but the problem is, they'll never be happy — they'll always demand more." Over the past year, the president had ordered federal agencies to look into other benefits that could be given to same-sex partners. A review showed some agencies could offer credit union memberships, adoption counseling and gym memberships. Some would even be able to provide reimbursements for health insurance premiums, dental and vision insurance and types of business travel policies.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS UK PASTOR ARRESTED OVER COMMENTS ON HOMOSEXUALITY

(EP News)--Dale McAlpine, a pastor in the United Kingdom, has been arrested after saying homosexuality is a sin. In mid-May, McAlpine was street preaching when he was approached by police officers, who told him it was illegal to preach against homosexuality. McAlpine maintains he did not mention anything about homosexuality in his preaching, but was arrested and spent seven hours in a cell. "I'm stunned," McAlpine said. "I'm just an ordinary, law-abiding Christian who wants to share his faith with the public." Mike Judge, head of communications with The Christian Institute in Great Britain, said McAlpine is scheduled to stand trial in September. "We're very much hoping that the case will be dropped by the public prosecutor before it even gets to trial," he said. "But, if it gets to trial, we will be defending him very robustly."



A Dose of Reality

"Common Sense Comments"

by Joseph Harris

Chairman of Biblical Studies
Southeastern Baptist
College, Laurel, Mississippi
www.miniedition.net



Without Natural Affection

An accurate description of society today can be found in II Timothy 3:1-5. This description is not some abstract statement of an unknown people in an unknown time. I believe it accurately and prophetically describes the time in which we live today. Who can argue with such words and phrases describing men as "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers" and this is only a partial list. Every one of these "qualities" can be located daily from a compilation of newspapers.

One phrase that stands out as especially true and descriptive is "without natural affection." The word natural is derived from the word nature which has to do with "the inherent or essential qualities of anything," to give a dictionary definition. To have affection for someone means to cherish that person. This phrase is also found in Romans 1 with reference to homosexuals who are without natural affection for the opposite sex. Having natural affection is the norm, as in a male having natural affection for a female, a female having natural affection for a male, and a parent having a natural affection for his or her children. In other words, it's just the natural thing, or that which is expected and normal. Anything contrary to that which is natural, is unnatural, naturally.

Though the Bible never mentions the word abortion, it does speak of murder and shedding of innocent blood. The phrase "without natural affection" in II Timothy 3:3 can also describe the feeling of a mother toward a child she may want aborted. In the animal kingdom, "most" mothers have an intense desire to protect their young, to the point of the mother putting her own life on the line. With animals, this is called instinct. The mother doesn't think about it or have to be taught to protect her young. She just does it, therefore it is natural.

All human mothers have a God-given desire to protect their young, whether inside or outside the womb. To dislike, even hate a child to the point of murdering the child, is to be without natural affection. But God places a natural affection within the heart of

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every parent. The same can be said of any father who might abuse or kill his children. He is without natural affection. Simply put, it is natural for him to love and protect his children, and unnatural to hate and abuse them. The result of any mother who rejects or denies this God-given natural affection is guilt and frustration, which explains why so many mothers who have had their children killed through abortion, eventually need some kind of emotional or psychological counseling. They also need forgiveness from God for committing the sin of murder.

As the ungodly “celebrate” decades of killing the innocent and helpless, may God have mercy on America and raise the awareness of this current generation concerning the horrible holocaust that has been taking place in the name of choice, because of the lack of natural affection.

Loyal to Principle, Not Party

There are some great champions for conservatism on talk radio and the internet and true conservatives owe a debt of gratitude for their insight and encouragement. They have captivated the hearts of millions of listeners who highly esteem their words and wisdom. Their influence has made a difference in awakening multitudes from their drugged sleep of the opiate of the modern media.

However, I wish they would stop trying to convince real conservatives that the only option they have in an election is for anyone with an R attached to their name. I constantly hear how the Republican party needs rebuilding, revamping and revitalizing as was done under Ronald Reagan, arguably the greatest president in modern American history. He did an outstanding job in strengthening the party and turning it around. However, we do not have a Reagan today and we certainly do not have the same quality of party he had to work with. The Democrat party has long been reprobate and incorrigible with no hope of change. Unfortunately, the Republican party may have finally reached the same state. THIS IS NOT REAGAN'S REPUBLICAN PARTY. Times have changed and so have people and their values.

When something is broken, you fix it. When it is broken beyond repair, you replace it. I am tired of being lied to by Republicans who pretend to “fix” the party long enough to get into office and then after winning, conduct business as usual. People are FINALLY beginning to wake up to reality. Theodore Roosevelt

once said, “The American people are slow to wrath, but once that wrath is kindled, it burns like a consuming flame.” I am hoping and praying this wrath will be kindled into a fire that burns out the corruption in Washington. Yet, we will continue to hear the “wasted vote” mantra, with pleas to not abandon the ship, but I for one am tired of plugging the holes on a sinking ship. It's time to sign on board to another vessel, one that stays true to course and can weather the storms based on conservative, constitutional principles, not the platitudes of a party.

Again, I know what Reagan did in his day, but this is a new day. It is time to get out of the past and stop smothering out a real grassroots movement that is steadily gaining momentum and has the potential to take back this country, repeal the Marxist healthcare Frankenstein brought to life on 3-21-2010 and replace the liberals in Congress with sane, common sense average Joes who know what makes this country work, and then safeguard their new found power with term limits. I constantly hear how a third party will split the conservative vote and elect liberals. The split vote will come because some conservatives will not shut up about the horrors of a third party, and keep encouraging real conservatives to vote Republican instead of conservative. If the vote is split, don't blame real conservatives who vote their conscience based on principle, not promises.

It is time to face reality and stop propping up this party dominated by liberal elites. Even now, leadership in the Republican party is ready to accept the current healthcare monstrosity and try to make the best of it, trim it where possible, “make it more conservative,” cut their losses and go on. They cannot be trusted to repeal it even if becoming the majority party once again. Not without a transfusion of some new blood. Remember, this is the party that ran John McCain, and who in their right mind would consider him to be a conservative? If a real conservative with an R attached to their name, holding to constitutional principles, guided by Biblical values runs for any level of office, I can vote for them in good conscience, and the vote will be based on principles, philosophy of government and value system, not on the letter following the name.

The Republicans proved their impotence when, as the majority party for a brief time, they made no real substantive changes. The changes made were superficial and short lived. Had they really grabbed the bull by the horns, (or should I say donkey by the ears?) acted like real conservatives who were concerned about this country and not their own careers, they would have established policies to cut spending, restore liberty and limit government. They also might still be in power, since

they would have won the respect and loyalty of true conservatives, who are tired of being lied to, taken for a ride, driven off a bridge and left to drown, in a Kennedy-sort-of way.

Real freedom loving, God fearing, patriotic Americans are sick of liberalism and just as sick of faux conservatives. The Republicans had their chance, but blew it. The authentic conservatives left in this party are the ones with enough character and sense to see that they need to stop clinging to a name, heritage, and tradition and be guided once again by principle, not platitudes. It is time to reject those who only want another term in office and a lucrative retirement. Time is short, freedom is shrinking and November is getting closer. It's now or never. If a real change is not made in November, then it's over for this nation. America, prepare to meet God.

“Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man” (Ps. 43:1).

“But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth” (Jer. 7:28).



Well of Bethlehem

(Continued from page 361) ♦

prayed once before in all his life. Because as Hart says,

*“The feeblest prayer, if faith be there,
Exceeds all empty notion.”*

He might pray for an hour, but, nevertheless, not being a living soul by this operation of God the Blessed Spirit, he could not pray at all.

The apostle says, **“He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”** What faith is it? Why, faith that stands in the justice of God, the immutability of God, the holiness of God, and the power of God. The law enters into the soul. The apostle says, **“The law entered, that the offence might abound; but when the commandment came, sin revived.”** That is, his sins abounded. He saw that to be sin which he never saw before, and not only saw it, but felt it, too. The Spirit lets a man have such discoveries of what he is by nature that he cannot have a stone to throw at the vilest wretch on earth or in hell.

This leads the poor soul to pray, makes him cry for mercy. This is the fruit and effects of the life of God in the soul of a poor sinner. He may not, perhaps, utter a word, and yet pray blessedly and sweetly, too, to the Lord God of Sabaoth. Perhaps the poor soul cannot do so much as lift up his eyes. Perhaps he cannot utter so much as a single sentence; yet the Lord knows. The Lord knows his groanings. He says, “I will hear the groanings of the poor sinner.” The apostle says, **“We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”** Mark the words; for they deserve to be marked. With **“groanings”** which cannot be uttered. The feelings of thy soul are such groanings that cannot be uttered. **“He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”** If thou doest groan for sin, for deliverance from death, hell, and the grave, this is a proof of eternal life being in thy soul. As soon as thou dost cry and groan for mercy, be sure that there will be something to try to stop thee. As soon as the blind man began to cry, **“Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me,”** they besought him that he should hold his peace; but he cried so much the more, **“Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.”** There Satan tries to make thee hold thy tongue; or it may be thy master, or it may be thy wife, or it may be thy father who may try to stop thee; but mark the word again; the more they tried to make the poor man, who sat by the wayside begging, hold his peace, he cried so much the more, **“Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.”** I can only tell thee, I believe in my very soul the more Satan tries to make thee hold thy tongue, the more Satan tries to keep thee from a throne of grace, the more thy soul will be on fire for the mercy of God. It is a path that I have traveled. The hotter the fire burned, the more I was in earnest. Nobody knows what I have gone through. God's everlasting arms being underneath the poor soul, nothing can stop that poor soul from the mercy of God.

*“Mercy, good Lord, is all I ask;
This is the total sum;
Thy mercy, Lord, is all I crave;
Lord, let thy mercy come.”*

This is what the poor soul needs; this is what he wants; this is what he is crying for; and all hell shall not stop him: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against him.”

“David longed and said, ‘O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!’” And David saith in Psalms 107, **“He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.”** What a mercy of mercies this is! Then he **“longed.”** If thou hast

♦ (Continued on page 378)

Well of Bethlehem

(Continued from page 377) ◊

eternal life in thy soul, there is longing. Where there is life, there must be some little eating, there must be some little drinking. Thus the Lord keeps thy soul above water. It may be from a verse in the Bible, or a verse of a hymn; or the Lord grants thee a little when thou art asleep. The Lord granted me a little once in the middle of the night. I had been musing on a passage of Scripture the night before, and though it was lost, and did not think any more about it; but I awoke about 3 o'clock in the morning and the passage awoke with me with such sweetness and glory that I was like a bee at the flower. I went down on my knees, and had a sweet and precious meditation on the passage. It comes sometimes unlooked for, unexpectedly. It will come without even looking for it, or asking for it. As sure as thou art a living soul, so sure the desire of the righteous shall be granted. Thou canst tell the Lord all about thy fears; tell Him what thou art, and where thou art; and though thou canst not get all thou wantest, is not thy hope strengthened? I know there is a little comfort and peace which the world knows nothing about. Thy soul is just like the horse-leech, crying, "Give, give!" You are not just then fit for the world; you are hardly fit to get a living. The Lord Jesus Christ is everything, and you want to leave this dying clod. The psalmist says, "**I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.**" If thou canst say with David, if David's feelings are thy feelings, that thou art longing, that thou hast hungerings and thirstings for the mercy of God, then "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Here it is that the Lord strips the man of his own righteousness, which is filthy rags, and makes him want to be clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He finds his own righteousness to be filthy rags. The Lord has plunged him into the ditch, and he cries, "**Behold, I am vile!**" Here is an end of his own righteousness, and then he longs for another.

"And David longed, and said, O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem."

Secondly. It sets forth "helplessness." If the Lord hath taught thee that thou art a living soul, thou wilt be a helpless creature. Christ says, "**Without me ye can do nothing!**" Thou art brought to see and feel thy helplessness here; that thou canst no more long after the mercy of God, than thou canst touch the stars with thy finger. Thou art as hard as a pebble. Thou canst no more create a spiritual desire than thou canst create a world. What does this prove? That thou art a poor helpless creature. Thy strength is in the Lord. David could not get at it,

and you and I cannot get at it.

"O, 'tis beyond a creature's power
To move a thought half way to God."

"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." For everything of this sort we are dependent on the Lord. What poor deluded creatures they are who think they are saved by their own free will. David says, "**Thy people shall be willing, in the day of thy power.**" "**It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.**" Christ says in the Revelation, "**Whosoever will.**" We must be willing. God must bring His people; they shall be willing to be saved as helpless, miserable sinners. We are every one of us Pharisees and Arminians by nature. He brings us through fire and through water. The apostle says, "If any man's work is burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." If the Lord has taught thee anything, He has taught thee that thou art a helpless sinner. I tell you what. When I have been in a cold, dead, lukewarm state and condition, I find it a great mercy to have a longing after the Lord Jesus Christ. I find it a great mercy when my soul can long, when my soul can pant for the mercy of God. I say it is a great mercy. When I am in that state, I am miserable because I cannot be miserable; and even that is a mercy, for what spiritually dead soul can be miserable?

Thirdly. The text implies "freeness," when poor dependent creatures depend upon the Lord for everything. It comes into thy poor soul free. I have felt at times as free as the air we breathe. We cannot do anything to merit this. If the Lord has made us to hunger and pant after the Lord Jesus Christ, it comes on our souls as freely as the air we breathe. From the feeblest desire to the loudest acclamation of praise, we are indebted for all to the Lord's free mercy.

*"The worthless may crave it, it always comes free,
The vilest may have it; 'twas given to me."*

If the Lord has granted thee this, it comes through the blood and the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God never blessed a sinner out of Christ. He never can bless a sinner out of Christ. The apostle says, "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.**" Now mark the words: "**Heavenly places in Christ.**" From the first mercy that was manifested to thy poor soul, in quickening thee to feel after the Lord Jesus Christ, all comes through the death, the life, and the resurrection of Christ. The apostle says, "**By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.**" What a mercy it is that it is all "a gift" from first to last; therefore it comes to us flowing

through His precious merits.

II. "**Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!**"

O what desires are there springing up in the poor soul when he feels that hell is his due, that wrath is his due. He breaks forth in this prayer of the prophet: "**O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.**" The heavens appear as brass and the earth iron. "**He hath led me and brought me into darkness, and not into light.**" Yes, I know it well. I have tried to give it up, but could not keep away. "**When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.**" My prayers have bounded back into my own bosom. Thy very prayers will stink in thine own nostrils, and thou wilt think thou art the very wretched wretch out of the bottomless pit.

And David longed and said, "**Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem.**" Here, then, are the blessed waters; longings, thirstings, that spring up from thy never dying soul. "**When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.**" When their tongue faileth for thirst, then the Lord will open rivers in high places.

III. The well sets forth the Lord Jesus Christ. First, the depth. Here is the well of Bethlehem; it is a deep well. Whoever can get to the bottom of the unfathomable love and mercy of Immanuel? I have no doubt some of you have been in the same state as some of old, at the very ends of the earth, yet have been led to cry to Him. "I will try this once; I will make another trial." Perhaps this is the case with some of you; you have said, "I'll go to chapel no more;" but when Sunday comes, you have been obliged to go, and the minister has spoken something to your soul, just to keep you from sinking. Here thou hast been crying from time to time like Jonah, "I am cast out of thy sight; yet will I look again unto thy holy temple;" as if he were to take the last despairing look; as if the poor man said, "I will look this once; I will have one more groan; (Like Peter, 'Lord, save, or I perish;') I will look once more to thy holy temple." This temple was the Lord Jesus Christ. Daniel, when he knew that the writing was signed, went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and there he prayed. They could say nothing against this Daniel, except concerning the law of his God. O that one would give me to drink of the water of this well. It is a deep well. "**O the depth,**" Who can set it forth? It is higher than Heaven, deeper than hell. It is broader than the earth, deeper than the depth of the sea. Who can set forth the love, and mercy, and compassion of his heart? It is such a fathomless river that in it the blackest sinners may be washed, and live eternally. When Christ is manifestly precious to

my soul, I should like to see the blackest characters, that I might preach to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. Here is a sea that we are completely lost in. My soul has been completely lost. It is not only deep, but it is full; as the apostle says, "**Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace;**" "**for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.**"

David's three mighty men "**broke through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless, he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord.**" What are these men? They seem to set forth faith, hope, and love, which burst every bond. These three rush through every obstacle that lies in the way, when the Lord draws them with cords of love and the bands of a man; and the poor sinner, when he gets it, pours forth his soul as David: "**Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.**"

O what a well is the well of Bethlehem! There is no such a thing as ever exhausting it. It is ever running over, and yet it is not in the least degree exhausted. For whom does it run freely? It reaches to the most ruined, the most undone. O what a mercy! "**Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!**"

Now it is a well. It is under the teachings of the Lord the blessed Spirit that ever the poor sinner get a drop of water. As sure as ever you have quenched your thirst from this blessed well you shall never die; for "**your life is hid with Christ in God.**" "**When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.**" Then is the poor sinner safe in life, in death, and in eternity. "**Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.**" If thou art a thirsty soul, and fearest thou shalt die from thirst, the invitation is for thee. Mark the words, no matter who you are, whether you are high or low, fair or as black as the tents of Kedar, the invitation reaches to you. You need not fear to set forth the Lord Jesus Christ to the vilest wretch on the face of the earth. If the Lord never had had mercy upon thee, thou wouldst never have cried for mercy.

Now let me speak to thee, if there are any here that never have cried for mercy. May the Lord, if it be His blessed will, make you to cry with the poor publican, "**God be merciful to me a sinner!**" "**He satisfieth the longing soul.**"

May the Lord add His blessing, and He shall have the praise. Amen.

(The Gospel Standard, January 1, 1863).



ANNOUNCEMENTS



On May 22nd Elder Garner Ray Smith, pastor of the Faith Baptist Church of Clarksville, TN, went home to be with the Lord.

Bro. Garner served the Lord faithfully for

52 years as a Baptist Minister. He was a graduate of Bible Baptist College, in Clarksville, TN. He pastored several churches in Tennessee and Kentucky.

Bro. Garner served as a forum writer for this paper from May 1991 till May 2004.

Please remember Sister Augusta and the church in your prayers.

“And thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty” (I Sam. 20:18).

The Philadelphia Baptist Church of Decatur, AL and Pastor Ted Tweet would like to announce a special meeting July 7th-11th.

Elder Tom Ross will be the guest speaker.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Northport AL, and Pastor Todd Bryant would like to announce a special meeting July 16th-18th.

Elder David O’Neal of Tulsa, OK will be the guest speaker.

Service times are Friday at 7:00 pm, Saturday at 10:00 am, with a meal provided, and Sunday at 10:00 am.

All are invited to attend.

The Mt. Zion Baptist Church of Whitestown, IN would like to announce a weekend meeting July 23-25th.

Service times are Friday evening at 7 p.m., Saturday at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., and Sunday at 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Elder Wayne Gregory from Morrisville, NC is scheduled to speak as well as several visiting pastors.

For more information call (317) 769-3247 or (317) 769-2998.

The New Testament Baptist Church of Burton, OH is seeking a pastor.

For further information please contact the church at PO Box 840, Burton, OH 44021, or you can email your inquiry to ctiber@hughes.net.

If you would like to know more about the church, please visit their website at www.newtestamentbaptistchurchoh.com.

The Grace Baptist Church in Fredericktown, OH is currently seeking a pastor, and also guest speakers.

Our current services: Sunday school at 10:00 am, Worship service at 11:00

followed by lunch, and an afternoon service at 1:00 pm. Wednesdays at 7:00 pm.

Any brethren that may be interested in filling in to help our ministry can contact Bro. Tory Smith at (614) 205-0729 or by email toremup@columbus.rr.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.

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.

We have now completed all the discs of the piano accompaniment for the Berea Hymnal. The latest discs are: disc 13 (hymns 301-325), disc 14 (hymns 326-350), disc 15 (hymns (351-375), disc 16 (376-395), and disc 17 (hymns 396-

405).

Anyone wishing a set of these need only request them.

With the completion of the piano CD’s we are now focusing on the possibility of reprinting the Berea Baptist Hymnal. If you, or your church, or other individuals would be interested in obtaining copies of the hymnal please send us a note with your name and how many copies you might be interested in.

We are currently obtaining pricing on the reprint. Pricing will be based on the number of copies that will be printed.

As we have more information we will contact those interested with further details and approximate pricing.

As time permits we are working to create an index of *The Baptist Examiner*.

If anyone has any old bound volumes of the TBE and could part with them for a time; we would like to borrow them. We are looking for any previous to 1951.

Also, if you have any old loose issues prior to 1951 we would be happy to borrow them as well.



Warnings, Rejoicings, and Invitations Given By Jesus

By T. L. Griffin

“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not” (Matt. 11:20).

In this wonderful portion of the holy Scripture, Jesus deals with three thoughts, namely, the responsibility of man, the sovereign election of God, and the free invitation of the gospel. All of these things are set forth in Matthew 11:20-30. These cities had much of the very presence of Jesus in their midst. They were responsible in regard to their failure to repent, or Jesus would not have upbraided them.

Warnings

Where much is given much is required. Men are responsible for the way they treat the Lord Jesus Christ and His mighty works. There is a time for upbraiding. The most loving, compassionate preacher will see the need for complaining of his impenitent hearers. The great Apostle Paul said: **“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved”** (Rom. 10:1).

In Romans 9, Paul went into the very depth of God’s sovereignty by saying: **“Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”**

In Jesus’ ministry and in Paul’s ministry, many were preached to who did not have

an ear to hear, but the responsibility still rested upon them. Jesus said: **“Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes”** (Matt. 11:21).

There can be no question as to the fact that Jesus knew just what these towns of Old Testament days would have done had His mighty works have been granted to them. This is mysterious but true. Jesus’ ministry was on schedule (Gal. 4:4-5), and it was God’s good pleasure that Tyre and Sidon did not have the opportunity that Chorazin and Bethsaida had. According to Jesus, They would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But here these cities were favored with great privileges but remained unmoved.

No doubt many of Christ’s ministers who preach the gospel of God’s grace face impenitent and hardened hearers, while if in God’s providence it had been preached in the same fervency in remote places, it would have brought them to the Savior’s arms. In Matthew 11:22 Jesus said: **“But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.”** Certainly, the Hell of these two sinful cities of Tyre and Sidon will be real and eternal, but it will be more tolerable than Chorazin and Bethsaida.

◊ (Continued on page 380)

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 5-1-2010 to 5-31-2010

Beginning Balance	\$10,575.35
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Berea B. C., Westpoint, TN	50.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
.....	375.00
TOTAL	10,950.35

EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	710.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	710.00
.....	\$10,240.35
Interest	+ .85
.....	10,241.20
Less Corbin, KY des.	-763.72
ENDING BALANCE	\$9,477.48

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance	\$923.72
RECEIPTS:	
TOTAL	923.72
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT	160.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$763.72



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 5-1-2010 to 5-31-2010

Beginning Balance	\$1,636.65
RECEIPTS:	

Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX.....	25.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	24.78
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	704.89
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL.....	60.00
Berea M. B. C., West Point, TN	150.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	100.00
Bible Believer’s B. C., Naples, ID	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	300.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	150.00
Buffalo Valley B. C., Clay, WV	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL.....	25.00
Faith M. B. C., Lynn, AR.....	25.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL.....	50.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK.....	35.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV.....	200.00
L. H. Ferrell, Des Allemands, LA	135.00
Landmark B. C., Moncks Corner, SC.....	50.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM.....	100.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH.....	100.00
New Testament B. C., Bristol, TN	10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Philadelphia B. C., Birmingham, AL.....	250.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumersville, AR.....	50.00
Rose Young, Senatobia, MS	25.00
South Park M. B. C., Seattle, WA	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Columbus, MS	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL.....	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C. Silsbee, TX	30.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Wake Forest, NC.....	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C. Warren, OH.....	75.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	162.00
Dividing checks	150.00
Anonymous	1,193.00
Sub Total	\$4,804.67
TOTAL	\$6,441.32

EXPENDITURES:	
Printing.....	581.00
Postage	708.73
Supplies	98.17
Wages	2,300.00
Wages*	469.00
FICA	175.96
Dividing checks	300.00
Total Expenditures	4,632.86
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,808.46

*Extra wages were for extra help on several projects we are working on. These funds reimbursed by Berea Baptist Church.

Warnings, Rejoicing

(Continued from page 379) ♦

Rejoicings

Matthew 11:23 says: **“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.”** The warning to Capernaum is just as emphatic as to the other cities. Capernaum had seen the miracles of Christ and heard the gospel preached to them, yet they remained unmoved by the Savior’s very presence.

Jesus also said: **“I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight”** (Matt. 11:25-26). One doctrine answers to another, sovereign grace is the answer to abounding guilt. Jesus meets this with thankfulness to the Father.

Here is a stronghold as to the Bible doctrine of election. God chose His own according to the good pleasure of His will out of Adam’s fallen race. He had the right to do this because He is Lord of Heaven and earth. In Romans 9:20-21 we read: **“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?”**

God made His elective choice in eternity past of some out of every generation of mankind and out of every kindred, people, and tongue. The Holy Spirit, vitalizing the Word of God, takes it home to each elect in due time. In every case it is successful. The cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were not given ears to hear the truths Jesus preached to them. But responsibility was upon them. Unless Divine power moves and overcomes the enmity and obstinate will of the sinner, he cannot believe.

The Great truths of Divine things are hidden by a judicial act of God from men who in their own esteem believe they are wise and prudent. (See I Cor. 1:19, 25). This choice seems good to the One who never errs. He says: **“All things are delivered unto me of Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him”** (Matt.11:27).

All things are put into the Mediator’s hands (I Tim. 2:5). Being elected into Christ as our sponsor, we are placed into His hands. Jesus said in John 10:30: **“I and my Father are one.”** He said again in John 14:20: **“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”**

In giving the great commission, Jesus said: **“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”** (Matt. 28:18). To know Christ is to be in possession of eternal life (John 17:2-3). Believers are the Father’s love gift to the Son (John 17:11). Each believer being in Christ is by Christ committed to the Father’s safe keeping (John 10:29).

Invitations

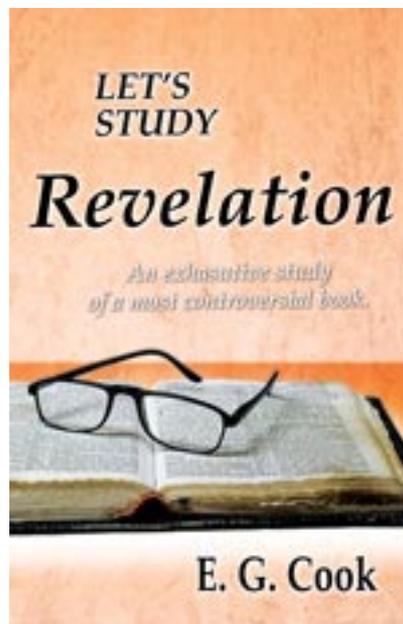
In verse 28, chapter 11, of Matthew, Christ said: **“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”** No one can question this being an invitation to come to Christ. I am aware that this passage, as many others, is variously interpreted. It is true that some fail to see or acknowledge that the gospel preacher is authorized by Christ to extend an invitation to all to come. But there is a general call that goes to all that God’s preacher is authorized to extend, and there is an effectual call that comes to the elect from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives this call through the Divinely appointed means of the Word, the gospel of salvation (Eph. 1:13-14; Jas. 1:18).

Here is the gracious invitation of the gospel in which the Saviour says: **“Come unto me.”** He drives none away. He did not say go to Moses, but come unto Me. In John 6:3, Jesus said again: **“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”** In this passage it is taught that some come and are not cast out. This particular group of Adam’s race comes to Jesus because they were given Him to save (John 6:44).

In John 5:40, Jesus said: **“And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”** This passage shows the incapacity of the mere natural man to come to Christ. The natural man’s will is bound and he is a slave to sin. His will cannot produce anything above its own nature. He is dead in sin and unable to affect a change from nature to grace of his own volition.

Thank God that when Divine power begins to take hold of a man, he is enabled and made willing; yea, even anxious to come to Christ. Song of Solomon 1:4 says: **“Draw me, we will run after thee.”**

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Psalm 110:3 says: **“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”**

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:29-30).

The rest in verse 28 is found when we come to Christ, receiving the benefits of

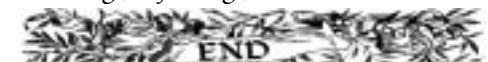
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His death for us and His righteousness imputed to us, but there is a rest to those who copy His life. First, we rest by faith in Jesus; next, we rest through the path of obedience to Him.

Note Jesus said: **“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.”** He did not say to make a yoke for ourselves. This is to a believer already in relation with Christ. In other places Jesus told us to take up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24). Yoke-bearing and cross-bearing may not be identical, but when we are familiar with one we are not strangers to the other.

We need humiliation as we obediently follow Him Who loved us and gave Himself for us. The yoke in which we draw with Christ needs to be a happy one. The burden which we carry for Him is a blessed one. Therefore, I hope that as we have noticed these ten verses from Matthew 11, that you have seen the warnings, rejoicings, and invitations.



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