

The Berea Baptist Banner

Displaying Biblical truth for 25 years in the printed page.

Jesus Christ Is the Way, the Truth, and the Life

By John H. Massie
Wayne, West Virginia

In Proverbs 14:12 it is said, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." These same words are repeated in Prov. 16:25. The



reason for the way of the unsaved to seem right is that he is deceived by his own self-sufficiency. A man will not call upon a doctor until he becomes sick; and so with the sinner, he will not call upon God until he is made to know that he is a sinner, a guilty sinner, with a great burden of sin and guilt. The Holy Spirit convicts him of his sin, and he has a great longing to be rid of those sins. He can be rid of them, have them forgiven, by trusting in the blood of Jesus Christ shed on Calvary's cross for sinners. His grace, love, and power were manifested there at Calvary in providing the blood atonement for all those who would trust Him for salvation. Christ says in His Word, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." He also said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Man in his natural state is separated from God by sin, into which

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Are You Prepared to Die?

By Raymond Bennett
Ithaca, New York

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

Twice in the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon says, "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun." He goes on to point out the 'vanities' he has observed in this life. The end of the righteous is the same as the end of the wicked, for both die and go to the grave, from whence they do not return, and are soon forgotten. All the wealth they have gained is left to another who may or may not manage it well.

On the surface it seems that Solomon's outlook differs little from the rich fool in



Luke 12:19, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Solomon wrote (Eccl. 5:18-19), "Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. Every man

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Backsliding, Its Cause, Course and Cure

By Timothy Hille
Pleasant Plains, Illinois

Jeremiah 2:1-37

Jeremiah prophesied and preached unto Israel when they were in a very backslidden condition. They had turned away from following the Lord. We should always



realize and recognize that a destination is not reached in a single step, but the journey to that destination begins with one step. The backslider does not become far off from God all at once, but begins to slide back one step at a time until he or she is no longer recognizable as a follower of God. The prodigal son did not arrive among the swine the very first day he left his father's house. The course of the backslider is gradual. A little thing at

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God's Perfect Way to Save Satan's Imperfect Sinners

By B. A. Langford
Pasadena, Texas

Read Eph. 2:1-10

God's way of salvation is truly one of the greatest, most wonderful subjects of today, yet it is one of the most misunderstood subjects of the entire Bible. It is one of the most controversial topics today. Consider the religionist; he will boldly boast of his and God's salvation. He tries to explain away such of the Scripture. Consider the Arminian: he rejoices in his position concerning the



doctrines of grace. He scorns and scoffs at the doctrines of grace as we know and proclaim them. If one is truly a born-again child of God - if he is truly a lover of God, and if he is a real Christian,

I believe he will adhere to the Five Points of Calvinism.

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A Deceived Young Girl Who Was Later Saved

"Aunt Maggie," as the subject of this article was familiarly called, was a very religious woman. In her girlhood days she had made a profession, and sought to live a life consistent with that profession.

Being a regular attendant at Sunday school, she had learned the catechism--as was the custom in those days. She committed to memory the Ten Commands, and was taught that she must keep these if she hoped to ever enter heaven.

The man whose companion she became by marriage, had had a similar training and experience. Hence they were true "yoke-fellows" in their religious activities. When they established their home, it was on a farm; and the family altar---to which both had been accustomed from childhood---was also established and maintained.

This occasioned the reading of a portion of the Holy Scriptures every morning and evening. From this daily reading of the Bible, and from the teaching of Christian

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An Address to the Children of Godly Parents

Probably, my young readers, you have often thought those who fear the Lord are happier than other people, and yet many of you live without scriptural evidence that you are of that number; suffer us, therefore, to remind you of this subject, and solicit you seriously to consider its importance.

This world is full of afflictions and changes, which perhaps you have already begun to experience; and have also proved that the things of time cannot yield satisfaction to your minds,

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What Is Your Life?

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

"Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (Jas. 4:13-15).

Human beings are great planners. We make our plans for tomorrow like verse 13 says, yet the Bible says: "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1). Our text says: "Ye know not what

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Visit us on the World Wide Web at:

www.bereabaptistchurch.orgOur email address is: bbchurch@intop.netThe 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.

Are You Prepared?

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also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God."

The vanity that Solomon sees is demonstrated in the Lord's response to the rich fool (Luke 12:20), "**But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"** However, Solomon is expressing the vanity of earthly benefits as if there were nothing *after* our earthly life. The Apostle Paul echoes Solomon's line of thinking when he writes, "**If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable**" (1 Cor. 15:19).

But if one will read Ecclesiastes with an open mind he will see that Solomon, like the Apostle Paul and the writer of Hebrews, sees *beyond* this life where there will be judgments and rewards in accordance to the life lived in *this* life. "**Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment**" (Eccl. 11:9).

Nevertheless, death is not to be feared – at least by those whose trust is in the Lord Jesus Christ. The question lies not in *our* good or evil for Scripture declares – *without exception* – **All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.** Jesus said, "**Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.**" (Matt. 5:20) Ezekiel wrote, under the inspiration of God, "**The soul that sinneth, it shall die.**" (Ezek. 18:4 & 20) Simple logic demands that the 'death' Ezekiel is referring to is more, or different than mere physical death, for as Solomon observed, both the righteous and the wicked go to the grave.

But, praise the Lord, Scripture also declares that God has a plan of salvation. Rom. 6:23, "**For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**" Rom. 10:13, "**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**" Titus 3:5, "**Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.**"

Entrance into that wonderful plan is by faith. Not blind or presumptuous faith but faith that is *given* by God and *based* on the Word of God. "**So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**" (Rom. 10:17); "**By**

grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8, italics mine.).

It needs to be driven home that this is a faith that issues in obedience – an obedience that is based on trust. For instance, when Abraham offered Isaac, he had no tangible way of knowing that there would be some provision made to save Isaac's life. He also knew that Isaac was the promised seed through which his progeny would come. James does well in pointing out the correlation of Abraham's works of obedience and his faith.

Abraham's faith, then, was: a) tested and proven; b) based on his trust in God, and God's faithfulness to fulfill the promise concerning Isaac; c) based in the Word of God, trusting its veracity even in the face of what seemed humanly impossible; and most of all d) *given* him by God – because no human could drum up that faith. *Even if a man were able to drum up such faith, through the various instrumentalities used in both pagan rituals and a lot of what passes as modern evangelism, had not God given him that faith, based on God's own promise and power, the slain child would not have been spared!*

Our text makes it clear that death is inevitable. Solomon wrote, "**The living know that they shall die**" (Eccl. 9:5). Placed along side of Eccl. 11:9, quoted above, it is safe to say that the person who does not expect and prepare for death is a fool. This preparation goes well beyond life insurance!

There is an obvious life *after* physical death, declared by Scripture. To scoff at it now; to say, "I've never seen anyone come back from the dead to verify that life," will never disprove the veracity of Scripture. On the other hand, unless God grants you faith and repentance (cf. Acts 11:18) you will never believe. But for the believer there is (should be) no fear of death.

To borrow from Solomon, there is an evil *I* have seen under the sun. It is that many of those whom we have known (thought) to be believers – *fear* death. Is that where *you* are? Everyone who reads this is in one of four positions. 1) A scoffer who does not believe the Scripture, does not believe in an after life in heaven or hell, and therefore sees no need of either a biblically moral life here or for a Savior; 2) One who trusts in their own good works, believing that their *good* works will outweigh their *bad* works and therefore warrant them entrance into heaven; 3) A *hope* so believer, weak in the faith, who *professes* to trust Christ but when faced with persecution, adversity, and death, fears it; 4) those who, like Paul, can look forward to death - or life – with confidence and anticipation. "**For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better**" (Phil. 1:23).

The following Scriptures are for those in the last 2 positions. If you are

in either of the *first* two positions, you need the verses given above. For those in position 3, it is hoped that these verses will strengthen your faith, or if necessary, cause you to "**give diligence to make your calling and election sure**" (2 Pet. 1:10).

Psa. 116:15, "**Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.**"

Psa. 56:4, "**In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.**"

I John 3:2, "**Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.**"

2 Tim. 1:12, "**I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.**"

Psa. 23:4 & 6, "**Yea, though 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...Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.**"

Jesus Christ Is the

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state he was born as a result of Adam's sin. He is out of touch with God, and must be reconciled to Him; and this can only be through the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is salvation in no other! God's free gift of salvation comes by way of His supreme love for sinners, manifested by His amazing grace, in sending His only begotten Son to suffer the shame and humiliation of Calvary for all those who will believe on Him as their Substitute and Saviour. So, in the salvation of a soul, there must be:

I. A conviction of sin, a weighty awareness of a guilty standing before God. Jesus Christ suffered the hell for all who are, and will be, saved deserved to suffer. One can never see himself as a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. The unsaved man cannot understand the things of God; he must have God's help to know the things of God. With the conviction of sin comes:

II. Repentance, a change of mind toward God. In chapter 13 of the gospel of Luke, verse 3, we read, "**except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**" These same words are repeated in verse 5. There must be a repentance of sins, a godly sorrow for sin and rebellion against God. Repentance is essential to salvation, as recorded in Acts 3:19. This scripture says, "**Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.**" When the Holy

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Planning a move?

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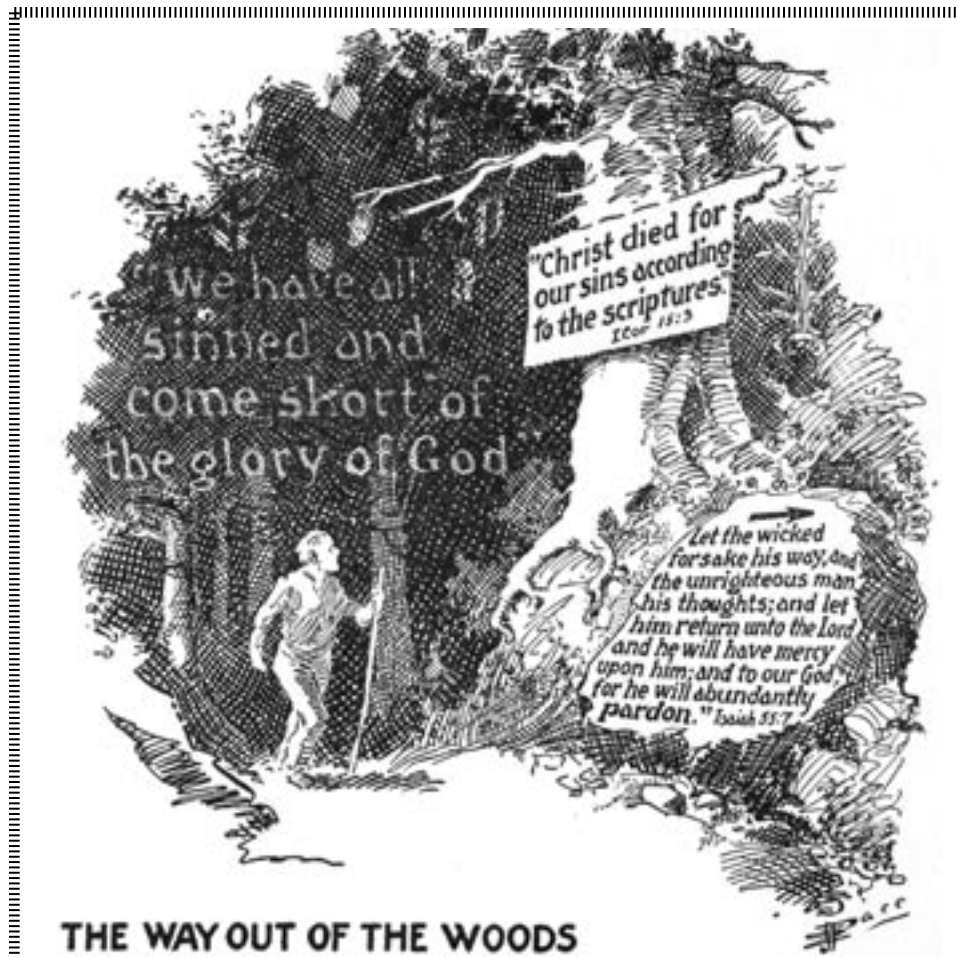
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Spirit brings an end to open rebellion against God, then godly sorrow enters the heart and brings repentance to the individual. A totally different attitude toward God is planted in the heart of the sinner, and a new heart is given to believe the gospel of Christ. Both godly sorrow (which is heart sorrow) and repentance are a gift of God's grace, proving His goodness to everyone who will believe the gospel. Romans 2:4 tells us that the goodness of God leads to repentance. Repentance and faith are essential to salvation. Listen to Acts 20:21, which states: **"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."** Repentance and faith issues from the heart, as a later Scripture quote will show. The entire Godhead is involved in the salvation of a soul; for it is God that calls, the Holy Spirit regenerates, and Jesus Christ redeems. What undeserved love and mercy is bestowed upon the sinner!

A. How does the salvation of a soul take place? The 'how' of salvation belongs to God, the miraculous change and benefit belongs to man. Men hear the sound of the wind but cannot tell whence it comes or where it goes. It is beyond human ability to explain how a lost sinner is saved. A new heart has been given, with grace and faith to believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. God lifts the burden of sin, and the love of the world becomes a thing of the past. The sinner has been born again, or born from above. God has forgiven his sins, and made him a partaker of the divine nature. The Lord does not explain the wondrous workings of salvation, but the one who receives the free gift of grace knows he is a changed individual. The man, who was born blind, as set forth in John's gospel, could not tell the Pharisees how Christ opened his blind eyes. He said in John 9:25, **"...one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."** The secret things belong unto God; the things He is pleased to reveal belong unto us. May God be thanked every day for the love of Christ manifested for sinners at the Cross of Calvary.

B. When does the salvation of a soul take place? It takes place at the time the gospel is heard and believed in the heart. The Holy Spirit applies the word to the heart with love and power. In Romans 10:9 we read, **"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."** Verse 10 follows with, **"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."** Salvation is all of the Lord, by grace through faith. Listen to God as He speaks in Ephesians 2:8-9, **"For by grace**



are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Again, we quote from II Timothy 1:9: **"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."** These Scriptures should be sufficient to prove that salvation is by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ; the One Who came into this world to give His life to save sinners. This is the God-appointed way of salvation, and there is no alternate. Faith and trust in the blood of Jesus Christ is the way to heaven. May many trust Him this very day!

C. The means God uses to save sinners is the preaching of the cross of Christ. I Corinthians 1:21 says, in part, **"it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."** Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, the only one capable of providing the blood atonement required of His Father. Sins must be covered by the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. In Him was no sin, and no blemish. On the night of the Supper with His disciples, the Lord Jesus said, **"This cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you."** This statement of our Lord makes it clear that the salvation of a sinner is a personal matter. When a sinner believes in his heart that Christ shed His precious blood for him personally, he will be saved. Those that continue on in unbelief will be lost forever. There will be no "second chance" after death; the lake of fire will

be the eternal destiny of all who die in their sins. Hell is an awful place, and its torment forever—no parole, no release, no escape!

The blood of Jesus Christ is the price of our redemption. God speaks to the ear of the heart in Ephesians 1:7, **"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."** Again, God speaks of the delivering power of the blood in Colossians 1:14, **"In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."** In Matthew 9:2 a paralytic was brought to Christ lying on a bed. Jesus spoke soul-saving words to him: **"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."** The unspeakable joy of salvation and physical restoration was given to the man, and the amazing power of His spoken Word was manifested unto all that were present. He was carried in, but he walked out---with his bed! His Word is with power!

IV. Our text says, **"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."** The Bible makes it very plain that a man cannot work his way to heaven. If this were so, then Christ died in vain. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night. These words were spoken to him by our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: **"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"** (John 3:3). Literally, **"Ye must be born from above."** No amount of good works will ever admit one to heaven, regardless of an individual's reputation or the esteem he may have in the eyes of man. A man

may have a reputation of a clean-living, upright, good moral life. He may also be known for his honesty in all his personal and business dealings, and one of good report for truthfulness in all aspects of public contacts, he may further be a good provider for his family, maintaining a mutual bond of love and respect therein. Vices such as drinking, smoking, gambling, and infidelity or other illicit activities, may not be charged against him; for he indulges in none of these things. He may be a good neighbor, a friendly person, and accommodating to those in need of help. Perhaps he may be a member of a local church, regular in attendance, and take a part in various endeavors of the church. But none of these things will bring salvation to his soul. The thing that counts the most is missing from his life---faith in Jesus Christ. Men through the ages have tried to devise a way whereby they may gain heaven, apart from the way of blood redemption, provided by Jesus Christ when He died on the tree. Blood redemption is distasteful to the natural (unsaved) man, and so he tries to work his way into being saved. Scripture tells why it is this way with the natural man. In Jeremiah 17:9 it is stated, **"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?"** Also, we read in II Corinthians 4:4, **"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."** The god of this world is Satan, and he keeps the mind of the natural man deceived, confused, and filled with false hopes. He whispers in the ear of the worldly man, saying, **"Your way is all right, you shall not die. Continue as you are, do the best you can, and enjoy yourself. All will end well for you."** The only way to a good ending for any man is to have the imputed righteousness of Christ, which is granted to those who receive Him into their hearts with simple, childlike faith. How true the song, **"Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness."**

It is the innate desire of man to exalt himself, to nourish his pride, and to lean heavily on his own self-sufficiency. He wants a position of authority, with power to execute his will for his own advantage, and to the praise and applause of men. But God says in Matthew 23:12, **"And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."** As to pride, this is what God thinks of it: **"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate"** (Proverbs 8:13). The Scriptures NEVER speak well of pride. An endless chain of wrongdoing is the inevitable consequence of pride. Self-sufficiency is foolish and leads to destruction. Christ says, **"...for without**

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me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Another comment or two about Nicodemus, previously cited on his night visit to see the Lord Jesus. Christ continued His discourse with him in John 3:5, "**Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**" Water is often used as a symbol of the Word of God. This man was self-righteous, and thought his way was the right way with God. He tried to reason with the Lord concerning the physical birth, after the Lord told him he must be born again; for he asked Jesus if a man could enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born. His carnal reasoning proved the certainty of I Cor. 2:14, "**But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.** . ." Before Christ had ended His discourse with him, however, we believe that he trusted Christ as his Saviour. His own way seemed right when he came to Christ at night as a visitor, but he left as a son, knowing that he had spent his life thus far in the spirit of error.

Another instance of one set free from his sins was the jailer at Philippi, who had been given custody of Paul and Silas, ministers of the Lord. These two faithful men had been beaten before they were put in jail, but at midnight were found praying and singing praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, which jarred open the doors and tore loose the prisoners' bands. The jailer was terribly frightened and thought the prisoners had escaped. He was ready to kill himself with his sword, but Paul said to him, "**Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.**" Trembling, the jailer then fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**" And they said, "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house**" (Acts 16:30-31). The jailer and his household were saved that night, after the Word of the Lord was spoken to them. Sometimes it takes a powerful stroke from the hand of the Almighty to bring one to humility and trust in the Lord. Before God intervened, the way of the jailer seemed right, but when his own jail was turned into the shadow of death for him, he knew that he needed something far better than his own way. The heavenly calling came in a most convincing way, and the man received it joyfully.

Man is under condemnation and the wrath of God as long as he is in the unregenerate state. Listen to God as He proclaims this fact through His Beloved Son in John 3:18, "**He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the**

name of the only begotten Son of God."

And in John 3:36 we read, "**He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.**" The unsaved are deceived and know not the purpose of the death of Christ at Calvary. That purpose was to provide the blood atonement for sinners. Man must have a blood covering for his sins; otherwise there can be no forgiveness of sins. Christ says in Matt. 26:28, "**For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.**" The "many" spoken of are those who will believe His Word to the saving of their souls. Hebrews 9:22 states, in part, "**and without shedding of blood is no remission.**" In Leviticus 17:11 we also read this same truth, ". . . **for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.**" If there had been any other way for sinners to be saved, Christ would not have died. Jesus Christ Himself declares, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me**" (John 14:6). Man must be robbed in the righteousness of Christ before he can be brought into the presence of Almighty God. The only way he can obtain the righteous robe is to believe that Jesus Christ died for him, then righteousness is imputed to him. By trusting in the blood of Christ a sinner stands justified before God, saved by His marvelous grace for all eternity; by denying the blood of Christ he will die in his sins, separated unto eternal punishment, forever banished from the presence of God.

Examples of those whose ways ended in death are:

1. Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve. He was a tiller of the ground, and he brought an offering produced from the ground. God refused his offering, because it was not a blood sacrifice, which God required. Cain by-passed the blood requirements and substituted the works of his hands. In contrast Abel brought a blood offering, and God accepted it. Sometime later, Cain slew his brother Abel; no doubt this was in a rage of jealousy. For this heinous crime God made him a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth. Read Genesis 4:1-17. No doubt Cain died lost, for there is no record that he repented of his sins.

2. Nimrod tried to build his way to heaven, for he began to be a mighty one in the earth. "**He was a mighty hunter before the LORD.** . ." (Gen. 10:9). He despised the government of God, so he set out to establish his own. This way seemed right in his own eyes. Nimrod was the founder of the Babylonian kingdom, and he esteemed himself a mighty one. The Chaldeans (Babylonians), with Nimrod as their ruler and dictator, started to build a tower whose top was to reach to heaven. God came down and suddenly ended their evil ambitions by

confounding their language, and they were scattered upon all the earth (See Gen. 11:1-9). He defied the authority of God and died for his efforts. He had a heart that devised wicked imaginations, one of the six things the Lord hates (Prov. 6:18).

3. Goliath, a Philistine giant, defied the armies of the living God; and he cursed David by his gods. His way seemed right in his own eyes, but it was foolish in the eyes of God. For a period of forty days, drawing near morning and evening to the army of Israel, this giant asked for a man to fight with him. According to his terms, the Israelites would become servants to the Philistines, if he defeated his opponent. The giant was sure he could kill anyone willing to fight him, but God was with David, who had agreed to fight with Goliath. David was just a lad, but with only one small stone hurled from his sling he brought the giant to the earth, dead. His way had seemed right, but it ended in death.

4. Absalom, David's own son, rebelled and tried to take the throne from David. He gathered quite a large following, by means of deceitful persuasion and false reports against his father, King David. While a battle was being fought in the wood of Ephraim, Absalom met his death in a strange and tragic way. In II Samuel 18:9, we read, "**And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.**" He was killed there by Joab, David's general, and his ten armor bearers. There is no record of repentance on the part of Absalom, so his own way, which seemed right, led him to his death. No repentance means no tomorrow.

5. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples of Christ, and the treasurer of the little band, died in his sins. Apparently, he thought it best to follow his own ways. He promised to betray Christ to the chief priests for thirty pieces of silver. He carried the bag, for he loved money; but he did not believe in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Rather, he played the part of a hypocrite. His unbelief opened the door of eternal torment, and he went in thereat. He ended his life by hanging himself and died without true

repentance. He was sorry that he was caught in his wicked deed against the Lord, but he was not sorry for the crime itself. God says, "**Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**"

May these examples show the truth of Jeremiah 17:9, "**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. who can know it?**" Behind the thoughts of men's ways seeming right to them is the spirit of rejection and rebellion. Until the ways of men are shown them to be wrong, and opposed to the ways of God, there will be no admission of weakness or of any sin worthy of death. Only by Holy Spirit conviction can any man, woman, boy, or girl ever see the need of turning from their own way to the way and the will of God. The way of God is glorious and perfect, and this was revealed to the world in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. His cross takes on a radiance of love and power to the sinner who has been brought to see his lost condition. He is brought to the end of himself, and then trusts in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ for salvation. His soul rejoices in its every fibre, and he knows that it is all from God. He has been made partaker of the divine nature by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. He has seen the King Jesus in His beauty, and he knows that heaven will be his long home. He has had a transfer of citizenship!

Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Him. May God open the eyes of many today to see that trust in Christ is the only way to be saved. There is no other way.

God's Perfect Way

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Salvation vs. Christian

I say it without reservation, or hesitation, that there is much more to the word "Christian" than the world knows about. Ninety-nine and nine-tenths of the religious world – in fact, the population of the world, are Christians according to their own interpretation, but I maintain that apart from Scriptural baptism it is impossible to be a Christian. Don't get scared. I do not believe in baptismal regeneration.

Webster says that a Christian is a "follower, or disciple, or a believer in

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DXRA, Davao City, Philippines	Sunday 8:15 - 8:45 a.m.....	783 Khz.....	10,000 AM

God's Perfect Way

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Christ." Without trying to ostracize or criticize other believers, and what they believe and taking what God's Word says about the matter. I find nowhere in God's Holy Word in the Old Testament where they were ever called Christians. The word "Christian" is only in the Bible three places, and in each instance it refers to the believers that have been scripturally baptized by the authority of a local New Testament church. Therefore, I must be a member of one of the Lord's New Testament churches.

I preached a message one time on, "Who is a Christian?" and I almost got crucified by some of my church members. They came running to me with tears in their eyes, and they said, "Oh, Grandmother Moses and Grandpa Jones – they were saints. Better Christians never lived than they."

Not Ashamed Of A Baptist Church

Now, beloved, I want to be understood. I didn't say you have to be a member of a Baptist Church to be saved. That is not so. But you do have to be a member of the Lord's church to be called a Christian. You may be saved by God's grace without ever being a Christian, but you will never be a Christian unless you are a member of the Lord's New Testament church.

I rejoice in the doctrines of the local New Testament church. It does not offend me in the least for a brother to ask me about my position concerning the local church. It does not offend me in the least for a brother to ask me what I believe concerning the doctrines of grace. I know a lot of "Sears & Roebuck" preachers. I know some personally. They preach one thing one place, and then they go another place and take it all back, and preach something else. I don't think that is right. I have been in both camps, and I believe I can speak with a voice of authority as to what I believe concerning the doctrines of grace.

I. God's Way Of Salvation Is The Way Of Grace From Start To Finish

God's way of salvation is by His sovereign grace. There is no other way of salvation apart from God's free sovereign grace. It is grace from start to finish.

Since it is by grace, therefore *God's grace is unmerited* by God's children. I don't care what the religious world says. It makes no difference to me what the religious professors say about the doctrines of grace, nor what they say against it. It is what God says that makes the difference, and God's Word plainly declares that His grace is unmerited by His children.

I am not saved because I deserve to be saved. I am not a Baptist preacher because I deserve to be a Baptist preacher. If I got my just deserts I'd be in Hell with the unsaved – the same place all of God's creatures would be if we got our

just deserts. So I am not saved because I deserve it, but I am saved by God's sovereign grace. God's grace is unmerited by His children.

The Apostle Paul said: **"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith"**(Rom.12:3). This Scripture tells us that Paul spoke by *the grace that was given to him*, He didn't earn it, and eh didn't deserve it, but it was given to him. Even the faith of God is given unto His children.

A lady came to me one time and said, "Brother Langford, you preached this morning that we are saved by grace through faith." She said, "I believe that, but don't you know that everyone has faith, and since he has faith, he can have grace, if he'll only ask for it, or call for it. It is there at his disposal."

I want you to know that Paul said, "You are dead in trespasses and sins."

A Corpse Is Dead

Did you ever visit a funeral parlor, and there view the corpse, and hear his call for a drink of water, or ask for a meal, or ask for a better coffin? I have preached many funerals and I have yet to see a corpse that ever spoke a word. I have yet to see one that has ever said a thing.

Therefore, a sinner apart from God's sovereign grace is dead, and he cannot see; he is blind and cannot feel; he cannot hope because his conscience is seared with a hot iron. So grace is unmerited.

The Apostle Paul raised a great question when he exalted the free sovereign grace of God and explained the plan of salvation from start to finish:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth"(Rom. 8:28-31, 33).

If God justifieth, who can "unjustifieth?" There is none. All the demons in Hell, with their father the Devil, cannot undo the work that God has done. So it is unmerited.

Paul said to the church at Corinth: **"I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ"**(1 Cor. 1:4). Therefore you can see that grace is given; it is not earned.

Grace is not only unmerited, but grace is unmindful of the children's condition.

DON'T MISS AN ISSUE

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I thank God for that. I know a lot of people that say, "Yes, I believe in election. I believe in foreordination, but it is based upon what God foreknew and foresaw in His children."

Brethren, if that be so, we would all go to Hell, for all God ever saw in any of His creatures was sin. There is that old popular cry today, "God loves the sinner, but He hates sin," however I ask the question, what is the sinner but sin?

Grace vs. Works

Paul said: **"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded"**(Rom 11:5-7).

So the dilemma is, shall we take the route of works, or shall we take the route of God's grace? It is not to go both ways, but it is one or the other. Man is not saved by grace and works. He is either saved by grace apart from works, or he is saved by works apart from grace. If he is saved by works, he has to boast before God. But I want you to know that none of us has anything to boast of before God.

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one"(Rom 3:10). Does that sound to you like a God-fearing, God-loving people? Does that sound like one that is desiring God's love and favor? The Scripture says, "there is none righteous; there is none seeking after God."

So God's way of salvation is the way of grace. It is unmerited by God's children, and *He is unmindful of the children's condition*.

"(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy"(Rom. 9:11-16).

Brother, I believe that shook up

Rebecca, because the Jewish tradition was that the younger was to serve the elder. But God said, "It is being reversed now; the elder is going to serve the younger." I believe the mother became alarmed, and God said, "This is the reason why it shall be such, because as it is written, Jacob, have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Everywhere I go preaching, people say, "How can a righteous God hate anyone? How could He hate Esau?" The misunderstanding with me is, not why He hated Esau, but why He loved Jacob. You take the two men and study their character, and their daily activities. Esau seemed much more a prospect of God's favor than Jacob. Jacob was a "heel" from the very beginning. But God's grace made the difference. So it is unmindful of the condition of the children.

The way of God's salvation is not only the way of grace, *but it is the way of a gift*. It is not merited; it is not deserved; it is not earned; but it comes as a free gift.

I give gifts to whom I please, do you not do likewise? Do you have to have somebody come begging you for gift? I don't, I give to whom I please. And if I don't please, I don't give to the individual. The choice is up to me as to whom I give gifts unto. Certainly if man has that prerogative, shall not the great sovereign supreme Almighty God which made man, have the same prerogative? Can He not give to whom He pleases? The Bible says that He can, and I believe God's Word.

So salvation is a gift, and as a gift it is free. It doesn't cost a dime. **"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the water; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and mild without money and without price"**(Isa. 55:1).

I believe the wine represents the Holy Spirit. I believe the milk represents the milk of the Word. I want you to know that before you will ever get to the meat, you'll have to get to the milk. Peter said: **"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby"**(1 Pet. 2:2).

Salvation is without money and without price. You can't buy it, but it is a gift. So God's salvation is a gift. It is free.

"For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world"(John 6:33). This does not say that He came to offer life to the world, but that He came to give life unto the world. I don't believe for a moment that God offers anything. I believe the He commands what He will and we have to bow to His sovereign will. God gives; He doesn't offer.

Some say that salvation is by change. Do you know, I believe we ought to collect these preachers and send them out to Reno, Nevada. That is where you preach change. So if it is by change, they need to move. God's salvation is not by

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God's Perfect Way

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chance. It is not by our choice. It is a gift of Almighty God.

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

"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"(Rom. 11:29). What God gives, He never takes back, so it is free. Not only is it free, *but God's gift is full.* Solomon, the wisest man apart from Jesus Christ, that ever walked the face of this earth, said, **"For I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever."**

So God's gift is full. It is not a little today and a little tomorrow.

I grew up in another denomination. My father was a preacher in that particular denomination. They believed that you could be saved today, go home tonight and take a chew of tobacco, and fall out of grace. Brother, if tobacco saved us and lost us, every one of us would go to Hell more than likely.

I want you to know that God doesn't save us by change. So it is free, and it is full. There is the song that we oftentimes sing:

"Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul,
Thank you, Lord, for making me whole;
Thank you, Lord, for giving to me,
Thy great salvation, so full and so free."

God's salvation is free and full, and it is forever.

II. God's salvation is by the way of greatness.

I don't know what you think about it, but a God that is thrice holy, that would look down upon such a puny, polluted hell-deserving sinner as I, and save me by His marvelous grace, it is great regardless of what you think. I'll tell you why I believe it to be great – *because of its author*, It is of God.

A lot of people have never learned this. They are still saying, "I shook the preacher's hand," or "I was baptized," or "I got emotionally disturbed," or "My feelings were disturbed," or "I felt something." Don't misunderstand me: I believe in heartfelt religion, but I tell you, you'll never feel it until you get it. Once you get it, you'll know it, and the preacher won't have to tell you about it.

You preachers know what I am talking about. People come to me and want to know if they are saved. I say to them, "I can't tell you whether you are saved or not; that is not for me to say." They say, "I thought you were a preacher." I say, "I am, but God never gave me that prerogative, to go around telling people whether they were saved or lost. But I can tell you this: if you believe to the saving of your soul – if you believe with all your heart, you are saved."

That is what Philip said to the eunuch. The eunuch said, **"See, here is water; what doth hinder me from being baptized?"**

The eunuch first was a Campbellite and later he became a Baptist. Philip said to the eunuch: **"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest"**(Acts 8:37).

The eunuch then said to Philip, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Philip then commanded the chariot to stop and the two went down into the water and Philip baptized him by authority of the First Baptist Church in Jerusalem.

So I say that I believe God's salvation is great because of its author.

The Psalmist said: **"Salvation belongeth unto the LORD"**(Psa. 3:8).

Jonah said: **"Salvation is of the LORD"**(Jonah 2:9).

The prophet said: **"Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation"**(Hab. 3:18).

Most preachers preach, "Restore unto me the joy of my salvation." It is only mine as a gift from God. It belongs to Him, for He is the author of it. So it is great because of its author.

God's salvation is great because of its appeal. God's salvation does not appeal unto every "Tom, Dick, and Harry." I am afraid of that which appeals unto everything and everybody.

I remember back when the SSS tonic came out. That was the lifeline of America at that time. We had the SSS tonic for breakfast, we had it for dinner, and we had it for supper. It was our physical salvation. Everybody believed in it. It appealed to them.

But I want you to know that God's salvation does not appeal to everyone. It only appeals to God's sheep, and that after the operation of God's Holy Spirit. Before then, it doesn't even appeal to the sheep.

In conclusion, I say that God's free salvation is great *because of its accomplishments.* What the works of men could never do, God's will and God's Word can, and will do. **"Not of works, lest any man should boast."**

"I will not work my soul to save,
That my God has done;
But I will work like any slave,
For the love of God's dear Son."

Backsliding

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the fountain head may change the whole course of a river. A little sin in the heart may change the whole course of a life. We think that some sins can be overlooked, or that they will not harm us. The smallest serpent can be deadly. The virus that kills a person may be microscopic in size, but it will ravage and destroy the life of the whole body. So is sin to our souls and spirits. The seemingly smallest sin is in every aspect an act of disobedience and rebellion against God. Why do you think that the Bible says, **"Do not err, my beloved brethren"** (James 1:16)! **"But**

every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren" (James 1:14-16). Sin has a beginning and an ending, and if you start out at the beginning you cannot avoid the ending. If you sin you will experience some manner of spiritual death. It may be the death of your testimony toward some other person. It may be the death of your ability to serve God in some capacity. It may be the death of your service to God in its entirety. It may be the death of you. **"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it"** (I John 5:16). Sin is to be avoided by every child of God. If you think that there is no harm in some certain sin, in some disobedience to God's Word, then you are already on the road to a very backslidden condition.

I. A Happy Condition.

In the first three verses (Jer. 2:1-3), we find that Israel had previously existed in a happy spiritual state. There was not only the profession of outward religion, but also the obedience of holy conduct and living. We note that, first of all, they followed the Lord in love. **"Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown."** When Israel was in the wilderness, after they came up out of Egypt, they swore an oath to follow the Lord. They espoused themselves to God, like a man and woman espouse themselves one to another to love one another as husband and wife, and to dwell together in a state of holy matrimony, putting each other first and foremost above all others, and being faithful to one another no matter what conditions or circumstances may come – "for better, or for worse." God told the children of Israel that He remembered their former ways, when they followed Him in love. Some of you who are married or who have been married may recall how that you spoke kind words to your fiancé or your fiancé spoke kind words to you before you were married; or when you were first married all was joy and love. If the joy and love and the kind words did not continue, then what was the reason? Did your love change because your circumstances changed? Most of us, when we first married, had nothing or next to nothing, as far as our possessions were concerned; but that did not concern us because we were in love. Why does it concern you so much now, so that you fret and argue and become angry one with another because of your circumstances? When Israel first went after the Lord, they were in a wilderness.

They did not have anything. They could not grow any crops, build houses, or have any of the comforts of a settled life. Now that they were in the land of promise that flowed with milk and honey, why had they turned from the Lord?

"Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase." They were holy because they were following the Lord. Holiness comes from submission and obedience unto God, and no other way. Not only did Israel follow the Lord, but they served and worshipped God with their substance – **"and the firstfruits of his increase."** When people begin to backslide, one of the first areas of their life that they often hold back from the Lord is their money and their possessions. If you're not willing to serve God with the filthy lucre, then what are you really going to serve Him with? Has the greenback become your God? If you can't stand to put your tithe and an offering above the tithe into the offering basket, then there's something wrong with you. Don't do it for attention. Don't do it so you can be proud about how much you think you give. Do it because you love the Lord and you want to honor Him! If God doesn't deserve your money, then no one else does either (so you just better stop paying all your bills and stop paying for your groceries and for the gasoline in your automobile and everything else).

Israel had been in fellowship with the Lord, and had been following Him in love and consecration of themselves and their substance. But we note that they slid back from God.

II. A Foolish Step.

"For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." The people had forsaken the Lord. They had turned away from God and left the paths of truth to walk in paths of error, sin, and unbelief. They looked to someone and something other than the Lord for the blessings of life. Do you know what the difference between a fountain and a cistern is? A fountain is a source of fresh water, and a cistern holds the water that comes from the rain and other sources, and also becomes filled with dirt and mire. The farmers who have cisterns in their fields to hold irrigation water will go out this spring and clean out the muck and the mud from those cisterns. If you have a fountain or a wellspring, then the water continually flows fresh and clean to sustain life and health. There is no spiritual life and health when you are not joined fast to the Lord. **"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water . . . Whosoever**

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sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee," (Ps. 51:1-13). Until you have God to cleanse you and heal you of your backslidings, then you will continue in a spiritually useless condition.

IV. A Gracious Remedy.

"Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding," (Jer. 3:12-15). God only can heal the backslider. God only can restore you unto spiritual usefulness. God only can remove the stain of your sins. **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,"** (I John 1:9). If you will not acknowledge your sins, then you will not be cleansed and restored. If you will not confess your backslidings and sins, then you will not experience the healing mercies of the Lord. **"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.**

I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah," (Ps. 32:1-5). The God who saves the lost sinner is the same God who restores the backslider. You who are lost will not be saved until you turn your back on all sin, confess your sins unto God and openly acknowledge that you are a sinner against God and men, and you cast yourself upon the mercy of Jesus Christ to forgive all your sins. If you remain proud in your heart, or you think you are getting a cheap and easy pass into heaven, you are not truly repentant, but only deceiving your own self. You who are backslidden away from God will not be restored until you turn your back on your sins and confess them to God openly and with humility. I've seen people who wanted their names back on the church roll, but they were too proud to admit that they had sinned. They were not repentant, and they were therefore not truly forgiven or spiritually restored. God's mercy is extended to you today. The way of God is not hard. The way of the backslider is hard. The way of sin is hard. The way of God is full of grace. If you are being drawn by God now to follow Him, it is His gracious hand that draws you.

The wrong path or course in life begins with a single step. You may think that you can experiment with sin or take a chance with disobeying God, because you think you can change direction at any moment and go back. You're dead wrong. You have ignored the Word of God that tells you that sin has a beginning and only one ending. Once you pull out onto the highway of sin, you will have to go so far before you can turn around and go back or get off that highway. You cannot start out with sin and end up any other way than with death, death of hope, death of usefulness, death of joy, and death of meaning. In God only there is life, true life, abundant life, spiritual life, everlasting life. He is the fountain of living waters. Don't say, "I have no hope." That's what the children of Israel said: **"There is no hope."** There is no hope with sin. There is hope for those who come to God, living and true hope that maketh not ashamed. You'll always end up ashamed whenever you sin. You'll never have to be ashamed when you believe and follow God. **"For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed,"** (Rom. 10:11).

(Title, outline, and many thoughts taken from "BACKSLIDING—IT'S CAUSE, COURSE, AND CURE" in *Handfuls on Purpose*, vol. IX, by James Smith.)

What Is Your Life?

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shall be on the morrow." All we have is the present. Yesterday is gone beyond recall. We cannot be sure of tomorrow; for us the sun may never rise. We can

only make the most of today. It is well that tomorrow is hidden from us. If we knew the future, we might not have a desire to continue to live.

When we tell someone we will perform certain duties in a few days, we **"ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."**

WHAT IS LIFE?

James asked: **"What is your life?"** It seems very few know the answer to this question. James gives a very good answer to this vital question. He says our life is like **"a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."** We know very little about birth, growth and the human body. Legions of books have been written on this subject, yet life itself still remains a great mystery.

Our earthly life is derived from God. I Samuel 2:6 informs us: **"The LORD killeth, and maketh alive."** David exclaimed in Psalms 36:9: **"For with thee is the fountain of life."** The Lord not only gives us the breath of life at birth, but He also sustains our physical existence. Paul preached to Areopagus: **"For in him we live, and move, and have our being"** (Acts 17:28). He again declared: **"He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things"** (Acts 17:25). You and I live and have our existence because God permits us to have it through the goodness of His own heart.

WHY WERE YOU BORN AT ALL?

Did you ever stop and consider these questions? Why were you born in America? Why to certain parents at a certain time? Why were you not born a thousand years ago? Why was not your birth place different? To these serious inquiries we can only say that the Lord did not so order it. We can only say with the psalmist: **"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased"** (Ps. 115:3). I myself can only say as did my Savior: **"Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight"** (Matt. 11:26). God made the earth for man, but He made man to glorify His Creator. Isaiah 43:7 reads: **"I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."** Man is a creature designed to bring honor to His God. The Creator made him for His own purpose. **"The LORD hath made all things for himself"** (Prov. 16:4). But in spite of good intentions, man has utterly failed to bring glory to His Creator. He is constantly sinning and coming short of God's glory. **"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"** (Rom. 3:23).

LIFE ON EARTH IS SHORT

Of our earthly life David said: **"Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding"** (I Chron. 29:15). He indicated by this that our life is vain and short; it is something which will end in perfect light or darkness. Job wrote: **"Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh**

forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not" (Job 14:1-2). The psalmist again said: **"My days are like a shadow that declineth: and I am withered like grass"** (Ps. 102:11).

I read in Psalms 90:9-10: **"For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."** Much of our years in this world we pass under the wrath of God because we live with little purpose. Each one of us writes his own autobiography. The spending of our years is like telling a tale. Each year is a chapter. There are some chapters which are pleasant; others are tragic. They are all short and transient though.

Of life Job declared: **"Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey"** (Job 9:25-26). Job is saying never did a post rot so fast, never did a ship sail to its port so swiftly, never did an eagle fly upon its prey with such rapidity, as my days pass so quickly. Time never stops. Its motion is swift. How we need to redeem the time. Time runs so fast toward eternity which approaches as time goes.

The psalmist cried: **"LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity"** (Ps. 39:4-5). Life is so short it behooves us to prepare for death. The psalmist compares our life to the breadth of four fingers. We need no rod or measuring line to take the dimension of our days. We have the standard of them at our finger's end. It is but one little hand breadth in all. Our share of time is little in comparison to the eternal God and the eternal state.

The Bible says our life is like a weaver's shuttle. Job 7:6 states: **"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope."** Our days are passing swiftly. Every throw leaves a thread behind. When the Master Weaver has finished His work, He will cut the thread. The finished product will be examined. We know not when the weaver shall finish his weaving; even so we know not the length of our earthly pilgrimage.

II Samuel 14:14 compares man's life to **"water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again."** When water is spilled on the ground it leaves an imprint, even so do we in our brief appearance in this lower universe. When the water is dried up by the sun, it is gone

◊ (Continued on page 109)

What Is Your Life?

(Continued from page 108) ♦

forever. Even so it is with us. When our life ends with death, we are past recall **“as water spilt on the ground.”**

As soon as we are born we commence to die. No wonder Job said: **“O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good. The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thine eyes are upon me, and I am not. As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.”** Our earthly abode is brief and uncertain. Our removal from it is sure and speedy. Our return is not expected. Our momentary passing may be noisy like a thunder storm but is quickly over and past retrieve.

THE WEARISOMENESS OF LIFE

Some one today may have had his fill of sin. You may be a drunkard, or a gambler, or a whore, or a thief, or a dope addict, or even a jail bird. As you look back over your past life, you see that you have made a horrible mess of it. You may think that you have no friend but your dog. Like Jonah, you may be saying: **“It is better for me to die than to live”** (Jonah 4:8).

Some other person may be saying, **“I have so many temptations, tears and trials. Nothing seems to go right for me. I am a miserable failure.”** Then you are like Rebekah who said: **“I am weary of my life”** (Gen. 27:46).

Still someone else may cry, **“I have suffered so much in body and soul. Death will be a sweet relief.”** You may feel like Solomon when he wrote: **“Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of Spirit”** (Eccl. 2:17). Someone may even be as despondent as Job who exclaimed: **“So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life. I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone; for my days are vanity”** (Job 7:15-16).

All such feelings just go to show how so many have missed the real purpose of human existence. Human friendship is uncertain. Human comforts are transitory. The human body is subject to suffering, pain and death. Rich men take their own lives. Famous people do themselves to death. All this proves that the words of Christ are true. He said: **“A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”** (Luke 12:15).

THE ABUNDANT LIFE

Jesus Christ is the bread of life (John 6:35). He alone can give real meaning to our life in this world. Without Him as our Savior, life has no meaning. He came that we might have a purposeful life (John 10:10). Those who know Him can say: **“the LORD is the strength of my life;**

of whom shall I be afraid” (Ps. 27:1). And still with Paul: **“The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”** (Gal. 2:20).

You cannot be happy in this life unless you live according to the teaching of the Holy Book. The Bible says in Proverbs 8:35: **“For whoso findeth me findeth life.”** Jesus Christ said: **“If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments”** (Matt. 19:17). In this verse He did not prescribe keeping the commandments as the means of receiving spiritual life. But rather he tells those who already have spiritual life how they can have a purposeful and meaningful life in this world. If you want your life to be happy, to have real purpose, then you must conform to the teaching of the Word of God. Obedience to the precepts of the Scripture prolongs our life. The Lord told Solomon: **“And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days”** (I Kings 3:14).

EARTHLY LIFE A PILGRIMAGE

How long we shall live in the present evil world only God knows. To a Christian, this life is a pilgrimage. Jacob told Pharaoh: **“The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been”** (Gen. 47:9). Jacob reveals in this how the hundred and thirty years had seemed to him like days. He knew himself to be a stranger and a pilgrim in this world. He realized he was a traveler to **“a better country, that is, an heavenly”** (Heb. 11:16). We, like Jacob, would do well to realize that the earth is our hotel, not our home. This is only true of those who have prepared to die, of those who know their sins are forgiven, of those who know Christ as personal Savior.

This earthly life to the unsaved is a broad way that leads to destruction. It is a place of a few sinful pleasures which is soon to terminate by God saying: **“Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee”** (Luke 12:20). How horrible to reflect upon a wasted life. How terrible to see a Christless coffin, a Christless funeral, a Christless grave and a Christless eternity out before you.

All men, whether evil or good, must face the record of their life. We must give an account for “the things done in our bodies, according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad.”

A Deceived Young

(Continued from page 101) ♦

friends, Aunt Maggie began to realize that there was something wrong with the theory that “doing the best one can” toward keeping the Law was the way to merit salvation.

When she read that Jesus said, **“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil”** (Matt. 5:17) and that, **“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”** (Rom. 10:4); she was greatly puzzled.

Again when she read in Luke 10:25-28 where there was a certain lawyer who thought he could inherit eternal life by doing good works, and who gave the gist of the law, as perfect love to God and man, and heard the Lord say to him, **“This do, and thou shalt live,”** Aunt Maggie was confused. But when she read in Romans 3:20: **“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin,”** she was still more confused. And what *heavy sighs* this confusion drew from her!

The matter became so serious that Aunt Maggie took a Bible to the kitchen; and while she waited for a fire to burn, an iron to heat, or the bread to bake, she would spend the moments *searching* for something that would *give her peace*. And all the while she was trying to cling to the early teaching that in some vague, mysterious way, law-keeping was essential to salvation.

When she read in Romans 3:24, **“Being freely justified by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:”** and, in verse 28, **“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,”** she saw how the words plainly contradicted her theory; and this elicited *more sighs* from her.

There came a day when Aunt Maggie said: **“This matter must be settled.”** Her husband was in the field, and the children were out at play. Taking her Bible, she sat by the kitchen table; and, knowing there was a great deal said about the law in the Epistle to the Galatians, she opened to that place.

As she read carefully, certain verses such as the following, took on a new meaning to her: **“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified”** (Gal. 2:16). And: **“This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”** (Gal. 3:2, 3).

But a climax was reached when she read verse ten: **“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”**

Aunt Maggie paused in her reading, and other verses which she had read went through her mind, such as, **“By the law**

is the knowledge of sin,” **“For sin is the transgression of the law,”** and **“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”** Then she said aloud: **“All that the law can do for me is to put me under its curse.”**

With a *heavy sigh* she dropped her open Book on the table; and putting up her hands exclaimed: **“Then, Lord, I’m lost!”** But what could she do about it? Taking up the Bible she read on. Galatians 3:13 brought a different kind of climax. For she read, **“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”** Yes, the law had pronounced its curse: but Christ went to the cross and bore the penalty of that curse---*death*---and thus redeemed from the curse of the law every child of Adam’s race who would believe in Him (John 3:18). After reveling in this blessed truth for a moment, and with a *deep sigh of relief*, Aunt Maggie again put up her hands and exclaimed: **“Then, Lord, I’m saved!”**

Oh, the joy and peace that fills the soul when one comes to the end of himself, and grasps the precious truth that, **“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”** (Rom. 10:4).

The Bible now became a new book to her. Instead of reading it as before, out of a sense of duty, she read it joyfully. Being a babe in Christ, it became **“the sincere milk of the word”** to her that she might grow thereby (I Pet. 2:2). She understood the meaning of the words: **“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith”** (Gal. 3:11).

*“Free from the law, O! happy condition,
Jesus hath bled, and there is remission,
Cursed by the law, and bruised by the fall,
Christ hath redeemed us, once for all.*

*Once for all, O sinner, receive it,
Once for all, O brother, believe it,
Cling to the cross, the burden will fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all.”*

Aunt Maggie noticed this hymn and learned it. Ever after it was a favorite with her; for it told out so fully her own experience.

Aunt Maggie lived for thirty-five years after the events here related. Many were the signs of relief when she read portions of the Scripture like John 1:17; 7:19; Acts 16:1-10,24; Romans 3:28; 7:4; Galatians 5:1; for each one confirmed the truth to her that, **“Ye are not under the law, but under grace”** (Rom. 6:14).

She was never more happy than when quietly telling troubled souls how they could find **“life”** (John 20:31), **“rest”** (Matthew 11:28), and **“peace”** (Romans 5:10), not by the impossible task of meriting these blessings by keeping the law, but by taking them freely from the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(J. C. Pearson, *The Baptist Examiner*, Dec. 31, 1955).

The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

When Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 say you have to be baptized to be saved, why don't you believe it?

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"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mrk. 16:16).

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

These verses do NOT say that you must be baptized "in order to" be saved. There are too many verses which teach that salvation is not given as a result of works—even good works. I do not mean to imply that good works aren't important in the life of a child of God. They are vital to a faithful Christian life. However, they in NO WAY secure salvation (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5). The Bible couldn't be plainer concerning salvation being a gift of God as a result of His Sovereign Grace.

Mark 16:16 doesn't not speak of two necessities of salvation. Those that believe in baptismal regeneration (the belief that baptism brings salvation) rarely quote the last half of this verse. In many verse in the Scriptures, "he that believeth" is followed by "hath everlasting life." (Jhn. 3:16, 36). From this fact, we can see that trusting in Christ as one's personal Savior is the only requirement the Bible puts on salvation. Even this "faith" is a gift of God's grace (Eph. 2:8). The baptism mentioned in this verse is merely the proof of salvation. If a person truly trusts Christ and is baptized, there is proof of salvation. Take note that the last half of the verse merely says **"he that believeth not shall be damned."** Nothing is said of "he that is baptized not." Therefore, if a person believes, they are a possessor of eternal life (Jhn. 3:36).

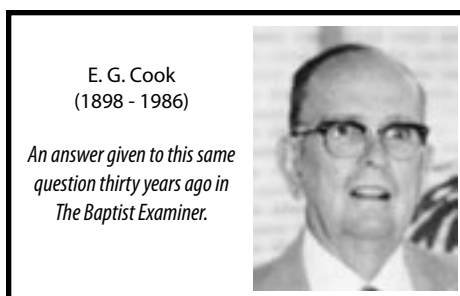
Acts 2:38 also doesn't teach that a person must be baptized "in order to" be saved. The truth of this verse can easily be ascertained by simply understanding the meaning of the word **"for."** Baptismal regenerationists tell us that the word translated **"for"** (eis, pronounced ace, Greek) *always* means "in order to." Therefore, they said the verse should read, **"Repent and be baptized...in order to the remission of sins."** They say this proves that baptism is necessary for salvation. However, the truth is that this word doesn't always mean "in order to." For instance, the word **"at"** in Mat

12:41 and Luke 11:32 is the same word translated **"for"** in Acts 2:38. If we follow the teaching of baptismal regenerationists, these two verses make no sense. They would read, **"they repented [in order to] the preaching of Jonas."** Obviously, there is no sense in following this line of thinking. The Greek word "eis" in these verses obviously means "because of" or simply "at" as it was translated. Inserting this into Acts 2:38 gives us the proper meaning—**"Repent and be baptized... [because of] the remission of sins."** Or even **"Repent and be baptized...[at] the remission of sins."** We often use the word "for" in this manner. For instance, in the early 20th century, you might have seen a sign that read, "Jesse James—WANTED FOR MURDER." Without a doubt, this doesn't mean that Jesse James was wanted "in order to" murder. That would make the wanted poster to be criminal itself. The meaning was that Jesse James was wanted "because of" or "in reference to" murder. As a result, the clear teaching of this verse (Acts 2:38) is that when a person is saved (when they repent and believe the Gospel), this should motivate them to follow the Lord in New Testament baptism.

We should mention that Acts 10:44-48 mentions a group who received the Holy Spirit (salvation) prior to baptism. This alone should be enough to prove that baptism isn't necessary to salvation.

Those that teach baptismal regeneration pervert the Scriptures and preach another gospel (Gal. 1:6). They don't seem to understand that Jesus alone is the Way to God. My prayer is that all those who read these words can now defend the Truth against this heretical teaching.

TODD BRYANT



E. G. Cook
(1898 - 1986)
An answer given to this same question thirty years ago in The Baptist Examiner.

I have several reasons for not believing it. First of all, these Scriptures do not say any such thing. Mark 16:16 says, **"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."** No one can deny that. And if it had said that he that believeth and falls in a mud hole shall be saved, no one would have reason to deny that either. The last part of this verse is definite proof that baptism has no more to do with our salvation than falling in a mud hole would have. If

you notice, it says, **"but he that believeth not shall be damned."** If baptism were essential to salvation, it would be doubly essential that this statement read **"but he that believeth not and is not baptized shall be damned."** The fact that baptism is not so much as mentioned in this statement should prove to anyone except a Catholic, a Campbellite, a Mormon or a Protestant that baptism plays absolutely no part whatsoever in a person's being either saved or damned.

When it comes to Acts 2:38 those who plan to go to heaven by water grab that little word "for" to their bosom and give it a meaning that suits their fancy. I have a large two volume dictionary that gives many more, but I also have an elementary school dictionary that gives sixteen different meanings for this word. It is true that one of the sixteen is "for the purpose of." So numerically speaking the chances of this word meaning that a person must be baptized for the purpose of having his sins remitted is 1 to 15. But when we put the measuring rod of God's precious Word to it that one chance becomes extinct.

Even a Campbellite would admit that God has only one way of saving sinners. And in Acts 10:43-48 we see that way set forth in no uncertain terms. Here while Peter is still preaching that **"through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins,"** the Holy Spirit fell on the ones who heard (understood) the Word. Then, and only then, did Peter bring up the subject of baptism. Baptism was not so much as mentioned until these people had heard the Word and the Holy Spirit had fallen upon them. The Holy Spirit never falls upon a lost person, only upon those who have been quickened by the Word. Baptismal regeneration is just one of many false doctrines that has been brought out of the Catholic Church and transplanted where it has no business.

by E. G. Cook

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It is obvious that the writer of this question is either a Catholic or a Campbellite. Both of these religions worship water gods fashioned by men. Both must go to a mediator (the priest or the Campbellite preacher) other than Christ in order to be "saved" in their

heretical system. Both Catholics and Campbellites alike believe that works performed by sinful men somehow enable them to merit God's salvation. Both believe that by following a carefully devised man-made system they will put themselves in a position to be "saved" at last if they have performed enough good deeds. Even after a Campbellite or a Catholic expresses spurious faith in their water gods they cannot be assured of salvation, because both believe they can lose it.

The reason why I don't believe someone has to be baptized to be saved is because baptism is a good work which only believers submit to after they are already saved. It symbolizes or pictures the salvation we have in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5 cf. I Pet. 3:20-21). I can show you a picture of a milk cow, but you will never be able to get milk from the picture. The only way you can get milk is from the cow itself. I can show you the picture or likeness of salvation through baptism, but you will never be able to derive salvation from it. You must go to the source of salvation, the person and work of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospel, in order to be saved. I don't believe that salvation resides in plans or programs, but rather in the person of Christ. My faith is in the finished work of Christ, not in a priest or preacher who must baptize me with or in water. I am not saved by deeds, ceremonies, ordinances, sacraments, or standards. Rather I am saved by simply trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ alone. If Christ's merits, sacrificial blood and glorious resurrection on my behalf are not enough to save me, then I will be damned forever, because a crucified and risen Christ is all I am relying on. Jesus said that was enough in John 5:24 and later in 14:6: **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."** Acts 13:38-39 declares: **"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."**

Jesus Himself declared that baptism was a work of righteousness when He was about to be baptized by John the Baptist (not John the Catholic, Campbellite, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, etc., ad nauseum) in Matthew 3:13-17. The Scriptures are unmistakably clear regarding salvation by grace through faith as opposed to the works of man. Ephesians 2:8-9 should forever settle the question: **"For by grace are ye**

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

Please explain Matthew 22:14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

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There are two groups of people mentioned in the above passage of Scripture, those who are called and those who are chosen. It seems that the phrase "many are called" is a reference to the many that receive the general call of the Gospel, while the phrase "few are chosen" is a reference to election unto salvation. I say this based on the context of the passage.

Christ spoke these words just after telling the parable about the king who prepared a wedding feast for his son and called many guests to attend (Matt. 22:1-13). When the guests refused to come he later told his servants to go into the streets and call anyone who would come to the wedding. When many people show up, the king sees a certain man without a wedding garment on. He then rebukes the man and sends him into outer darkness, because of not wearing a wedding garment.

The man who is cast out of the wedding feast represents all those who are called but not chosen unto salvation. This seems to be why Christ makes the statement, "many are called, but few are chosen." On the other hand, those who are prepared for the wedding with their wedding garments on are both called and chosen. Ephesians 1:4 reads, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

MATT JAMES

Roy Mason
(1894 - 1978)

An answer given to this same question thirty years ago in The Baptist Examiner.



When we come to see the meaning of the Greek words in this verse the problem resolves itself. The word "called" comes from KLETOS which just simply means invited. In Mark. 16:15, our Lord said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Through the preaching of the gospel all are called, or invited. This is the outward call, and it

has no compelling force to it. The more Saul of Tarsus heard this call, the more he hated Jesus Christ, and also His disciples. When a church has a Bible Conference everyone is invited to come, but there is nothing personal in this invitation, however, the church and pastor will choose, or select, certain ones to whom a personal invitation is sent.

The word "chosen" in this verse is from EKLEKTOS which means to choose or select certain ones. In Ephesians. 1:4, Paul says, "According as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." The "us" here consists of the elect. But still the outward call that goes to everyone has no effect on them until Christ is pleased to change it to an inward call. When that inward call comes to a person, he cannot even want to resist it. One moment Saul of Tarsus hated the Lord's saints, and was doing all he could do to completely eradicate them, but the next moment he wanted to be one of them. This radical change was brought about by that personal, inward call that he could not even want to resist. And you know that it was not according to his will, but according to the will of God, John. 1:13.

So through the preaching of the gospel everyone (many) are called, or invited. "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). But only the elect (few) are chosen and given that inward call.

E. G. COOK

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An answer given to this same question thirty years ago in The Baptist Examiner.



In Matthew 22:14 we have one of the verses that teaches us about the two calls. "For many are called, but few are chosen."

We see here the general or outward call. This call is through the preaching of the Gospel. We are commanded to preach the Gospel to the lost. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). You see, men are commanded to repent. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). It is obvious that this verse is showing the responsibility of everyone to repent. Because of this we preach to everyone the command to

repent and believe. We can say with all assurance that anyone who believes will be saved. "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). We can say with all assurance that anyone who is athirst for spiritual life will be satisfied. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). We know that if anyone will come to Jesus he will not be cast out. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Because of this we are to sincerely attempt to persuade men. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:20).

Since we know that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14), we know that man must be made to desire the Lord. For this reason we do not try to force men to be saved. We preach the Gospel in sincerity and truth, but we do not try to drag them to the front thinking that we might get them saved.

The general call is not enough, the Spirit of God must work directly with the individual. This is why one person is saved and another who hears the same message is not. The Holy Spirit takes the preached Gospel and applies it to the sinner and he is saved. "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 2:13,14). Thus we have the words, "For many are called, but few are chosen."

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This is the same language used in Matthew 20:16.

The teaching here is simply to one who properly understands the doctrines

of grace. "Many are called" speaks of the Gospel being preached to the world externally. This "general call" of the Gospel goes out to all who hear it. This is a call in which the soul of man is unaffected by the Truth of the Gospel as a result of his depraved nature. However, God empowers the Gospel to the elect (I Thes. 4-5, II Thes. 2:14, James 1:18, Rom. 1:16 to name a few). Those who receive this "effectual call" of the Gospel inwardly are the "few" who "are chosen."

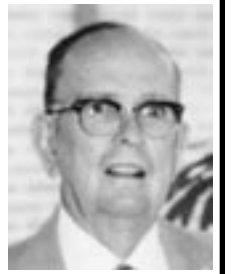
Unfortunately, there are many today who don't understand this passage properly because they don't understand that the Holy Spirit uses the Gospel when He regenerates His elect. This belief is referred to as "hardshellism." The Bible couldn't be plainer that a person must "trust" or "believe in" Christ to be saved. The Bible also teaches that a naturally depraved man cannot do this on his own as he has no knowledge that he is lost and no desire to be saved. When God regenerates His people, the Holy Spirit takes the Gospel message and applies it to the heart of a sinner (Acts 16:14) which brings them to personally embrace Jesus as Savior. All of this is to be attributed to God's Sovereign Grace. It is awe inspiring to consider that God is so powerful as to get the Gospel out even to the remotest parts of the Earth where He has lost sheep (Acts 8:26-40).

Let us keep watering the TULIP's. But, let us do it properly and with the right doctrine.

TODD BRYANT

E. G. Cook
(1898 - 1986)

An answer given to this same question thirty years ago in The Baptist Examiner.



When we come to see the meaning of the Greek words in this verse the problem resolves itself. The word "called" comes from KLETOS which just simply means invited. In Mark. 16:15, our Lord said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Through the preaching of the gospel all are called, or invited. This is the outward call, and it has no compelling force to it. The more Saul of Tarsus heard this call, the more he hated Jesus Christ, and also His disciples. When a church has a Bible Conference everyone is invited to come, but there is nothing personal in this invitation, however, the church and pastor will choose, or select, certain ones to whom a personal invitation is sent.

The word "chosen" in this verse is from EKLEKTOS which means to choose or select certain ones. In Ephesians. 1:4, Paul says, "According as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation

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Forum #1

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saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, let any man should boast."

I could go into a long discourse refuting the sordid claims of Catholics, Campbellites, and Protestants refuting the heresy of baptismal regeneration. However, I will leave it up to the reader to decide whether you want to trust in the symbol the water salvationists preach, or in the Christ that I and the writers of Scripture preach. I will take my place along John the Baptist and the apostle Paul in preaching Christ alone as the means of salvation. John 1:29 declares: **"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."** I Corinthians 1:17-18 and 2:2-5 state: **"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God...For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."**

Those who worship the water gods and preach salvation through water are the worst sort of heretics. In fact, Paul wrote that they will be damned for preaching a false gospel in Galatians 1:8-9 which declares: **"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."**

TOM ROSS

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An answer given to this same question thirty years ago in *The Baptist Examiner*.

When Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 says baptism is essential to salvation I will believe it, however they do not say it and I do not believe it.

If they did teach it then they would be in direct contradiction with several other passages of the Bible. God does not contradict Himself in His work. Jesus said, **"For God so loved the world, that**

he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"(John 3:16).

John said, **"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him"**(John 3:36). Paul answered the question, **"What must I do to be saved?"** with these words: **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"**(Acts 16:31).

Ephesians 2:8, 9 tells us very clearly, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast."** Titus 3:5 says, **"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."** Jesus tells us very plainly that baptism is a work of righteousness in Matthew 3:15: **"And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."**

I find it a little difficult to believe that anyone could base a doctrine on a preposition. In Acts 2:38, **"Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."** Please note "repent" goes with the latter part **"And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."** The clause **"and be baptized"** etc., is at the end of the sentence and still says the same thing. The word **"for"** is a word that can mean "in order to receive" or "because of." The Greek word is the same that is used in Luke 5:14 where Christ had healed the leper. He told him to go to the priest and, **"offer for thy cleansing."** He was already clean so the word means because of. This is the same meaning in Acts 2:38. Peter is answering the question, **"What shall we do?"** (v. 37). He is telling them to repent (believe in Christ) and then be baptized because of the remission of sins.

Mark 16:16 is showing us that we should believe and then in obedience be baptized, but the latter part of the verse shows that the emphasis is on the believing. **"He that believeth not shall be damned."**

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"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"(Mark 16:16). **"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be**

baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"(Acts 2:38).

The salvation of God's people is merited by the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. We are saved through union with Christ the Lord and our union with Him is the divine operation of God (I Cor. 1:30), and this corresponds formally to baptism. **"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death..."**(Rom. 6:3-4). **"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"**(Gal. 3:27). **"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead"**(Col. 2:12).

Baptism, therefore, is a public ordinance whereby believers manifest their allegiance to Christ and His kingdom. Those who willingly refuse to obey Him are simply manifesting that they do not love Him or believe His word. Disobeying Christ is the way of death, but the elect of God are obedient to His gospel.

Since salvation comes through union with Christ, we should not think of it in impersonal terms such as "if you do this, God will do that." The gospel message is not a system of how to get saved if you will only do the right things, but it is the declaration that God has made Christ Sovereign Lord over heaven and earth by raising Him from the dead. Therefore, all men are called to the obedience of faith in Christ (Rom. 1:3-5, Acts 17:30-31, Matt. 28:18). This means that the elect of God are those who are brought by the Spirit of God under the dominion and rule of Christ as Lord (Col. 1:13). The saints are those who submit to Him in all of life, not those who do three or four things in order to get saved.

We must be careful not to separate the act of baptism from its meaning, namely that we have put on Christ. This is exactly what many Jews were guilty of with the ordinance of circumcision (Rom. 2:25-29). However, Paul taught that what really mattered was the circumcision of the heart.

Baptism is not one step toward salvation, but is a symbol of our union with Christ. If we lose sight of this, we will turn salvation into a work of the flesh rather than the Spirit. The issue is not "do we have to be baptized in order to be saved?" but rather "how do we identify those who are saved?" Baptism is important as we identify the people of God, but it is not absolute. Faith and obedience in all areas of life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is the true mark of the righteous. **"As it is written, The just shall live by faith"**(Rom. 1:17).

MATT JAMES

Roy Mason
(1894 - 1978)



An answer given to this same question thirty years ago in *The Baptist Examiner*.

Wait a minute! Wait just a minute! Let us see if Mark 16:16 says one has to be baptized to be saved. Let us read it. It says, **"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."**

Yes it is true that he that **"believeth and is baptized shall be saved."** It is also true that he that believeth and is baptized and brushes his teeth every day, and goes to bed at eight o'clock, and votes the Democratic ticket, and etc., etc., etc. shall be saved. But what is it that damns (or condemns) a person? Not lack of baptism. Not failure to properly brush one's teeth. Not a dozen or a hundred or a thousand things that might be mentioned – but JUST ONE. Failure to BELIEVE. It says that the one who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but when it comes to being condemned, only one thing is mentioned – UNBELIEF.

Neither does Acts 2:38 says that one must be baptized in order to be saved. Let's read it. **"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."**

Before we stake everything on any passage of Scripture, we need to always know the correct translation. In this passage the Greek word translated **"for"** is in many instances translated "because of," and that makes a tremendous difference in the meaning. **"Be baptized because of the remission of sins."** That is bound to be the correct rendering of the passage, for otherwise the passage would contradict the rest of the New Testament in relation to salvation. God has only one way of salvation. What about the thief on the cross who was saved? Was he baptized? Of course not. And he wasn't saved under the Law either, as some try to say, in their attempt to squirm out of this instance. If he was saved apart from baptism, then everybody else is saved apart from the same.

When the Philippian jailer asked Paul, **"What must I do to be saved?"** He didn't say believe and be baptized. He said **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."** Why didn't he add baptism? Because baptism is not involved in salvation.

So it goes, throughout the New Testament. I am an old-fashioned deep-water Baptist, but I believe in being baptized "on account" of remission of sins, not in order to obtain remission. Salvation is not through H²O, but through faith in Christ.

ROY MASON

Forum #2

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of the world." The "us" here consists of the elect. But still the outward call that goes to everyone has no effect on them until Christ is pleased to change it to an inward call. When that inward call comes to a person, he cannot even want to resist it. One moment Saul of Tarsus hated the Lord's saints, and was doing all he could do to completely eradicate them, but the next moment he wanted to be one of them. This radical change was brought about by that personal, inward call that he could not even want to resist. And you know that it was not according to his will, but according to the will of God, John. 1:13.

So through the preaching of the gospel everyone (many) are called, or invited. **"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"** (Rev. 22:17). But only the elect (few) are chosen and given that inward call.

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The context is the parable of the marriage of the king's son where the servants were commanded to go into the highways and hedges and compel men to come to the wedding. I liken this to the responsibility that we have to go into all the world and share the Gospel with lost sinners. This is a form of the general call that goes out to all men indiscriminately. It is a call that proclaims Christ as the only way of salvation. Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of hearers respond like those in Matthew 22:5: **"But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise..."** Hence, many are called through the preaching of the Gospel, but only those chosen before the foundation of the world are partakers of the effectual call of the Spirit. The preaching of the Gospel in the form of the general call will always be rejected. Only when the Holy Spirit makes the Gospel effectual do the elect come to Christ as illustrated in I Thessalonians 1:4-6: **"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost..."** The result of the effectual call of God's elect to salvation

is always the same. Sinners hear and believe the Gospel, then they begin to follow the Lord and respond to the truth of His Word. Many are called, but few are chosen. Many have heard with their physical ears the preaching of the Gospel in the form of the general call, but few are chosen of God and experience the grace of the effectual call.

TOM ROSS

An Address to the

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but that something of a superior nature is necessary for that purpose. This is an experimental acquaintance with true religion, or the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the great Saviour of sinners, which is attended with joy and peace here, and will be followed by perfect felicity hereafter. **"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"** (I Tim. 4:8). To engage you to the proper study of divine things would be highly pleasing, however much labor it might cost us, for we could have no greater joy than to see our children walking in the truth; while your being far from God, and exposed to His righteous displeasure, fills us with anxiety and pain.

Some young persons have imagined themselves in a safe state in relation to another world, because they have not committed the gross crimes which many of their own age and neighborhood have committed; but on the contrary have attended public worship, and the morning and evening devotions in the families of their parents; but all such imaginations must be delusive, and the expectations built upon them disappointed. Freedom from gross sins, and an attendance on external duties, cannot constitute true piety. The difference between such young persons and others originated, not in religion, but in their different circumstances. A religious education and the example of pious parents, may have restrained some from flagrant vices and follies of which others have been guilty; but if this be all, they are still strangers to God, and to the vital principles of true holiness. While your hearts remain unchanged by divine grace, no outward observances can be of any use to you: **"God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"** (John 4:24).

Other young persons may suppose their information in the Scriptures, and their understanding the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, will favorably distinguish them from those who have not such knowledge; a supposition equally delusive with the former; for, as a quantity of gold cannot be useful to a man sinking in the sea, but only serves to plunge him so much the deeper; so, a mere speculative acquaintance with the

Word of God will increase your guilt, and aggravate your condemnation. We could easily inform you of many, whose views of Christian doctrines have been very clear; but who, to all appearance, have died without an experimental acquaintance with the Saviour. A well informed judgment should not be mistaken for a sanctified heart; knowledge without holiness is far more dangerous than ignorance. **"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes"** (Luke 12:47-48). In proportion to the degree in which you understand the will of God, your disobedience to that will becomes the more aggravated, and if you die impenitent, your punishment will be the more severe. **"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them"** (John 13:17).

An opinion prevailed among the Jews, that none of their posterity could be lost: they thought their relation to the father of the faithful would prevent their final perdition. John the Baptist cautioned them against this false opinion: **"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham"** (Matt. 3:9). Something like this may have been experienced by you. Did you never inwardly say, "My father and my mother fear the Lord--- they often pray for their children. God hears the prayers of His people, and will regard us for their sakes." We assure you that such notions are wrong; religion is personal; as mere descent from the father of the Jewish nation could not entitle his posterity to the peculiar promises God made to him; so neither can your being the offspring of pious parents give you any claim to the salvation of the gospel. Whatever privileges you have derived from your first birth, you must be born again. The very beginning of religion is the renewal of our natures; we are so depraved by sin, that all our powers and passions are polluted, and we are altogether as an unclean thing. The children of grace are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The advantages of your birth and education, lay you under strong obligations to holiness; and should you break through them and walk in an evil way, to you, above others, it will be bitterness in the end. Consider, sooner or later sin must pierce your hearts with penitential sorrow, or with everlasting despair. **"Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into**

judgment" (Eccl. 11:9).

Perhaps you allow, that religion is important---that it ought to be attended to---and mean at some future period to become religious; but for the present you cannot think about it: but is not life uncertain? and have not thousands been ruined who once flattered themselves with such promises? "Procrastination is the thief of time." The Word of God promises nothing for tomorrow; but says, **"To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts"** (Heb. 3:7-8). To neglect the concerns of your souls, is to abuse the patience and forbearance of God---to sin against the convictions of your own consciences---and to increase your natural aversion to divine things. If your inward corruptions are not opposed, they gather strength; every day you neglect to seek the Lord, you are removed to a greater distance from Him, and may in the end be brought to entertain those slight notions of sin, and of your natural state by it, which have been the principal cause of the infidelity and ruin of multitudes.

You are the children of our cares and anxieties, the objects of our daily and earnest prayers; next to the salvation of our own souls, we are solicitous for that of yours: we long to see you fear the Lord before the world takes possession of your minds; besides, observation teaches us, that if the morning of life passes away, and you are not converted, it is probable you will become hardened in sin, and at last go down to the grave with a lie in your right hand. The thought of this is painful to our minds. How could we bear to see you placed on the left hand of the Judge at the great day of accounts, and to hear Him pronounce upon you that awful sentence, **"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"** (Matt. 25:41). The idea of so tremendous a scene fills us with pain, and awakens in our minds, on your account, the tenderest emotions. Does not the mention of it affect your souls also, and fill you with ardent desires to escape so dreadful a condition? Can you think of being driven from God, and dragged by devils into the place where there is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; to suffer from the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched, and not cry to the Lord for grace to prepare you to dwell with Himself, and with all the blessed in that happy world, in which He lives and reigns? Surely to meet you there would add to our felicity in those glorious regions, and cause us to strike our golden harps with new joy to His praise. While to be disappointed of this pleasure would, if indeed any thing could, cast a cloud over the brightness of our glory. O our dear children! Suffer us to remind you of the infinite importance of eternal things, and entreat you to seek the Lord while

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He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near. It is with pleasure we direct you to Jesus Christ; He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him: His blood cleanses from all sin---and whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

To fear the Lord in your youth, would prevent your contracting bad habits, the cure of which, when of long standing, is like cutting off a right hand or plucking out a right eye. No schemes of pleasure, nor plans of prosperity can succeed, without the divine blessing; your future prospects may seem well guarded from every disaster, but in one day, even in one hour, the whole may be blasted by some unexpected occurrence, and all your fondest hopes and warmest wishes laid in the dust. Your best interests, as well as your surest happiness, consist in the fear of God, for nothing can greatly injure those who fear Him; a sense of His favor, and a hope of dwelling for ever in His presence, are sources of consolation under all the trials of life.

As we love you, and ardently desire the salvation of your souls, we guard you against irreligious companions. **“Evil communications corrupt good manners”** (I Cor. 15:33). Many have been gradually, and, at first, imperceptibly led into sins, which have most awfully terminated their career. Some of those unhappy wretches who have become victims to public justice, have declared with their last breath, that wicked company was the first occasion of their ruin. **“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not”** (Prov. 1:8-10).

Should these lines be read by any who have already broken through parental restraints, and plunged into debasing vices, let them remember, that if they wish to return to the paths of virtue, even their case is not without hope. The promises of God and the blood of Christ unite in encouraging them to return from their wanderings, and seek the Lord. When the prodigal son said, **“I will arise and go to my father”** (Luke 15:18), his father received him with gladness: so when a sinner forsakes his evil ways, he meets with unexpected tokens of divine goodness---his sins are freely forgiven---and his polluted soul is cleansed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Come, ye prodigals, return to God! In the ways of sin you will find nothing but vexation, disappointment, and, at the end, everlasting misery: **“The wages of sin is death”** (Rom. 6:23). Come, then, we beseech you, retrace your erring steps; flee for salvation to the glorious Redeemer.

(D.G., *Baptist Magazine*, May 1818, pp. 175-178).

Why Your Faith and Your Baptism Will Not Save You

By Curtis Pugh
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Every Christian denomination and group teaches that faith is necessary to salvation! With only a very few exceptions, each one of these groups requires baptism for membership in their organization. Historically, Baptists have required a credible profession of faith as an evidence of salvation. Then they have required a baptism that meets Scriptural requirements prior to membership in a Baptist Church. I say *historically* Baptists have done this. Today there are people who call themselves Baptists who bear little resemblance to either their forefathers or to the Churches and Doctrines of the New Testament. So the title of this message, **WHY YOUR FAITH AND YOUR BAPTISM WILL NOT SAVE YOU** may sound strange to some. I invite you to stay with me and let us consider what the Scriptures have to say on these two matters.

Before we go to the Scriptures on these matters, however, let us recognize this: what God has to say about things may not be what we think about them. Isaiah 55:8-9 says. **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”** Because of this we ought to expect to find something different in the Scriptures regarding faith and baptism – something different from man’s popular opinion! Are you willing and able to believe the Bible? Will you believe and stand for what the Bible says even though it is different from what you have always believed?

As a matter of fact, the Scriptures declare that unsaved men and women will not receive what God says is truth and that they actually cannot know such things. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says **“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”** Two things are taught in this verse. (1) unsaved or natural people will not receive God’s truth because God’s truth is foolishness to them and (2) unsaved people cannot know or understand God’s truth in a spiritually profitable way because these things are matters of spiritual discernment. God’s truth is not desirable to unsaved men and women because it appears foolish to them! Not only does God’s truth appear foolish to unsaved people, God’s truth cannot be naturally known and



understood. It is impossible for unsaved people to receive God’s truth in a way that will benefit them for eternity.

The reason for this is that unsaved men and women do not have the

necessary ability to understand God’s truth in such a way for that truth to be spiritually profitable to them. Oh they might know some facts from the Bible, but such facts will do them no eternal good. You see, since the fall of our father Adam, men and women are born into this life in a condition that the Bible calls spiritual death. Where is the proof for this? Listen to the Bible! Speaking of those who have been saved, Paul writes in Ephesians 2:1 **“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins”** and again in Ephesians 2:5 Paul wrote, **“Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).”** The quickening here speaks of making alive, sometimes called regeneration or the new birth. Literally, the Greek word for “dead” here means “a corpse.” Unsaved men and women and boys and girls, are born alive physically, but they are born dead spiritually! Now we do not expect a corpse to do anything. The reason we do not expect a corpse to do anything is because a corpse cannot do anything! A corpse is a dead body! So it is with all the sons and daughters of Adam in their natural state. We are all born spiritual corpses – unable to understand God’s truth, the Bible, because we are spiritually dead and in need of what the Bible calls regeneration or the new birth.

The Bible teaches that man is composed of three distinct parts, spirit, soul and body. We often change the order to body, soul and spirit, but God lists them in order of salvation in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. That order is spirit, soul and body. Notice what God says through Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:23: **“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** I am aware that a person cannot be chopped up into three pieces, but man can be divided functionally into spirit, soul and body. Because of the fall of Adam all men have three needs. First of all they need to be born again or regenerated in their spirit – the part of man that when alive can know God. Secondly, they need to be converted in their soul – that part

of man that has consciousness of self and surroundings. Such a conversion takes place through the Word of God as David wrote in Psalm 19:7 **“The law of the LORD (or the Word of God) is perfect, converting the soul...”** But until the spirit of man is regenerated, the Word of God cannot be received profitably in such a way as to effect the conversion of the soul. That principle we learned earlier in 2 Corinthians 2:14. Thirdly men need to be rid of their mortal body and clothed upon with an immortal one. “Mortal” means subject to death. At the resurrection of God’s people, each one shall receive a new body, a spirit-suited body that is not subject to death, rather it is immortal. But our concern today is with the need, the absolute necessity of regeneration or a new birth in the dead spirit of every unsaved child of Adam. Jesus said it simply and concisely: **“Ye must be born again”** (John 3:7). In that same passage Jesus taught that such a new birth or regeneration is a spiritual matter and must be accomplished by the Holy Spirit – not by men’s works or men’s washing in the water of baptism. Remember the Lord said, in John 3:6-7: **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”** All that you might do or strive to do and all the religious rites that you might submit to at the hands of religious leaders will accomplish nothing! You must be born again or regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God!

Having said all that, let us consider for a moment what most religious groups believe about faith. You will not talk with their leaders long, or listen to their preaching long before it becomes clear that most religious people believe that faith is something possible to all people. In fact, it seems that most people believe that everyone has faith. According to them the problem is just this; some people put their faith in the wrong thing or person. Now sometimes doctrinally sound preachers tell people to put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, but they do not mean by that what the vast majority of public preachers mean by the term. The popular idea is that people have faith in many things – their abilities, their intelligence, their money, their own goodness etc., and that their faith is misplaced. The idea is that preachers and other religious workers must get men and women to change the object of their faith. The common message seems to be that men and women must stop trusting in their own religion or personal goodness and start trusting in Jesus Christ. While there is a small element of truth in what they say, they have missed what the Bible says! Are you ready and able to receive what the Bible says about saving faith? What if what the Bible teaches is

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completely contrary to your own ideas or the ideas of your preacher or your religious group? Will you go with God and the Bible? May God give you grace to do so! You will never be saved if you remain contrary to the Word of God!

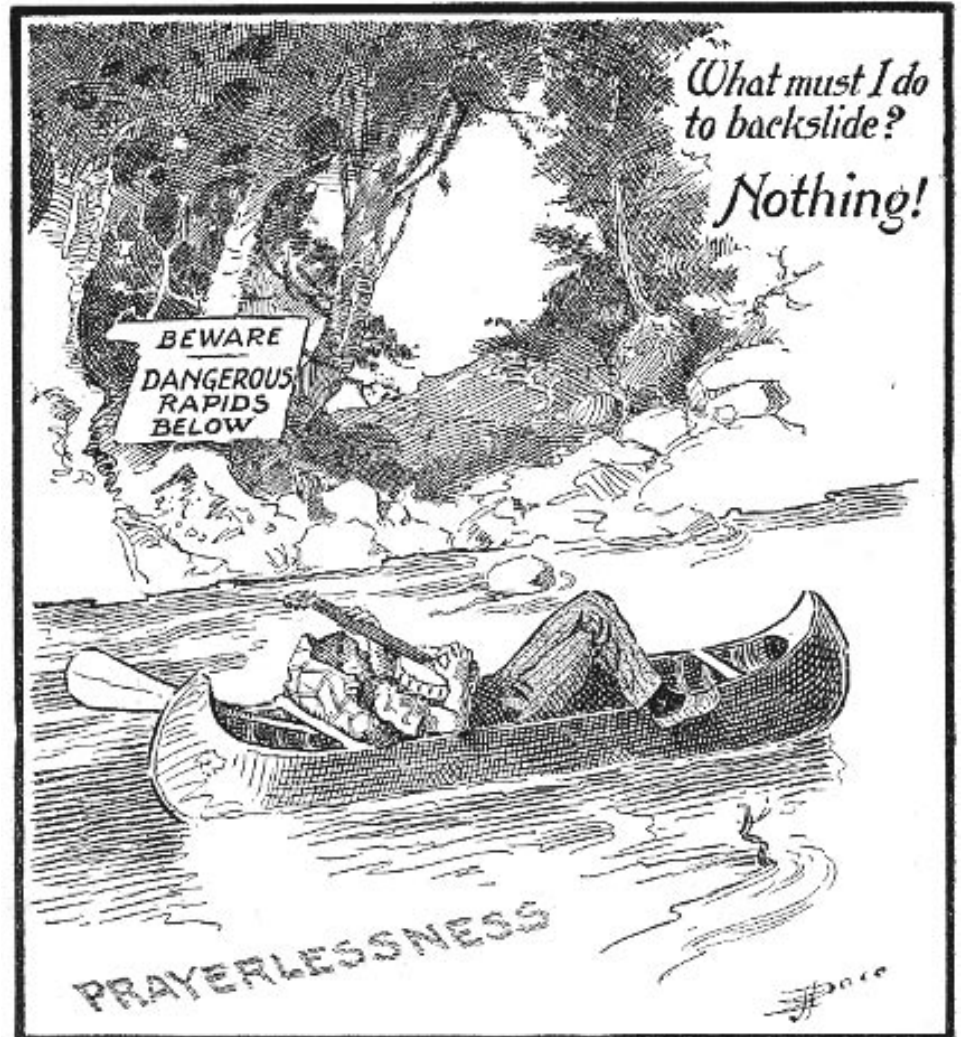
Let me give you five things that the Bible teaches about faith. *Number One:* It is at the point of faith that God declares a person to be righteous in His eyes. Here's the proof: three times the Bible tells us that Abraham believed God and righteousness was imputed to his account at the time he believed God. Romans 4:3: **"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."** And again, Galatians 3:6 where we read, **"Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."** And also in James 2:23 where the Scripture says, **"And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."** Then the Bible makes it clear that these things were not written just about Abraham. Justification, which means being declared righteous in God's sight, is obtained today in the same exact way as it was obtained by Abraham! In Romans 4:23-25 we learn this: **"Now it was not written for his sake alone, (Abraham's sake) that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."** The Bible is clear! Justification comes to the sinner at the point of faith! So then, faith is absolutely necessary for salvation!

But what kind of faith is the Bible talking about here? Is this kind of faith just an intellectual assent to revealed truth? No! For this intellectual kind of faith is a characteristic of demons according to James 2:19. There we read, **"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."** Demons give mental assent to the facts known to them about God and even tremble at those facts! Although a lot of foolish things are taught in this religion-weary world, I have never yet heard anyone teach that demons are saved because they believe the facts about God, even though their belief causes them to tremble before the truth – something that is almost unknown among people today. And so we have established the *Second thing* about faith and that is this: not every kind of belief is saving faith.

The *Third thing* about true faith or saving faith is this: not every man has saving faith. In 2 Thessalonians 3:2 Paul says, **"And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men:**

for all men have not faith." In fact, the Bible characterizes saving faith as **"the faith of God's elect."** Paul introduces the book of Titus thus and says in chapter 1 and verse 1 **"Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness."** So then, only God's elect people ever have this kind of saving faith! And it comes to them when they are regenerated. Now immediately someone will rise up and protest against the Bible doctrine of election. This is often an indication of what I said earlier: the natural man will not and indeed cannot receive revealed truth. Argue against it all you will and try to explain it away all you can, the Bible teaches that God, in eternity past, chose certain individuals to salvation without regard to any supposed or foreseen goodness in them and gave them to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Say what you will, the Bible says, in Ephesians 1:4, **"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."** That these chosen ones were given to Christ is recorded in John 17 verses 6 and 12 as well as in John 18:9. These elect or chosen ones, given by the Father to Jesus Christ are kept safe by Him. The proof for this is found in John 6:39 where Jesus said, **"And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."** God's chosen people, given to Christ, redeemed by Christ, come savingly to Christ, and shall never be lost! That is the message of God's grace to lost sinners!

The *Fourth thing* that we must note about saving faith is that faith comes as a gift to the elect child of God. In Ephesians 2:8-9 we read: **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** Saving faith is a gift! Some will say that a gift can be refused and that it must be willingly received, but these statements are not true at all about a gift. Think carefully for a moment! Many people have artistic gifts or the gift of music, but these were given to them before they were born. They had no opportunity to refuse such gifts and did not consciously or willingly receive them. They did not manufacture these gifts themselves, nor did they ask for them, nor did they make a decision and receive them on that basis. They are gifted people because they have such gifts. They did nothing to deserve them. So it is with faith that comes because of the free grace of God. In fact, Peter addresses his second letter saying in 2 Peter 1:1 **"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of**



God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Did you notice that? The people to whom Peter wrote this letter had "obtained" their saving faith. Now something that is obtained is something that comes from a source outside yourself! True faith or saving faith is obtained – it comes as a gift! You cannot manufacture it. You cannot muster it up! You are dependent wholly upon God for salvation, even for the faith that secures imputed righteousness in God's eyes! From first to last and everything in between, God in grace gives all that is needed for salvation!

The *Fifth and final thing* about faith is this: Saving faith is a fruit of the Holy Spirit of God. Such a fruit of faith comes in connection with the Word of God at the moment of regeneration or the new birth. Hear the Word of God in Galatians 5:22, **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith."** Now, regeneration or the new birth is a work of the sovereign Spirit of God and He is uncontrolled by human beings. The proof for this statement is John 3:8: **"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."**

So then we conclude from the Scriptures that YOUR faith will not save you! The only faith that saves or results in a person being declared righteous in God's eyes is **"the faith of God's elect"** (Titus 1:1). Do you have this kind of faith?

But what about baptism! Almost every religious group claiming to be a Christian group insists on baptism. Will not baptism save you? This brings us to the real point of this message. Almost every religious group in the world teaches that there is something that a lost person must do in order to please or placate God. They say there is *some thing* or there are *some things* that a lost person can do to secure salvation. One group says you must make a pilgrimage to some supposed holy shrine in honor of the Prophet. Another group says you must bathe in the sacred Ganges River. Another group says you must make a decision for Christ and come down to the front in a religious meeting. Still others say you must repeat something called "the sinner's prayer." And many say you must be baptized according to their particular mode and formula. If you meet the particular requirements of whatever group, they will assure you that you are saved.

Here again we see how that the natural man has not received the things of the spirit of God. Here again we see how that he *cannot* know them, because they are spiritually discerned as we quoted earlier in 2 Corinthians 2:14. While every man-made religion in the world, even those who claim to be "Christian," teaches that there is something that a lost man must do (have faith, make a decision, be baptized to wash away your sins, etc.) the Bible teaches the very opposite! Are you willing for your

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humanistic, natural ideas to be changed by the Bible? Write this passage down, look it up, read it and ponder it! Read Romans 8:7-9! Romans 8:7-9 is the answer to every false religious hope and every man-made religion in the world. It is the answer to the professing Christian who thinks that his decision for Christ has saved him. It is the answer to the professing Christian who thinks that his own self-produced faith has saved him. It is the answer to the professing Christian who thinks that his baptism, his church attendance, his taking communion, and his life of good works have a part in his salvation. God says in Romans 8:7-9, **"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."** Hear the Word of God! Those people who have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in them can indeed serve and please God. That is the inference here. These are people who have been born again or regenerated by the Holy Spirit. But the clear teaching of the Word of God is this: lost men and women cannot do anything to please God. Human faith will not please God. Praying a prayer will not please God. Making a decision for Christ will not please God. Baptism and taking communion will not please God! There is absolutely nothing that a lost person can do that will please God! That being the case, all religious efforts, whether making a decision or being baptized, are displeasing to God! Jesus emphasized that man-made religion was iniquity in Matthew 7:22-23. Hear what the Lord Jesus said: **"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."** According to Jesus Christ there is coming a day when men will seek to enter into Heaven because of their religious deeds. They will try to claim a connection to Him because of their self-effort. Some of the things they mention require real spiritual power indicating they had some kind of spiritual connection. Notice also that they claim to have done all these things in Jesus' name! And yet the Lord says they were none of His elect people – He never knew them! And then He will order them from even His presence saying they were workers of iniquity! Religion without regeneration is iniquity! This world has witnessed centuries of such religion with its persecutions and murders, but this

world has not yet seen how Christ will honor and receive unto Himself those that were given to Him by the Father before the world was created! Revelation 3:9 tells something of this. To the little, weak Philadelphia church Jesus sent this message: **"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."** Only in eternity will it become manifest just who the Lord loves! But that is another subject – one that most professing Christians are not ready to receive even though the Bible is clear on the subject.

“...Salvation is of the LORD,” the

Why You Should Join A Baptist Church

by Roy Mason (1894 - 1978)

(Taken from his book "After Conversion What?")

Occasionally one comes across a person who says "I believe in churches, I think that every Christian should be a church member, and I should like to join a church, if I could only settle the question as to which is the right one to join. With so many churches and denominations in existence, each one advancing their own peculiar claims, I have become confused so that I do not really know what to do." It is for such persons who are in honest doubt about this matter that this article is written, although it is hoped that it may prove helpful to those who are already members of Baptist churches, but are little more than Baptists in name only.

Assuming that you, my reader, are in earnest, and have an open mind, I wish to show you why that you, a Christian, should be a Baptist and should unite with a Baptist church. Understand me; I do not believe that you should unite with a Baptist church unless you become thoroughly convinced that Baptist churches of all others are the true and the only New Testament churches. Often mere sentiment determines the church to join, for many people. Many join a certain church because grandmother or grandfather or some other relative or friend once belonged to that church. Many times I have known a husband or wife to change their church affiliation just so the family would not be divided on the church question. I cannot but feel that it is a sin against God and against one's own soul to do this. No one ought to join a certain church, when their choice of that church is dictated by mere sentiment, whim, or caprice. No one ought to join a certain church just to please some relative or friend, or to keep peace in the family. This matter is too important, and one might add, sacred, to settle on any such basis. When one unites with a certain church it ought to be because of an intense *personal conviction that that church is right, and that it adheres to Christ's teachings, and that God approves of the making of that the church of their choice.* If more people felt that way about the matter of their church affiliation, we wouldn't have so many weak and "wobbly" church members

Word of God says in Jonah 2:9. From beginning to end, salvation is of the Lord! God provides all, does all, and secures all so that there is nothing left for man to do. Even the faith that secures justification is a gift of God wrought in the heart of God's elect by the Holy Spirit.

Lost person, stop trying to please God by your religious observances and human faith! You can only cast yourself on Jesus Christ and Him alone for your salvation. Your eternal destiny does not depend on you, but upon the finished work of Christ! Can you trust Him? Will you trust Him? May God be pleased to bless this message to the salvation of His elect people through the gift of saving faith.

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who seem to love other churches about as much as they do their own.

In looking out over the religious world today, divided into numerous sects, parties, and denominations, one thing ought to stand out as very apparent, and that is, that the *Founder of Christianity did not start all of these sects and divisions.* He cannot be said to be the author of any such confusion. The New Testament makes it very clear that He founded a church---not *many institutions* of different names and creeds calling themselves churches---but *one institution.* That this church was the local assembly should be very clear to any one who studies Christ's use of the word "church" (*ecclesia*) as given in the New Testament. His use of the word prohibits us from believing that other than the local assembly was meant. Moreover He promised the continued existence of this church throughout the ages. So in searching for the right church to join, the question for you to determine is, which church of all the institutions calling themselves churches today, is the one that Jesus founded and promised to perpetuate? If Jesus knew what He was talking about, and meant what He said, we are forced to believe that the church which He started has been perpetuated and is still in existence. I am quite sure that you would prefer to unite with the church that Jesus founded in preference to any counterfeit church that may have come into existence since His time. This brings me to a statement

of the first reason that I wish to offer you as to why you should join a Baptist church:

You should join a Baptist church **BECAUSE JESUS FOUNDED THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, AND HAS PRESERVED CHURCHES OF LIKE FAITH THROUGHOUT ALL THE CENTURIES UNTO THE PRESENT MOMENT.**

Now of course you will require at my hands some reasons for believing that the statement just made is true. Space does not permit of a lengthy discussion of this here, (for a full discussion of the perpetuity question, see the author's book, "The Church That Jesus Built,") but I shall give very briefly a few reasons that ought to prove conclusive.

1. *All churches, with the single exception of Baptist churches began hundreds of years after Christ, and had human founders.* This of course utterly precludes the possibility of any of them being the church that Jesus founded. Below there follows a table giving the date of the founding of each of the great churches of the world, and the name of the founder. This table is from "Denominationalism Put to the Test," by S. E. Tull.

2. *A comparison of the doctrines held by Baptists with those taught in the New Testament, shows them to be strictly apostolic in this regard.* A similar comparison of the doctrines held by other denominations with those of the New Testament, will show that such is not true in their case. Practices have been added for which there is no scriptural warrant, or else a meaning is placed upon the ordinances that is foreign to the teaching of the New Testament.

3. *Historians, many of them not Baptists, have conceded the apostolicity of Baptist churches.* Moreover they have traced the Baptists under various names back to the days of the apostles, and have established their identity with the church founded by Jesus. Let us take the time to note a few quotations from some reliable historians on this point:

Among Baptist historians, it is generally conceded that John T. Christian, stands at the head. Indeed, there are some who rate him as being the greatest historian in the world today. In his monumental work, "A History of the Baptists," (Bapt. S. S. Board 1922), we find him saying, (page 5), "I have no question in my mind that there has been a historical succession of Baptists from the days of Christ to the present time."

Mosheim: (*Lutheran historian*) "The origin

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DENOMINATIONAL CHART

Denominational Name	Founder's Name	Date of Origin	Present age in 1924
Catholic	Gregory I	A.D. 590	1334 yrs.
Lutheran	Martin Luther	A.D. 1520	404 yrs.
Episcopalian	Henry VIII	A.D. 1534	390 yrs.
Presbyterian	John Calvin	A.D. 1536	388 yrs.
Congregational	Robert Brown	A.D. 1580	344 yrs.
Methodist	John Wesley	A.D. 1740	184 yrs.
Campbellite	Alexander Campbell	A.D. 1827	97 yrs.
Mormon	Joe Smith	A.D. 1830	94 yrs.
Christian Science	Mary Eddy	A.D. 1884	40 yrs.
BAPTIST	JESUS CHRIST	Matt. 3:13-19; Matt. 16:18	

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of the . . . Anabaptists. . . is hid in the remote depths of antiquity" (*Institutes of Eccles. History III*, p. 200).

John Clark Ridpath, (*Methodist historian, author of Ridpath's History of the World*), in a letter to Dr. W. A. Jarrel (*Baptist Church Perpetuity*, p. 59), wrote: "I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist church as far back as A. D. 100, though without doubt there were Baptists then, as *all Christians were then Baptists*."

A. Ypeij and J. J. Dermout, (*Reformed Church, Holland*), in their "*History of the Dutch Reformed Church*" (Vol. I, p. 148), have this to say: ". . . the Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community which has stood since the days of the apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the Gospel through all ages."

Quotations might be multiplied, but space does not permit further historical references on this point. Any one, who wishes to read further along this line, and to see the indisputable historical evidence of the perpetuity of the Baptists, can do so by obtaining the author's book, "*The Church That Jesus Built*," or J. T. Christian's "*A History of the Baptists*."

Since other churches and denominations were not started by Jesus but by some man, hundreds of years after Jesus founded the first Baptist church, and since they all depart radically from the New Testament doctrines, it seems to me that a Baptist church would be the logical preference of any devout Christian who is anxious to please his Lord.

The second question that I wish for you to consider as to why you should be a Baptist is: **BECAUSE BAPTIST CHURCHES ARE THE ONLY CHURCHES THAT ADHERE STRICTLY TO THE SCRIPTURES IN REGARD TO ALL OF THE DOCTRINES THEY TEACH OR PRACTICE.** Other churches deviate from the Scriptures. Have you ever observed when attending other churches, that the minister often lays aside his Bible and reads from a Discipline or some man devised book, his authority for his mode of procedure? Would you not rather belong to a church that does not have to go outside the Bible for the justification of any of its actions?

Other denominations have doctrines and practices that have to be constantly excused and explained. Some of these practices involve them in inconsistencies that are very embarrassing. For instance, compare the way of salvation as held among Baptists with others. Baptists teach *only one way of salvation*. They teach that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone, and they only receive as candidates for baptism those who claim to have already been saved. Some other denominations hold to *more than one way of salvation*. They profess to believe in salvation by grace through faith, and at the same time baptize infants to make them children of God. Some of the members of these denominations, to be sure, claim that

they baptize infants because they are already children of God, but the catechisms, rituals, disciplines, etc., of these denominations indicate on this point that baptism has to do with making them children of God. Further than this, some of the other denominations teach that unless one "hold out faithful to the end" they will be lost. In other words they hold that man must add his works in order to be saved. This practically amounts to three ways of salvation: by grace, by baptism, and by grace plus works. Still other denominations hold that immersion is essential to Salvation (*Cf. Campbellites and Mormons*). This leads me to the statement which you will do well to ponder: **"BAPTIST CHURCHES ARE THE ONLY CHURCHES ON EARTH THAT REQUIRE A PERSON TO PROFESS TO BE SAVED BEFORE THE PERSON UNITES WITH THE CHURCH OR IS BAPTIZED."**

You believe that a person should be saved before they unite with the church, don't you? If you believe that, you belong with the Baptists, *for they alone* hold to this requirement. Other denominations either baptize infants, who cannot be believers, or else baptize with the idea that baptism helps to save.

As regards the ordinances, the Baptists are happily situated. In holding to believer's baptism, baptism by immersion only, and baptism as a simple, symbolical ordinance, possessing no saving power, they are both scriptural and consistent. Other denominations are greatly embarrassed to explain their position on this ordinance. Most of the great denominations practice infant baptism. Many who belong to these denominations do not believe in it, but let the reader bear in mind the fact that when one unites with an organization that practices infant baptism; *they set the seal of their approval upon it.*

Since the question of infant baptism is so often involved when one comes to consider what church to join, let me just give you, in the briefest way, two or three reasons why it should not be practiced and why one should not sanction such a practice by belonging to a church that administers it:

1. *There is nowhere in the New Testament a single command to baptize babies, nor a single example of one having ever been baptized.* If there was a single passage to warrant the practice it would have been found long ago. On the other hand New Testament baptism always presupposes belief in Christ. Of course no infant is capable of belief.

2. *Historians have fixed the date of the beginning of the practice of infant baptism, many decades after the death of Christ, and the beginning of the first church.* (For full historical discussion of Infant baptism see "Infant Baptism" by McGlothlin, S. S. Board, 1916). Thus they have shown that it was no part of the practice of apostolic churches.

3. *Infant baptism has no place in an evangelical system of religion.* Denominations that practice it today get the practice from the Catholics, who are not evangelical. One can readily see that if all babies were baptized, believer's baptism would soon

perish from the earth. So utterly out of place is infant baptism in an evangelical system that the very churches that practice it have not been able to keep from taking note of the inconsistency involved in it. This explains the dropping off in recent years in the number of infants baptized among the denominations that hold to this practice.

In regard to the other ordinance, the Lord's Supper, Baptists alone hold the logical, consistent, and scriptural position. Now you have probably heard more people object to Baptist churches on the ground of their attitude on this question, than any other thing. It is very common for people of other faiths to call Baptists "narrow" in regard to this matter. But there is really nothing in which Baptists are more right or scriptural than in this. We cannot go into this question exhaustively, but let us just think for a moment, and we can easily see the correctness of the Baptist position.

The Lord's Supper is a *church ordinance* isn't it? All denominations that I know anything about admit that it is. Baptists believe that immersion must precede church membership. Hence those not immersed are considered by them as unbaptized and thus unqualified to partake of the Lord's Supper. Moreover, as I have sought to show, Jesus founded the Baptist church, and gave to it this ordinance. If this is true, then no other so-called church has the right to administer this ordinance. No other church is a scriptural, New Testament church; hence Baptists cannot invite members of other churches to partake of the Lord's Supper with them any more than they could invite the members of the Masonic Lodge or the Carpenters' Union.

Summing up the argument on this point, Baptists do not partake of the Lord's Supper with the members of other denominations, because: (1) They are not properly baptized, and baptism must always precede the Lord's Supper. (2) Because Jesus gave the ordinance to His church to be observed and administered by His church. Since other denominations cannot be identified with the church that Jesus founded; since they are man-originated institutions, they are not true churches and have no authority to administer the Lord's Supper, and have no more right to partake of it with New Testament churches than have those who claim no church affiliation at all.

Further, they are prohibited by Scripture from partaking of the Lord's Supper with people of other faiths. Let me ask, is there division between denominations? Certainly, else they would not exist. All are divided on one or more doctrinal questions, as well

*There is never a day so dreary,
But God can make it bright,
And unto the soul that trusts him
He giveth songs in the night.*

*There is never a path so hidden,
But God will show the way,
If we seek the Spirit's guidance,
And patiently watch and pray.*

as other things. Now, the New Testament teaches us very clearly that people who are in a state of division cannot really partake of the Lord's Supper. Let us notice this passage: I Cor. 11:18-20 R. V., "**For first of all when ye come together in the church I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. . . when therefore ye assemble yourselves together it is not possible to eat the Lord's Supper.**" What could be plainer than the meaning of this passage? It declares plainly that there can be no real observance of the Lord's Supper where there is division and where there is "Open Communion" there is always division.

Again, whose Supper is it and whose table is it around which we assemble? Is it not the Lord's? If it is, what right have we to be so "broad" as to remove the restrictions that He placed upon it? All those who gathered with Christ at the first "Lord's Supper" were baptized persons. He did not even invite the good man who owned the house in which they gathered. We have no right to invite the unbaptized when He did not invite them. Suppose that you should invite a few of your close relatives and very intimate friends to supper. You specify exactly whom you wish to attend, and you tell those invited to come at six o'clock. At six o'clock you look out and lo, and behold! People are gathered by the score before your door. You inquire and you find that one of your friends decided that you were too "narrow" in your choice of guests. He thought that you should have included others in your invitation so he assumed the privilege of broadening your invitation and invited dozens of others not included by you. The question is, what would you think of your friend's action? Would it not seem the height of presumption? What right had he to change your invitation and invite to *your* supper, those whom you did not invite?

Christ gave the Memorial Supper to church members---baptized persons. What right has any one to invite to this Supper those who are not scripturally baptized, and who do not belong to His church?

To do so is to act with arrogant presumption!

Another reason why you should be a Baptist is **BECAUSE THEY HAVE THE ONLY FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT THAT IS RECOGNIZED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.** Being a rational, sensible being you had rather live in the United States where you have a voice in the government, than to live under monarchical rule where you would have no "say so" whatever, wouldn't you? Would you not also rather be a member of a church with a democratic form of government where you are privileged to vote in all matters pertaining to the church and its work? If you should become a member of some churches you would have very little to say about the way that affairs should be conducted in that church. You would be expected to pay and keep your mouth shut. You would not even have the right to help choose a pastor for your church. He would be sent to you by a higher-up ecclesiastic, and you would have to put up with him whether

♦ (Continued on page 117)

Why You Should

(Continued from page 117) ♦

you liked him or not. On the other hand if you should get a pastor that greatly pleased, and whose work should prove to be exactly suited to your church, and if he should want to remain, and every person in the church should want him to remain, the same higher-up could remove him just the same.

Now as a member of a Baptist church you would have just as many rights and privileges as any other member, regardless of their wealth, age, or social position. When it came to the call of a pastor, you would have a voice in the matter. In any other matter concerning the welfare of the church you would have a vote equal to that of any other member. Perhaps the purest democracies in the world are Baptist churches. Read the book of Acts, and see if the "whole multitude" of church members did not exercise a voice in matters concerning the church. Read all of the Epistles and see if believers were not on a strict equality as regards the church. The Catholic Church was the first to take from church members their rights and vest them in the clergy. Other denominations that withhold from their members their privileges in the government and affairs of the church, brought their unscriptural practice over from Catholicism.

If you believe in democracy rather than kaiserism and autocracy, then you are on this point a Baptist!

One last reason I will take time to give as to why you should be a Baptist: *YOU SHOULD BE A BAPTIST BECAUSE A STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WILL PRECLUDE YOUR BEING ANYTHING ELSE.* You cannot study the New Testament for yourself, with an unbiased, unprejudiced mind, willing to obey the Lord whatever the cost, and finish that study with other than Baptist convictions. Numerous instances are on record where a Bible has fallen into the hands of people totally unacquainted with

the beliefs of the different denominations, indeed, unaware of their existence, and they became Baptists in belief. Baptist missionaries in Brazil have had such persons to come to them for baptism upon numerous occasions. I know of no people save Baptists who are willing to turn a new convert loose with a New Testament and say to him, "Here, take this New Testament, study it yourself, and join the church to which it leads you!"

Let not the reader be careless about the church question, and just push the whole matter aside with the thought, "Oh well, it doesn't matter much which church I unite with anyhow!" Too many deal with the church question in this trivial way. It is quite common to hear people say, "There are good in all churches. The church doesn't save anyone. We are all trying to get to the same place." These things may be very true, but that doesn't warrant one in being careless about the matter of church membership. It is a sad thing to see a new born soul start out on a career of life long disobedience to Christ. This is exactly what happens when a new convert unites with a church that has unscriptural doctrines and practices. Besides I think that we may take exception to the statement made above, and state that after all one church is *not as good* as another. No church founded by a fallible man could be as good as the one founded by Jesus Christ Himself. No church that practices unscriptural things can equal the church that is sound and scriptural in all of its beliefs and practices. These two great claims, that Jesus founded the Baptist church, and that it adheres rigidly to apostolic doctrine and teaching, are well authenticated claims that demand your consideration in settling the question as to what church you should join.

Ponder carefully the things said in the foregoing paragraphs, investigate their truth, read and study the New Testament for yourself, with the determination to do what is right at any cost. If you will do this, I have no fear but that you will become a Baptist!

Keller said.

He added that the 2004 election led newspapers to take a second look at what readers want: "The tone of the debate that went on during the elections, served a constructive purpose for the media generally in making us a little more aware that we should be seeking out stories about the role that religion plays in the lives of Americans."

Scott Keeter, associate director of the Pew Research Center, indicated that might be a wise track for newspapers to follow: "There is ample evidence from our work that there is an audience for more coverage of religion in general and of religion in politics specifically."

GEORGIA GOVERNOR SIGNS PRO-LIFE BILL INTO LAW

(EP)—Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue on May 10 signed into law the Woman's Right to Know Act at a ceremony in the Georgia State Capitol.

The bill (HB 197) passed the General Assembly with strong bi-partisan support in March. The law protects a woman in an unintended pregnancy by providing her with resources and a 24-hour "reflection period" before an abortion. During her reflection period, she is given an opportunity to receive information in a booklet or on the state website about the development of the unborn child as well as information on agencies that offer alternatives to abortion, such as, adoption services, maternity care, and medical assistance that may be available. The law also specifies the obligations of the child's father to provide support.

HOMOSEXUAL INFLUENCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS SUBJECT OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST RESOLUTION

(EP)—A group of private school and home school advocates is asking the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to investigate what they are calling the "homosexual influence in public schools."

The resolution encourages every SBC church to investigate whether the school district in which it is located has either a homosexual club or any curriculum or program that attempts to influence children to accept homosexual behavior as a legitimate lifestyle. If the school district has any of these, the resolution urges churches to inform parents and encourage them to remove their children from the district's schools immediately.

Under the guise of promoting tolerance, safety, diversity, and multiculturalism, a growing number of government schools are influencing our children to regard homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle and silencing those within the schools who disagree.

FLORIDA JUDGE APPROVES ABORTION FOR 13-YEAR-OLD

(EP)—A juvenile judge in West Palm Beach, Fla., ruled May 2 that a 13-year-old girl involved in a legal battle with the state may abort her unborn child.

Judge Ronald Alvarez said the teen, who has been in state custody for four years, would not be physically or emotionally harmed by the procedure. Alvarez had earlier blocked the girl's abortion until a psychological evaluation was completed.

"He ruled that she is competent, that she has made a decision and that she has a right to act on that decision," Howard Simon, executive director of the Florida American Civil Liberties Union, which represented the girl, told the Associated Press.

But Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council disagreed. "This is a clear example of a system that should be protecting this young girl and her unborn child, yet has failed miserably," Perkins said. "Judge Alvarez created rights for a 13-year-old girl who is too young to make such decisions."

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush said that the state would not appeal further, but he called the case a "tragedy."

HOUSE PASSES PRO-LIFE LEGISLATION

(EP)—The U.S. House of Representatives recently approved the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act, a bill that would prohibit transporting a minor girl across state borders to obtain an abortion in order to avoid parental notification laws for abortion in the girl's home state. The bill passed on April 20 by a 270-157 vote.

The bill would also require a doctor to notify a minor's parent before performing an abortion, if that girl is a resident of another state.

NATIONAL BRIEFS

(EP)—High school students with knowledge of the Bible have a "distinct educational advantage," according to a recent study that polled English teachers in high schools. The teachers said it is difficult to pick up a work of literature that doesn't have some reference to the Bible, and that when students don't have biblical knowledge, they're really missing part of what the author has to say. Ninety-eight percent of the teachers surveyed believe Bible literacy gives students a distinct educational advantage, and 90 percent believe biblical knowledge is crucial for a good education. The study was funded by the John Templeton Foundation and published by the Bible Literacy Project.

(EP)—A study announced in the journal "Adolescent & Family Health" shows that remaining a virgin through adolescence has a significant impact on a person's well-being in middle adulthood. According to the study, men and women who were virgins at age 18 – when surveyed 20 years later – had about half the risk of divorce, had completed more education, and had about 20 percent more income each year than those who were not virgins at age 18. The study analyzed information gathered on more than 7,000 men and women during the National Longitudinal Study of Youth from 1979-2000.

(EP)—Results from a recent survey reveal that the majority of America's teenagers believe in God, but they have a shallow religious knowledge, and they have difficulty expressing their faith. Christian Smith, a sociologist at University of North Carolina, led a team that conducted 3,370 interviews with teens ages 13 to 17. The survey reveals that young people are not antagonistic about religion, but their religious knowledge is "meager, nebulous and often fallacious." Smith suggests several causes, including the parenting habits of Baby Boomers, poor educational and youth programs, and the

♦ (Continued on page 119)

THE

BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

PEW RESEARCH SURVEY SAYS AMERICANS DON'T TRUST DAILY NEWSPAPERS

(EP)—Nearly half of Americans believe little or nothing of what they read in America's daily newspapers, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.

The "New York Times" boasts millions of readers, yet only 21 percent of them say they believe what they read in the "newspaper of record." Of those surveyed, 14 percent said they believed almost nothing they read in the

Times.

Danny Schechter, editor of MediaChannel.org, said, "The deeper problem with the 'New York Times' is that it tends to focus on the beltway, on the establishment and as a platform for a very predictable range of views."

Bill Keller, executive editor of the "New York Times," said the paper is considering increasing its coverage of religion in America as a way to win back readers' trust. "We could use not only more reporting on religion, but a different tone in our reporting on religion,"

Bible & the Newspaper

(Continued from page 118) ♦

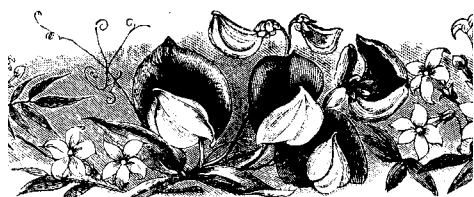
increased responsibilities and activities of teenagers.

(EP)—Voters in South Carolina will have the opportunity to weigh in on a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage next year. An amendment protecting traditional marriage, which was previously passed by the state's Senate, also passed in the House by voice vote April 26. As a result, the measure will be placed on the November 2006 ballot in South Carolina. So far, 18 U.S. states – which is every state that has so far voted on the issue – have already adopted such amendments, approving them by an average 70 percent margin.

(EP)—The school board of Odessa, Tex., has voted to add a Bible class to its high school curriculum. The unanimous vote came after hundreds of people packed the board meeting April 26 to support the move. The schools in the Odessa district will use material prepared by the Greensboro, N.C.-based National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools. A spokesman for the group, Mike Johnson, said students in the elective class would learn such things as the geography of the Middle East and the influence of the Bible on history and culture. Johnson asked the school board: "How can students understand Leonardo da Vinci's 'Last Supper' or Handel's 'Messiah' if they don't understand the reference from which they came?" Bible curriculum from the North Carolina group is already being used in nearly 300 school districts in 35 states.

(EP)—An annual survey from the Barna Group finds little change in faith-related beliefs, behaviors, and perspectives among Americans over the last 15 years. "The State of the Church: 2005" survey examined nearly four dozen religious measures including church attendance, the percentage of unchurched people, prayer, financial habits, and core beliefs. Among the findings, says the report, was a small increase in Bible reading. According to Barna, the percentage of evangelical Christians in America remains at just seven percent of the population. That number has not changed since the Barna Group began measuring the size of the evangelical public more than a decade ago. The survey noted decreases in church attendance and Sunday school involvement.

(EP)—The Texas House has tentatively passed a bill banning homosexuals from becoming foster parents. Randall Ellis, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, said the bill is bad for children. "(The measure) has taken aim at the (gay and lesbian) community of Texas and thousands of children are now caught in the cross hairs," he said. Rep. Robert Talton, a Republican, who introduced the amendment, said the bill is good for children: "It is our responsibility to make sure that we protect our most vulnerable children and I don't think we are doing that if we allow a foster parent that is homosexual or bisexual."



Are You Going to

(Continued from page 120) ♦

of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:1-3).

WHO CAN ENTER?

Heaven is "a prepared place for a prepared people." The Bible is very clear that only those who were chosen and made fit can enter the new Jerusalem: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23).

Let me ask you again: "Are you going to Heaven?" Let me beg you to accept one of the great invitations of God's Word: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Salem Missionary Baptist Church of Willow Hill, IL will be having their annual Singles' Conference August 11th thru the 13th. Bro. Mark Campbell will be one of the speakers. For more information contact Pastor Billy Holbrook at (618) 592-3806 or email holfam5@shawneelink.net.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Northport, AL will be having a special meeting Friday June 17th thru Sunday June 19th. The guest speaker will be Elder Troy McGahan. Service times are Friday 7:00 p.m., Saturday 10:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Sunday service at regular time. For more information contact Pastor Todd Bryant at (205) 242-8466 or email ToddBryant@charter.net

The Philadelphia Baptist Church of Decatur, AL will be having special services with Elder Leroy Pack, June 22nd-26th. The area fellowship meeting will also be on Saturday the 25th. All are invited to attend.

The church is completing their new building and hope to be in it by this time.

For more information contact Pastor Doyle Thomas at (256) 773-1474 or email coraltom@charter.net.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Pensacola, FL, is actively searching for a pastor. Any interested and unattached Brother is urged to contact Bro. Warren Burrell, church clerk at (850) 941-8067.

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST

Financial Report

4-1-2005 to 4-30-2005

Beginning Balance	\$2,455.91
RECEIPTS:	
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	425.00
Berea B. C., Westpoint, TN	100.00
.....	625.00
TOTAL	3,080.91

EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time	440.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	440.00
.....	\$2,640.91
Interest	+42
.....	2,641.33
Less Corbin, KY fund balance	-1,051.52
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,589.81

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance	\$1,291.52
EXPENDITURES:	
WCCT	240.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,051.52

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER

Financial Report

4-1-2005 to 4-30-2005

Beginning Balance	\$328.57
RECEIPTS:	
Arthur D. Richardson, Cedarville, WV	100.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	1,100.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Berea M. B. C., Mansfield, OH	50.00
Berea M. B. C., Westpoint, TN	1,650.00
Bethel M. B. C., Pasadena, TX	100.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne WV	300.00
Cedar Grove B. C., Millport, AL	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Faith M. B. C., Clarksville, TN	100.00

Faith B. C., Lynn, AR	25.00
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	25.00
Joseph Jurzec, Lake-in-the-Hills, IL	25.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
Landmark M. B. C., Moncks Corner, SC	25.00
Leston Farrell, Des Allemands, LA	150.00
Morris St. B. C., Hobbs, NM	300.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Bristol, TN	10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Ocoonita M. B. C., Keokee, VA	40.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Colimbus, MS	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Galena, OH	150.00
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
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	454.00
Anon	180.00
Sub Total	\$5,744.00
TOTAL	\$6,072.57
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	498.04
Postage	827.12
Supplies	263.96
Wages	3,920.00
FICA	281.47
Dividing Checks	150.00
Total Expenditures	5,940.59
.....	131.98
Bank Charges	-20.39
ENDING BALANCE	\$111.59



Father Please

Father; please save a soul today.
It's only through Your Sovereign Will,
For man is saved by faith through grace.

Father; please save a soul today.
The one you know I love so dear,
For that one, I dread, the end is near.

Father; please save a soul today.
You know the one, that one who's lost,
The one who can't see the cross,
My heart does swell for he is lost.

Father; please save a soul today.
You know the one, the one like me,
Who once was lost but know is found.

Father; please save a soul today.
The one I hope Christ bled and died,
The one I hope you chose, ere ever was a sky.

Father; please save a soul today.
For my hope is they are one of yours,
The hope I may see them when I die.
Father, won't you please, save that soul today?

By-Roger D. Reed

Are You Going to Heaven?

By Rosco Brong
(1908 - 1985)

"In my Father's house are many abodes, and if not I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye may be also" (John 14:2,3---corrected translation).

This is a small world; as it were a mere speck of dust in the great universe of God's creation, and a human lifetime is less than a moment when considered in view of an endless eternity. Spiritually ignorant of divine revelation and like simple savages overawed by the inventions of the learned---learned, at any rate, in the science of destruction---not only avowed enemies of Christianity but multitudes of infidels parading as Christians are denying the teaching of the Bible on such fundamental subjects as the character of the true God and the nature of man, righteousness and sin, life and death, Heaven and Hell.

We need not be disturbed by the excursions of mice, monkeys, or men into outer space. Divine truth will survive the discoveries, inventions, and theories of astronomy and astronautics just as it has survived the discoveries, inventions, and theories of biology, geology, and other sciences---including a great deal of "science falsely so called" (I Tim. 6:20).

HEAVEN IS A PLACE

Spiritualists and people deceived by them, who ought to know better, think that Heaven is just a different state or condition of existence. Note that Jesus says, **"I go to prepare a place."**

Three heavens are mentioned in the Bible: First (that is, nearest to us), the air in which birds fly (Gen. 1:20). Second, the space where He put the moon, the sun, and the stars (Gen. 1:14-18). Third, the Heaven that is His throne (Isa. 66:1). It is this Third Heaven, also called Paradise (II Cor. 12:2-4) that we are talking about now.

If anyone wants to argue that Heaven is not a place but a state, let him argue the point with our Lord when he gets there---if he gets there. Jesus said, **"I go to prepare a place for you,"** but He was talking to disciples who believed His Word.

In a sense, God is everywhere (Ps. 139:7-12), but His presence is more manifest in Heaven. So our Master taught His disciples to pray, **"Our Father which art in heaven"** (Matt. 6:9).

The fact that God is especially resident in Heaven appears again and again in the Bible. Thus we read, **"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men"** (Ps. 14:2), and other such references which show that the omnipresent God manifests Himself especially in and from Heaven. In Heaven we shall be with God in the sense far beyond anything we can experience or imagine here.

WHERE JESUS IS

"No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven," said Jesus to Nicodemus. Being God as well as man, Jesus was also in Heaven at the very time He was talking to Nicodemus. But since then



He has returned to Heaven in the glory of His resurrection body and has opened the way for His followers to go up there also.

In Acts 1:9 we read that **"a cloud received Him out of their sight,"** and in Acts 7:55 that the martyr Stephen, **"being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God."**

So we need have no difficulty in knowing where Jesus has gone---where He is now---to prepare a place for us. It is in Heaven above, **"where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God"** (Col. 3:1).

WHERE ANGELS ARE

"Take heed," said Jesus (Matt. 18:10), **"that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."**

It would be easy to multiply Scripture references to holy angels, angels of God, heavenly hosts, etc., to show that Heaven is the regular abode of these **"ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation"** (Heb. 1:14).

WHERE LOVED ONES ARE

The mortal bodies of our departed loved ones sleep in the dust of the earth, but it is not so with their souls. If they **"die in the Lord"** (Rev. 14:13), while their bodies rest, spiritually they have not died at all, but have gone on to Heaven and are now with the Lord.

"Whosoever liveth and believeth in me," said Jesus, **"shall never die. Believest thou this?"** (John 11:26). No, believers in "soul sleeping" do not believe Jesus, but His Word is still true. As one of our poets has said, "Dust thou art, to dust returnest, was not spoken of the soul."

When Stephen was being stoned to death he said, **"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."** Though in the body **"he fell asleep,"** can anyone doubt that this martyr, **"full of the Holy Ghost,"** was received by his Lord into His heavenly presence?

FRIENDS TO RECEIVE US

With the story of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1-9), Jesus exhorts us, **"Make to yourselves**

friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Jesus plainly says that these friends are to receive us not at the resurrection, but **"when ye fail,"** in other words, at the very time we "fail" from this world we are received into the next.

Even so, the Apostle Paul wrote: **"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord"** (II Cor. 5:6-8).

Surely God has made it clear enough in His Word that all our departed loved ones who were saved by His grace, along with all the saints of past centuries, probably from Adam and Eve, and certainly from righteous Abel to the last unconscious infant laid beneath the sod, are now with Him in Heaven, ready to bid us welcome when we pass through the shadow of death to that bright world above.

OUR NAMES ARE THERE

To the disciples who reported with joy that demons were subordinated to them in His name, Jesus answered: **"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven"** (Luke 10:20).

In Revelation 20:15 we read that **"whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."** Thus we can understand why Jesus taught that there is more reason for joy in knowing that our names are written in Heaven than in having great power, even miracle-working power, on earth.

TREASURES IN HEAVEN

One of Jesus' commandments is that we shall lay up treasures in the right place so that our hearts will be in the right place: **"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"** (Matt. 6:19-21).

If we have obeyed Jesus in this matter, we have treasures stored up for ourselves in Heaven, and so Heaven is more precious to us.

Several crowns are mentioned in the Bible as among the treasures that can be laid up in Heaven: an incorruptible crown (I Cor. 9:25); a crown of rejoicing (I Thess. 2:19); a crown of righteousness (II Tim. 4:8); a crown of life (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10); and a crown of glory (I

Pet. 5:4).

RESERVED FOR US

Unlike treasures on earth, which **"moth and rust"** can corrupt and which thieves can steal, our treasures in Heaven are reserved under the same protective power of God as are we ourselves. Men may rob us of potential crowns and other treasures that we could and ought to earn but come short of (II John 8; Rev. 3:11), but if we ever get them to our credit in Heaven, they are safe:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:3-5).

OUR ETERNAL HOME

Note the word "abodes" in our text (John 14:2). The place our Lord has gone to prepare for us is a place to stay. (**"Mansions"** of the King James Version meant about the same thing 350 years ago.) Of course, this does not mean that we shall be confined to these abodes, or dwelling places, in our Father's **"house,"** but we shall always have a place to call "home." And it will always be a home of such love and joy and peace as this world knows nothing of.

Even now, we ought to think of ourselves as strangers and pilgrims in this world, on our way to a better country and a better city (Heb. 11:10-16). In fact, our true citizenship is in Heaven (Phil. 3:20).

If we die and go to Heaven before the second coming of Christ, He will bring us back with Him to get our glorified resurrection bodies before the translation of the saints still living in mortal flesh: **"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"** (I Thess. 4:14-17).

THE HEAVENLY CITY

As we have already seen, the **"Father's house"** of John 14:2 is also called a **"country"** and a **"city"** in Hebrews 11:10-16. And in Galatians 4:26 we read, **"Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."**

Now we read in Revelation 21 a partial description of this glorious heavenly city, and that it will come down, not upon this present earth, but to the new earth that is to be: **"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out**

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