

The Berea Baptist Banner

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

The Cry of Creation

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



has rested upon the lower creatures and this planet. From Adam's fall the whole frame of nature has had an interest in man's redemption. It was for man's sake the earth was cursed. Therefore, it should

come as no surprise that the earth is to share in man's recovery. Today all creation sympathizes with man's misery and expects its own emancipation from its present sin-blighted condition. What a beautiful thought!

A great deal of confusion exists as to the meaning of the word "creature" used in our KJV. The word in the original, which is translated in verses 19, 20, and 21 "creature," is translated in verse 22 "creation." The creation or the creature

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"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:19-22).

Very few sermons have ever been preached from these verses. Interpreters have been puzzled by their meaning. The writer speaks of a subject here which is seldom mentioned in other Scripture. Paul speaks of the transcendent glory for which all creation is looking and longing. Ever since man sinned a curse

Encouraging the Saints

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia



"Encouragement" can be defined this way: "support of a kind that inspires confidence and a will to continue or develop." Encouragement is an important part of our service unto the Lord. Especially, as we consider our service within the churches of Jesus Christ, it must be easily discernible that "encouragement" and "encouraging the saints" is essential in the day to day and week to week success of the churches of Jesus Christ. We want to see others (and ourselves) with some measure of confidence in the things of God. We want to see others (and ourselves) having a will to continue or develop.

Today, I want to remind all of us here, that it is needful to "receive" encouragement from time to time. I also want to remind each of us here that it is

needful to "extend" encouragement from time to time. I believe that both the recipient and the source of encouragement are going to be blessed – as long as this encouragement is in accordance with the Scriptures, and our proper worship of God.

So, let's move on to consider some ways in which we can encourage one another – and our brothers and sisters in the churches of Jesus Christ.

WITH OUR PRESENCE

First of all, I think it is necessary (and very basic) to point out that we cannot hope to be an encouragement to one another if we are not often in the presence of one another. Since I am addressing the

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"Choose You This Day Whom Ye Will Serve"

By Timothy J. Hille
of Ashland, Illinois



lead, that does not make God's Word of no effect. We seem to live in a day in which people think that if they choose not to believe something, then it is not so: what they

have done is constructed a false reality for themselves that fits the liking of their inordinate affections. **"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged"** (Rom. 3:3-4).

There are many things set forth in the Bible to which the reply of our carnal minds and unbelieving hearts is, **"This is an hard saying; who can hear it"** (John

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Read Joshua 24:1-14

I had intended to preach upon another of the Old Testament beatitudes this morning, as we had done last Sunday morning; but the Holy Spirit would not permit me to do so. This passage of Scripture is no doubt familiar to many of you, especially the words of Joshua to the children of Israel where that he stated, **"But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"** (Jos. 24:15). We live in a day of abundant religion, but the problem is that it is religion foreign to the Scriptures. God's Word is the rule for all things that are acceptable unto Him. If people will not accept the Bible's teachings, either because it offends them or does not agree with their own personal rationale, or because they find its commandments and principles inconvenient to the lifestyle they wish to

Watching for Christ's Coming

By C. H. Spurgeon
(1834 - 1892)



"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants" (Luke 12:37-38).

I am about to speak of the Second Coming of Christ; and I felt thankful that my dear brother's prayer, although we had not been in consultation with one another upon the matter, was in every way so suitable to the subject upon which I am to speak. He led us in prayer to think of our coming Lord; so that I trust you are on the margin of the subject now, and that you will not have to make any very great exertion of mind to plunge into mid-stream, and be carried away with the full current of thought concerning

the Second Advent of the Savior. It is a very appropriate topic when we come to the Lord's table; for, as that prayer reminded us, the Lord's supper looks backward, and is a memorial of His agony; but it looks forward and is an anticipation of His glory. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, **"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."** By looking forward, in a right state of heart, to that Second Coming of Christ which is the joy of His Church, you will be also in a right state of heart for coming to the communion-table. May the Holy Ghost make it to be so!

The posture at the communion-table, as you know, according to our Lord's example, was not that of kneeling, but that

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Between right and wrong there is no middle path.

Though a great many try to make one, they can never succeed..

"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" (Revelation 22:14).

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

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

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office charges us \$.50
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address.

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church at Indore, I think that it is right and proper to remind each of you that your presence is expected any time that the congregation would assemble together in a public worship service. Therefore, it is to be expected that we would be gathered together in the presence of one another several times every week. Our attitude towards the congregational assemblies and times of worship and prayer, ought to be like David's attitude: **"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD"** (Ps. 122:1). It should make us happy and joyful and glad to meet together around the Word of God and in the presence of God and our brothers and sisters in Christ! This should be the highlight(s) of our week!

Well, I know that we often don't have the right attitude, and I know that some of us look for reasons to skip a service now and then. But, trust me, you cannot encourage your brother or sister in Christ; nor can you receive encouragement from your brother or sister, if you are not regularly in the presence of one another. I think that the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ proves to us that He often times went into the temple (or the synagogue) in order to meet with the people. And, while there, He would comfort, exhort, encourage, teach, and instruct the people that would be gathered in His presence. (See Luke 19:47-20:1; John 8:1-2).

This pattern of gathering together in the presence of one another, in order that the saints could be edified and encouraged is continued into the New Testament age through the assemblies and congregations of Jesus Christ. We read in Acts 2:46-47, **"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."** God's saints realized, and have always contended, that gatherings together are necessary so that we can grow and be sustained in the Spirit and the Word of God. How can we encourage one another if we don't ever assemble with one another?

The writer to the Hebrews teaches us this necessity from the negative sense when he says: **"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"** (Heb. 10:25). It was already becoming a problem – even in the early churches – that some folks would absent themselves from the assembly or congregation. If this happens, or if this becomes a pattern of behavior, then that absent person is committing a

sin; because the Scriptures plainly teach us that we are commanded to assemble together. Well, it isn't just that the absent parties are hurting themselves; they are also committing a sin against the other members. If they aren't there, how can they know to pray for their brothers and sisters as they ought? And, if they aren't there, how can they know to rejoice with, sorrow with, comfort, exhort, or encourage their brethren as they ought?

I believe that this duty we have to assemble with one another extends even beyond the public worship services. Our best friends, and our most beloved ones, ought to be the members of the church of Jesus Christ to which we belong. We ought to spend much time with each other. We ought to enjoy the presence of one another. We should always be available in each other's lives – so that we can help and encourage one another. This is what the preacher had to say: **"Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun. There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail. Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken"** (Eccl. 4:7-12). Solomon saw a lot of persons that had no one to labor for or with. Solomon considered these persons to be lonely; and, he considered their labors to be vanity. After all, if you have no one to labor for – if you have no loved ones, and none that are dear to you, why would you work so hard and labor so much? I mean, this is true in the flesh, because who would you have to give your riches and your honor to? To whom will you deliver your goods, possessions, and place in society, if you have no one dear to you? Isn't this the height of vanity, to labor and seek riches when you yourself will soon pass away, and there are none to share with you or inherit the rewards of your efforts?

Sadly, I think that many folks in our churches behave the same way. They seem to labor and work in a solitary fashion, and they have no desire to share the rewards of their efforts with others. Solomon makes it plain that it is better to be with others, than it is to be alone. There are many benefits, such as the strength that we gain when we are joined with others of like precious faith; and, the encouragement that we receive to know that we are laboring in unity and harmony with others of the children of

God; and, the warmth and satisfaction that comes from the fellowship that we share one with another. God expects that we will sustain and encourage one another with our presence.

WITH OUR INTEREST

In this second point, I want to stress the importance of not just our "presence" in the congregation and lives of others; but, I want to stress that we ought to have a real and genuine "interest" in the service that we render unto God and others.

The Lord said through the prophet Isaiah, **"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation"** (Isa. 51:6-8). Our interest and our desires ought to be placed on heavenly things rather than on earthly things. We should consider the importance and the great value of the "salvation" that comes from God and the "righteousness" of God rather than any valuables, or treasures, or beauties that this earth has to offer.

So, when we show up at church services; and when we show up in the lives of our fellow saints; let it not be just a presence, but let it be a presence that is accompanied by a genuine interest in the furtherance of the kingdom of God, and the good and the success of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul said, **"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God"** (Col. 3:1-3). Our eternal lives – and all that is of eternal importance – are currently **"hid with Christ in God."** Therefore, our greatest interest, and our sincerest desires, ought to be centered on the things of God, and the people of God, and the church of Jesus Christ. (See Matt. 6:19-24).

Our interest in each other ought to include a desire to see our brothers and sisters faithfully serving the Lord in the church of Jesus Christ. Let's read the verses that immediately precede the famous verse which we have already quoted: **"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto**

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love and to good works" (Heb. 10:23-24). In this context the word "provoke" is not a bad or evil thing. Instead, we are being instructed to "inspire" or "incite" or "stir up" one another. This is of paramount importance in the churches of Christ! I am afraid that we have too long allowed ourselves to live solitary lives without a sincere interest in the lives of others. I pray God that He will give us the strength and wisdom to "provoke" one another in such a way that we are all inspired to greater heights in our service unto God!

WITH OUR PARTICIPATION

So, we see that it is necessary to be present and to have an interest in the lives of others so that we can be an encouragement. But, let me take this thought process one step further: Now that we have a genuine interest in the lives of others, what do we do next? Well, this is exactly what I want us to think about – "doing." We ought to be active participants in the fulfillment of God's will. Do you realize that God is going to accomplish His will? Do you realize that whatsoever He ordains is going to be done? Do you realize that every soul that is ordained unto eternal life shall be saved? Do you realize that every saint that is ordained to be encouraged will be encouraged and uplifted? Well, what is your place in this process? Will you actively participate in what you know God is going to accomplish – with or without your participation? I am not trying to say that you can change God's will and purpose, nor am I trying to say that you can insert yourself into the will of God and perform some deed that you were not ordained to perform. All I am saying is that you have a choice – an opportunity to follow and serve God in an active fashion. Who knows what God will do with you when you take that next step? **"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word"** (I Kings 18:21). If God is God – and you know He is – then "follow" Him! If God has ordained that His people should be encouraged, and that we should labor side by side with our brothers and sisters in the churches of Christ, then do what you know He has ordained! Be a part of the process! Participate in the unfolding of God's will and purpose!

In reality, I think that God expects no less from each of us. **"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire"** (Heb. 12:28-29). God expects us to "serve" Him "acceptably

with reverence and godly fear." He wants us to serve one another, and participate in the well-being and success of each other. We read in Galatians 5:13-15, **"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."** (See also I Cor. 12:18-26). It is a privilege and an honor to be bound to one another in the church of Jesus Christ. In this capacity we can encourage one another, and actively participate in the success and good of each other. (See Rom. 15:30). There may be some happy occurrence, or some joyful event, that you can be a part of accomplishing in the life of some brother or sister in the church. In my opinion, this is a great privilege and a great opportunity, that we ought not to let slip by!

WITH OUR LOVE

Finally today, I want us to consider the effect that love can have in our lives as we seek to encourage one another in the faith of Jesus Christ. This is the way Jude put it: **"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life"** (Jude 21). Now, some folks might imagine that Jude is talking about the necessity of "keeping ourselves in the love of God" for fear of losing our salvation. But, this is not what Jude is talking about at all. He is talking about those that are saved, responding to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in such a way, that we are evidently and obviously in the "love of God" and "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." He is talking about us knowing and understanding that God does love us, and that we ought to love Him. Jude is talking about the "love of God" being the motivation for what we do in this life – even as it will be in the life to come.

I reckon that the only things that we do in this life, which will be rewarded in the life to come, are those things that we do, and those words that we say, which are motivated by our love for God and our love for His people. **"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more"** (I Thess. 4:9-10). (See I John 4:20-21; Mark 12:28-34). The idea that we have ever loved enough – or done enough – is foreign to the Scriptures! We can always say and do more! We can always love God and His people more! There is never an end to the opportunities that we have before us!

Let us be an encouragement to each other. If you need encouragement, then

I suggest that you go to church and be in the presence of those that can give you genuine, and sincere, and scriptural encouragement. Or, if you feel like you are able to extend encouragement (and all of us can on some level), then go to church and be in the presence of those that need genuine and sincere and Scriptural encouragement.

It is an encouraging thing to meet together with fellow-saints and know that we all believe in the same God, and we all trust in the same Saviour! It is an encouraging thing to meet with the church of Jesus Christ, and to know that this church is descended from that first church that Jesus Christ established 2000 years ago! It is an encouraging thing to know that we are meeting together with brothers and sisters in Christ that love us, and desire only our best and the best that God has to give us! It is an encouraging thought to consider that our fellow saints in the church of Jesus Christ love us with the same love that we love them – and that they care for us even as much as they could ever care for themselves!



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of reclining. The easiest position which you can assume is the most fitting for the Lord's supper; and yet remember that the supper was no sooner finished, than "they sang a hymn," and when that hymn was concluded, they went out into the Mount of Olives to the agonies of Gethsemane. It often seems to me as if now, after finding rest at the table by feeding upon Christ, whose real presence we have, not after a carnal sort, but after a spiritual sort, after that, we sing a hymn, as if we would go out to meet our Lord in His Second Coming, not going to the Mount of Olives to see Him in a bloody sweat, but to hear that word of the angel, **"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."** I do not think we ought to feel at all surprised if we were to go out from the table of fellowship tonight, and meet our Lord at once; nay, we should be always waiting for His appearing, ever expecting Him, not knowing at what hour the Master of the house shall come. The world does not expect Him; it goes on with its eating and drinking, its marrying and giving in marriage; but His own family should expect Him. When He will return from the wedding, I trust that He will not find the door shut against Him, but that we shall be ready to open to our Lord immediately He knocketh. That is the object of the few words that I shall have to say to-night, to stir you up, and my own heart also, to be ever watching for Christ's Second Coming.

I. First, THE LORD WILL COME. He that has come once is to come again;

He will come a second time. The Lord will come.

He will come again, for He has promised to return. We have His own word for it. That is our first reason for expecting Him. Among the last of the words which He spoke to His servant John are these, **"Surely I come quickly."** You may read it, "I am coming quickly. I am even now upon the road. I am traveling as fast as wisdom allows. I am always coming, and coming quickly." Our Lord has promised to come, and to come in person. Some try to explain the Second Coming of Christ as though it meant the believer dying. You may, if you like, consider that Christ comes to His saints in death. In a certain sense, He does; but that sense will never bear out the full meaning of the teaching of the Second Advent with which the Scripture is full. No, **"the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God."** He who went up to heaven will come down from heaven, and stand in the latter day upon the earth. Every redeemed soul can say with Job, **"Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."** Christ will as certainly be here again in glory as He once was here in shame, for He has promised to return.

Moreover, the great scheme of redemption requires Christ's return. It is a part of that scheme that, as He came once with a sin-offering, He should come a second time without a sin-offering, that, as He came once to redeem, He should come a second time to claim the inheritance which He has so dearly bought. He came once, that His heel might be bruised; He comes again, to break the serpent's head, and, with a rod of iron, to dash His enemies in pieces, as potters' vessels. He came once, to wear the crown of thorns; He must come again, to wear the diadem of universal dominion. He comes to the marriage supper; He comes to gather His saints together; He comes to glorify them with Himself on this same earth where once He and they were despised and rejected of men. Make you sure of this, that the whole drama of redemption cannot be perfected without this last act of the coming of the King. The complete history of Paradise Regained requires that the New Jerusalem should come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and it also requires that the heavenly Bridegroom should come riding forth on His white horse, conquering and to conquer, King of kings and Lord of lords, amidst the everlasting hallelujahs of saints and angels. It must be so. The man of Nazareth will come again. None shall spit in His face then; but every knee shall bow before Him. The Crucified shall come again; and though the nailprints will be visible, no nails shall then fasten His dear hands

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to the tree; but instead thereof, He shall grasp the scepter of universal sovereignty; and He shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah!

When will He come? Ah, that is the question, the question of questions! He will come in His own time. He will come in due time. A brother minister, calling upon me, said, as we sat together, "I should like to ask you a lot of questions about the future." "Oh, well!" I replied, "I cannot answer you, for I daresay I know no more about it than you do." "But," said he, "what about the Lord's Second Advent? Will there not be the millennium first?" I said, "I cannot tell whether there will be the millennium first; but this I know, the Scripture has left the whole matter, as far as I can see, with an intentional indistinctness, that we may be always expecting Christ to come, and that we may be watching for His coming at any hour and every hour. I think that the millennium will commence after His coming, and not before it. I cannot imagine the kingdom with the King absent. It seems to me to be an essential part of the millennial glory that the King shall then be revealed; at the same time, I am not going to lay down anything definite upon that point. He may not come for a thousand years; He may come to-night. The teaching of Scripture is, first of all, **'In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.'** It is clear that, if it were revealed that a thousand years must elapse before He would come, we might very well go to sleep for that time, for we should have no reason to expect that He would come when Scripture told us He would not."

"Well," answered my friend, "but when Christ comes, that will be the general judgment, will it not?" Then I quoted these texts, **"The dead in Christ shall rise first." "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."** I said, "There is a resurrection from among the dead to which the Apostle Paul labored to attain. We shall all rise; but the righteous shall rise a thousand years before the ungodly. There is to be that interval of time between the one and the other; whether that is the millennial glory, or not, this deponent sayeth not, though he thinks it is. But this is the main point, the Lord shall come. We know not when we are to expect His coming; we are not to lay down, as absolutely fixed, any definite prediction or circumstance that would allow us to go to sleep until that prediction was fulfilled, or that circumstance was apparent."

"Will not the Jews be converted to Christ, and restored to their land?" enquired my friend. I replied, "Yes, I think so. Surely they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn

for Him, as one mourneth for his only son; and God shall give them the kingdom and the glory, for they are His people, whom He has not for ever cast away. The Jews, who are the natural olive branches, shall yet be grafted into their own olive tree again, and then shall be the fullness of the Gentiles." "Will that be before Christ comes, or after?" asked my friend. I answered, "I think it will be after He comes; but whether or no, I am not going to commit myself to any definite opinion on the subject."

To you, my dear friends, I say, — Read for yourselves, and search for yourselves; for still this stands first, and is the only thing that I will insist upon to-night, the Lord will come. He may come now; He may come tomorrow; He may come in the first watch of the night, or the second watch, or He may wait until the morning watch; but the one word that He gives to you all is, "Watch! Watch! Watch!" that whenever He shall come, you may be ready to open to Him, and to say, in the language of the hymn we sang just now, —

"Hallelujah!

Welcome, welcome, Judge divine!" So far I know that we are Scriptural, and therefore perfectly safe in our statements about the Lord's Second Advent.

Brethren, I would be earnest on this point, for the notion of the delay of Christ's Coming is always harmful, however you arrive at it, whether it be by studying prophecy, or in any other way. If you come to be of the opinion of the servant mentioned in the forty-fifth verse, you are wrong: **"If that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."** Do not, therefore, get the idea that the Lord delayeth His Coming, and that He will not or cannot come as yet. Far better would it be for you to stand on the tiptoe of expectation, and to be rather disappointed to think that He does not come. I do not wish you to be shaken in mind so as to act fanatically or foolishly, as certain people did in America, when they went out into the woods with ascension dresses on, so as to go straight up all of a sudden. Fall into none of those absurd ideas that have led people to leave a chair vacant at the table, and to put an empty plate, because the Lord might come and want it; and try to avoid all other superstitious nonsense. To stand star-gazing at the prophecies, with your mouth wide open, is just the wrong thing; far better will it be to go on working for your Lord, getting yourself and your service ready for His appearing, and cheering yourself all the while with this thought, "While I am at work, my Master may

come. Before I get weary, my Master may return. While others are mocking at me, my Master may appear; and whether they mock or applaud, is nothing to me. I live before the great Task-master's eye, and do my service knowing that He sees me, and expecting that, by-and-by, He will reveal Himself to me, and then He will reveal me and my right intention to misrepresenting men." That is the first point, brethren, the Lord will come. Settle that in your minds. He will come in His own time, and we are always to be looking for His appearing.

II. Now, secondly, THE LORD BIDS US WATCH FOR HIM. That is the marrow of the text: **"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching."**

Now what is this watching? Not wishing to use my own words, I thought that I would call your attention to the context. The first essential part of this watching is that we are not to be taken up with present things. You remember that the twenty-second verse is about not taking thought what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; you are not to be absorbed in that. You who are Christians are not to live the fleshly, selfish life that asks, "What shall I eat and drink? How can I store up my goods? How can I get food and raiment here?" You are something more than dumb, driven cattle, that must think of hay and water. You have immortal spirits. Rise to the dignity of your immortality. Begin to think of the kingdom, the kingdom so soon to come, the kingdom which your Father has given you, and which, therefore, you must certainly inherit, the kingdom which Christ has prepared for you, and for which He is making you kings and priests unto God, that you may reign with Him for ever and ever. Oh, be not earthbound! Do not cast your anchor here in these troubled waters. Build not your nest on any of these trees; they are all marked for the axe, and are coming down; and your nest will come down, too, if you build it here. Set your affection on things above, up yonder; —

"Up where eternal ages roll,

Where solid pleasures never die,

And fruits eternal feast the soul;"

there project your thoughts and your anxieties, and have a care about the world to come. Be not anxious about the things that pertain to this life. **"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."**

Reading further down, in the thirty-fifth verse, you will notice that watching implies keeping ourselves in a serviceable condition: **"Let your loins be girded about."** You know how the Orientals wear flowing robes, which are always getting in their way. They cannot walk without being tripped up; so that, if a man has a piece of work on hand, he just tucks in his robe under his girdle, ties his girdle up tightly, and gets ready for his task, as we should say in English, turning the

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Oriental into the Western figure, rolling up your shirtsleeves, and preparing for work. That is the way to wait for the Lord, ready for service, that, when He comes, He may never find you idle. I called to see a sister one morning; and when I called, she was cleaning the front steps with some whitening, and she said, "Oh, my dear pastor, I am sorry that you should call upon me just now! I would not have had you see me like this on any account." I answered, "That is how I like to see you, busy at your work. I should not have liked to have come in, and caught you talking to your neighbor over the back palings. That would not have pleased me at all. May your Lord, when He comes, find you just so, doing your duty!" You see exactly what is meant; you are to be doing your duty; you are to be engaged about those vocations to which God has called you. You are to be doing it all out of love to Christ, and as service for Him. Oh, that, we might watch in that style, with our loins girded about! Work, and wait, and watch! Can you put those three things together? Work, and wait, and watch! This is what your Master asks of you.

And next, He would have us wait with, our lights burning. If the Master comes home late, let us sit up late for Him. It is not for us to go to bed till He comes home. Have the lights all trimmed; have His chamber well lit up; have the entrance-hall ready for His approach. When the King comes, have your torches flaming, that you may go out to meet the royal Bridegroom, and escort Him to His home. If we are to watch for the Lord, as we ought, it must be with lamps burning. Are you making your light to shine among men? Do you think that your conduct and character are an example that will do your neighbors good, and are you trying to teach others the way of salvation? Some professors are like dark lanterns, or candles under a bushel. May we never be such! May we stand with our lamps trimmed, and our lights burning, and we ourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord; not walking in darkness, nor concealing our light, but letting it shine brightly! That is the way to watch for Christ, with your girdle tight about you because you are ready for work, and your lamp flaming out with brightness because you are anxious to illuminate the dark world in which you live.

To put it very plainly, I think that

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Watching for Christ's

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watching for the Coming of the Lord means acting just as you would wish to be acting if He were to come. I saw, in the Orphanage school-room, that little motto, "What would Jesus do?" That is a very splendid motto for our whole life, "What would Jesus do in such a case and in such a case?" Do just that. Another good motto is, "What would Jesus think of me if He were to come?" There are some places into which a Christian could not go, for he would not like his Master to find him there. There are some kinds of amusements into which a believer would never enter, for he would be ashamed for his Master to come and find him there. There are some conditions of angry temper, of pride, petulance, or spiritual sloth, in which you would not like to be if you felt that the Master was coming. Suppose an angel's wing should brush your cheek just as you have spoken some unkind word, and a voice should say, "Your Master is coming," you would tremble, I am sure, to meet Him in such a condition. Oh, beloved, let us try every morning to get up as if that were the morning in which Christ would come; and when we go up to bed at night, may we lie down with this thought, "Perhaps I shall be awakened by the ringing out of the silver trumpets heralding His Coming. Before the sun arises, I may be startled from my dreams by the greatest of all cries, 'The Lord is come! The Lord is come!'" What a check, what an incentive, what a bridle, what a spur, such thoughts as these would be to us! Take this for the guide of your whole life. Act as if Jesus would come during the act in which you are engaged; and if you would not wish to be caught in that act by the Coming of the Lord, let it not be your act.

The second verse of our text speaks about the Master coming in the second watch, or in the third watch. We are to act as those who keep the watches of the age for Christ. Among the Romans, it was as it is on board ship, there were certain watches. A Roman soldier, perhaps, stood on guard for three hours, and when he had been on the watch for three hours, there came another sentry who took his place, and the first man retired, and went back to the barracks, and the fresh sentinel stood in his place during his allotted time. Brethren, we have succeeded a long line of watchmen. Since the days of our Lord, when He sent out the chosen twelve to stand upon the citadel, and tell how the night waxed or waned, how have the watchers come and gone! Our God has changed the watchers, but He has kept the watch. He still sets watchmen on the walls of Zion, who cannot hold their peace day or night, but must watch for the Coming of their Master, watch against evil times, watch against error, and watch

for the souls of men. At this time, some of us are called to be specially on the watch, and dare we sleep? After such a line of lynx-eyed watchmen, who counted not their lives dear unto them that they might hold their post, and watch against the foe, shall we be cravens, and be afraid; or shall we be sluggards, and go to our beds? By Him that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore, we pray that we may never be guilty of treason to His sacred name and truth; but may we watch on to the last moment when there shall ring out the clarion cry, "**Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.**" People of the Tabernacle, you are set to watch tonight just as they did in the brave days of old! Whitefield and Wesley's men were watchers; and those before them, in the days of Luther and of Calvin, and backward even to the days of our Lord. They kept the watches of the night, and you must do the same, until —

"Upstarting at the midnight cry,

"Behold your heavenly Bridegroom nigh,"

you go forth to welcome your returning Lord.

We are to wait with one object in view, viz., to open the door to him, and to welcome Him: "**that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.**" Perhaps you know what it is to go home to a loving, tender wife and children who are watching for you. You have been on a journey; you have been absent for some little time; you have written them letters which they have greatly valued; you have heard from them; but all that is nothing like your personal presence. They are looking out for you; and if, perchance, the boat should fail you, or the train be late, if you arrived at eleven or twelve o'clock at night, you would not expect to find the house all shut up, and nobody watching for you. No, you had told them that you would come, and you were quite sure that they would watch for you. I feel rebuked myself, sometimes, for not watching for my Master, when I know that, at this very time, my dogs are sitting against the door, waiting for me; and long before I reach home, there they will be, and at the first sound of the carriage wheels, they will lift up their voices with delight because their master is coming home. Oh, if we loved our Lord as dogs love their masters, how we should catch the first sound of His Coming, and be waiting, always waiting,

and never happy until at last we should see Him! Pardon me for using a dog as a picture of what you ought to be; but when you have attained to a state above that, I will find another illustration to explain my meaning.

III. Now, lastly, THERE IS A REWARD FOR WATCHERS. Their reward is this, "**Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching.**"

They have a present blessedness. It is a very blessed thing to be on the watch for Christ, it is a blessing to us now. How it detaches you from the world! You can be poor without murmuring; you can be rich without worldliness; you can be sick without sorrowing; you can be healthy without presumption. If you are always waiting for Christ's Coming, untold blessings are wrapped up in that glorious hope. "**Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.**" Blessednesses are heaped up one upon another in that state of heart in which a man is always looking for his Lord.

But what will be the blessedness when Jesus does come? Well, a part of that blessedness will be in future service. You must not think that, when you have done working here, you Sunday-school teachers, and those of us who preach and teach, that the Master will say, "I have discharged you from my service. Go and sit on a heavenly mount, and sing yourselves away for ever and ever." Not a bit of it. I am but learning how to preach now; I shall be able to preach by-and-by. You are only learning to teach now; you will be able to teach by-and-by. Yes, to angels, and principalities, and powers, you shall make known the manifold wisdom of God. I sometimes aspire to the thought of a congregation of angels and archangels, who shall sit and wonder, as I tell what God has done for me; and I shall be to them an everlasting monument of the grace of God to an unworthy wretch, upon whom He looked with infinite compassion, and saved with a wonderful salvation. All those stars, those worlds of light, who knows how many of them are inhabited? I believe there are regions beyond our imagination to which every child of God shall become an everlasting illumination, a living example of the love of God in Christ Jesus. The people in those far distant lands could not see Calvary as this world has seen it; but they shall

hear of it from the redeemed. Remember how the Lord will say, "**Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.**" He is to keep on doing something, you see. Instead of having some little bit of a village to govern, he is to be made ruler over some great province. So it is in this passage. Read the forty-fourth verse: "**Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.**" That is, the man who has been a faithful and wise steward of God here, will be called of God to more eminent service hereafter. If he serve his Master well, when his Master comes, He will promote him to still higher service. Do you not know how it used to be in the Spartan army? Here is a man who has fought well, and been a splendid soldier. He is covered with wounds on his breast. The next time that there is a war, they say, "Poor fellow, we will reward him! He shall lead the way in the first battle. He fought so well before, when he met one hundred with a little troop behind him; now he shall meet ten thousand with a larger troop." "Oh!" say you, "that is giving him more work." That is God's way of rewarding His people, and a blessed thing it is for the industrious servant. His rest is in serving God with all his might. This shall be our heaven, not to go there to roost, but to be always on the wing; for ever flying, and for ever resting at the same time. "**That do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.**" "**His servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face.**" These two things blended together make a noble ambition for every Christian.

May the Lord keep you waiting, working, watching, that when He comes, you may have the blessedness of entering upon some larger, higher, nobler service than you could accomplish now, for which you are preparing by the lowlier and more arduous service of this world! God bless you, beloved, and if any of you do not know my Lord, and therefore do not look for His appearing, remember that He will come whether you look for Him or not; and when He comes, you will have to stand at His bar. One of the events that will follow His Coming will be your being summoned before His judgment-seat, and how will you answer Him then? How will you answer Him if you have refused His love, and turned a deaf ear to the invitations of His mercy? If you have delayed, and delayed, and delayed, and delayed, how will you answer Him? How will you answer Him in that day? If you stand speechless, your silence will condemn you, and the King will say, "**Bind him hand and foot, and take him away.**" God grant that we may believe in the Lord Jesus unto life eternal, and then wait for His appearing from heaven, for His love's sake! Amen.

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6:60)? The precepts of God will not cater to your sinful flesh. God makes no room for the flesh and the lusts thereof in His will for a person's life. Jesus Himself said to some of His own disciples, **“Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,”** (John 6:61-63). People want to repeat a prayer, say they're sorry, make a so-called “decision for Jesus,” and then be allowed to go on living after the old fleshly lusts they have followed since the day they were born. If the gospel you profess to believe didn't change you, then it didn't save you. When a person is saved, that person experiences a change in his or her heart inwardly that manifests itself outwardly in whom he or she chooses to serve. The Apostle Paul stated it like this: **“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”** (Rom. 6:6). A lost person serves sin. A lost person loves sin, delights in sin, imagines sin, and will continue to choose and practice sin all the days of his or her life unless God ministers grace and gives that person repentance unto life and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. People say, “Well that's not me.” It is if you have never repented of your sins and trusted in Christ as your Lord and only Saviour! A saved person has been given liberty from sin, and should not serve sin any longer, no longer walking after the course of this world, no longer being conformed to this world. A born again child of God (and you must be born again to be a child of God) is transformed by the renewing of his or her mind according to the living and powerful Word of God! A child of God is set free by these words of the Saviour: **“Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more”** (John 8:11).

Whether or not you will readily admit it, you are serving something today. Something has mastery over your life and you are subject unto it. A servant is one who follows the rules and orders of someone else. The question you need to ask yourself today is, “Am I serving the Lord?” The answer may seem difficult, but really it is quite simple in the light of God's Word. The reason, perhaps, that people think the question is difficult to answer may be due to the fact that when they answer the question honestly, they do not like the answer they must give. This is not a question you must ask with regard to someone else, it is one which you must ask with regard to yourself. Service is a matter of submitting to someone else. Some people submit to their jobs: their job rules their lives. Some people

submit to their spouse, their family; others to themselves and their own self-centered desires. The way to determine who you are serving today is to answer these questions. Who or what occupies the majority of your thoughts? Who or what determines the way you schedule your time? Who or what controls how you spend your money? Who or what do you love and is the center of your affections? Whom do you seek to please by the way that you live? Perhaps the question should be asked in this manner: Who determines whether or not you go to church on the Lord's day or someplace else?

In our text, Joshua rehearsed in the ears of the children of Israel how the Lord had blessed them. God had kept the covenant with their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had delivered them from the bondage and slavery of Egypt. He had protected them from Pharaoh's army. He had given them Moses and Aaron to lead them and guide them in the way that they should go and how they should walk before the Lord. God had delivered them from those who sought to curse and hinder them, and had brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey as He had promised. They had enjoyed the salvation of the Lord and the covenant blessings of God. Has not the Lord extended unto us His great salvation? Are there not some of you here today whom the Lord has delivered out of the house of bondage, the bondage of false religion, the bondage of spiritual darkness, the bondage of sin and death? Are not you here today who are saved by faith in the Son of God recipients of the

covenant blessings of God, **“who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”** (Eph. 1:3)? If that be so, then ought not we to **“now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served?”** We have verily been blessed of the Lord, we who are saved; and if that be so, then we ought to serve the Lord and worship Him with every breath that He gives us from now to the last.

Joshua was issuing a challenge to the children of Israel, and I believe God's Word issues that challenge to us today: **“choose you this day whom ye will serve.”** In all honesty, beloved, you will make a choice and you will serve someone, **“whether the gods which your fathers served . . . or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell,”** or the Lord God of heaven and earth. You are already serving one of these right now; and just because you're in church doesn't mean you're serving the One whom you ought to be serving who made heaven and earth and who shed His blood on Calvary's tree to ransom men, women, boys, and girls from their sins. Let us take note, beloved, first of all, of the reality of your choice, and the characteristics of that choice. Secondly, let us note your options, if you will, or whom you may choose to serve. Finally, we shall notice that if a person chooses to serve the Lord, there is a way in which that service must be rendered.

I. THE REALITY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUR CHOICE.

Joshua stated, under the inspiration

and leadership of the Holy Spirit, **“Choose you this day whom ye will serve.”** The fact of the matter was that the children of Israel were going to make a choice concerning whom they were going to serve now that God had brought them out of the slave house of Egypt and into the promised land. The same is true concerning each of us that are here today. We have already made and will in the future make a choice regarding whom we are going to serve. You made a choice regarding coming to God's house today. Some of you chose to come here to be seen and heard. Some of you chose to come here because you feel guilty for not having been here other times when you should have. Some of you, by the grace and mercy of God, chose to come here with a sincere desire to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. Whatever the reason and motivation, your choice is a reality, and you are here. The only way anyone ever makes a right choice for the right reasons is due to and by the enabling grace of God.

Joshua had challenged the children of Israel to make a choice, and that choice was going to have certain qualities or characteristics. First of all, it was going to be an individual choice: **“choose you.”** Every person was going to choose with respect to his or her own self. You cannot choose for someone else to serve the Lord. You may want someone else to serve the Lord, and you may wish they would; but you will choose for yourself. Some of you are here to serve the Lord today, and your parents are not. Some of you are here today to serve the Lord, but your spouse may have no desire to be here or to serve the Lord. Your children may not have chosen to serve the Lord this morning, whether you brought them with you or not. Whether or not someone serves the Lord is a matter of that person's heart and individual submission to the will of God.

You may know some people who ought to be here serving the Lord, yet who are not. I know of many, but the reality is that they chose not to and yet others did. Someone else's choice not to serve the Lord will not hinder you from choosing to serve the Lord. The Jews should have accepted Jesus as the Christ, but they did not: **“He came unto his own, and his own received him not”** (John 1:11). That did not hinder those whom the Lord did call and whom He did save: **“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name”** (John 1:12). Someone may be a hindrance and a discouragement to you in getting to God's house or living in a way that pleases the Lord and is in obedience to His Word; but no one else can make your choice to serve or not serve the Lord! If you choose to serve the Lord, God will make a way for you to

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do so, and it will be the right way. When we choose to serve the Lord, there is no need for compromise on truth and righteousness, because God will open the door that we may serve Him the way He wants to be served.

Another characteristic of your choice with regard to serving the Lord is that it is one you will make today, tomorrow, and every day of your life: **“choose you this day.”** The children of Israel were going to have to choose that very day; and then they were going to have to choose the next day, and the next. Whether or not to serve the Lord is a choice that God’s people must and do make on a daily basis. You will not escape this choice, and you will face this choice every day. Some people think this is only a choice made on Sunday morning when they roll around in bed and try to decide if they aren’t too lazy or too tired from staying out too late the night before to get up and go to God’s house. Monday you will make this choice. Tuesday you will make this choice. There is no day of the week that you won’t make this choice because serving the Lord is a seven day-a-week, twenty-four hour-a-day part of the life of every child of God. For lost sinners, this choice is easy: they always choose to serve someone other than the Lord, whether they use Jesus’ name as a stamp upon the things they do or not. They have to choose sin and darkness because their hearts are in darkness and that is all they know. You that are saved always chose darkness, every single day; and you would have continued to if God, who commanded the light to shine, had not shined in your heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The psalmist wrote, **“This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it”** (Ps. 118:24). God has made every day, and you are going to choose to either serve Him or someone else on a daily basis. Not every day you face is the same. Some days are filled with heaviness and sorrow, and others are filled with joy and delight. God did not promise that all days would be hard or that all days would be easy. The reason you can choose to serve God today, tomorrow, and every day is not because of the circumstances of that particular day, but because of the unchanging God who made that day, **“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever”** (Heb. 13:8). People complain and say, “You just don’t know what my days are like.” I may not, but I know that my God is the same every day, and He has promised in His Word, **“As thy days, so shall thy strength be”** (Deut. 33:25). Who are you going to serve today?

II. WHOM YOU MAY CHOOSE TO SERVE.

Another one of the characteristics of your choice, which we shall consider separately under this point, is that of whom you choose to serve: **“choose you this day whom ye will serve.”** Joshua had given the children of Israel many reasons for serving the Lord; yet, they must themselves choose whom they were going to serve. People today must make the same choice. Many come to church, some more than others; but that does not mean they have chosen to serve the Lord. Joshua presented some different choices to the people. First, he exhorted them, **“Serve ye the LORD.”** They had good reason to serve the Lord, and so does everyone who is here today. Then Joshua stated unto them, **“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you . . . whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell.”** There were many whom they could choose to serve, but they could serve only one.

(Read Matt. 6:24.) People today would like to think, as the devil seeks to deceive them into thinking, that they can serve God and serve something else at the same time. Jesus clearly indicates that you will serve God or something else, and that no one can serve two masters. The one you choose to serve will be the one you love. We can certainly tell a lot about people’s affections today, can’t we? The children of Israel had a choice. They could serve the Lord, who had delivered them and saved them and blessed them with blessings they had not deserved, earned, or merited in any way. They could also serve some other gods, which in truth are no gods, but which they could nonetheless serve. People today are serving a lot of things that are not gods, but you would think they were by the way people serve them. People today serve the beach, the soccer field, the baseball diamond, the television, the couch, the mattress, and their jobs – all the things for which they forsake God’s house, the time of prayer, and the reading and studying of God’s Word. I believe we are seeing the greatest revival of sun worship in all the world in this day in which we live, for if the sun is shining on the Lord’s day, people are out mowing the lawn, riding their bikes, taking walks, going fishing, and all manner of things, and they seemingly have chosen not to serve the Lord.

Joshua described the gods whom the Israelites could choose to serve if it seemed evil to them to serve the Lord God of heaven and earth. They could choose the gods which their fathers had served, the idols worshipped by Abraham’s ancestors in the land of the Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham experienced the grace of God in being called out of

his father’s house and from his kindred by the Lord, away from the idolatry and false worship of that land. Some of you have been blessed in a similar manner, having been called of God away from false systems of worship and from gods who were in truth no gods, but the making of men’s reprobate minds and wicked imaginations. The children of Israel could have chosen to serve the gods of the Amorites in whose land they dwelt, the land of Canaan which God had promised to the seed of Abraham for an everlasting inheritance. Those about us are serving many gods, and you may likewise choose to serve those gods with them. To many Baptists today, it has seemed evil to serve the Lord of glory; so they have decided to serve the gods of those around them. They imitate the lifestyles of their neighbors and acquaintances who are in the world. You know what the problem with associating with people who don’t believe right and worship right is? They will influence you to incorporate their false worship and service into your life. **“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners”** (I Cor. 15:33). The children of Israel were not supposed to associate with the heathen nations around them so that they wouldn’t be influenced to serve their false gods.

(Read Ps. 115:4-8.) Are you dead? The Bible says that if you serve one of these gods, that are in reality no gods, you are just like them. They have no life in them. I wonder if people in churches today are really alive spiritually! You will not serve the Lord and something else. God wants none of your half-hearted service: it is an abomination to Him, and He rejects all of it that you try to pass off as true religion. People say, “Well, I don’t know what to do about this or that.” God’s Word is very plain on the matter: **“How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him”** (I Kings 18:21). Who are you going to follow? You will serve one or the other.

III. THE WAY IN WHICH THE LORD MUST BE SERVED.

I am glad that God’s Word is clear about what is required for serving the Lord. Will you choose to serve the Lord today? Many people answer this question in the affirmative, but then they go about trying to serve God on their own terms. You are going to serve God the way He says for you to serve Him, or else you are not going to serve Him at all. I know that this is not popular preaching in this day of “anything-goes religion.” Anything and everything does not go with God. People so often will say that they will serve God their way and you can serve God your way, and it’s all alright with God. I don’t know whose Bible they have been reading, but it certainly is not the one that the Holy Spirit inspired. Joshua indicates very clearly how the Lord must be served: **“Now therefore fear the**

LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth.”

The first thing that is required is the fear of the Lord. If you serve the Lord, you are going to fear Him above all others. Now this is not the fear which has trembling, but is the fear of utmost reverence and honor. Those who serve the Lord according to the Scriptures do not do so with the fear of a servant or a slave. A servant or a slave fears his or her master, because if the service is not well pleasing unto the master, the servant may be punished, may be cast out, or may not be compensated. A son, however, serves his father out of love. The fear which a son has is that of honor for the father and a desire not to wrong the father’s love. Children of God serve the Lord, not for fear of punishment for disobedience, but out of love and with a desire not to displease the Father who has loved them and whom they now love. Walking in the fear of the Lord means that we are conscious in all that we do and say of what will be pleasing to our Lord and our God.

One who serves the Lord must also serve Him in sincerity. I am afraid that insincere persons have done more harm to the name of Christianity than all the irreligious persons who never pretend to have any interest in godly things in all the world. Jesus spoke of such hypocrites during His earthly ministry: **“Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me”** (Matt. 15:7-8). People sing the song, “Oh, How I Love Jesus;” and the minute they are out the doors of the church building they forget every word that was preached unto them. Jesus taught thus: **“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment”** (Mark 12:30); and you won’t fulfill any of the commandments if you don’t fulfill this one first, as it is the first. There must be sincerity of heart, willingness of mind, and consecration of purpose if we are going to serve the Lord.

Not only must the Lord be served in sincerity, but **“in sincerity and in truth.”** Sincerity is the hat rack of false religion, upon which many so-called “Christians” have hung their professions. Let me tell you something in all seriousness, beloved, you can be sincerely wrong. Unless sincerity is coupled with truth, then you cannot serve the Lord. Many today are preaching the false gospel of “do whatever you want and God will accept it so long as you are sincere.” Believe that, and you and your sincerity will go all the way to hell, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. The children of Israel whom Joshua was addressing

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“Choose You This

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were going to have to serve the Lord in the prescribed manner, or it was all just an outward show of vanity. They had been given a set of divine instructions for worshipping the Lord, God having given them His lively oracles through His servant Moses: and we have been given a complete set of instructions for worshipping the Lord (II Tim. 3:16-17; 4:1-2). There is no serving the Lord apart from the Word of God, and the preaching of the Word will equip you to rightly serve the Lord.

(Read John 4:19-24.) God cannot be worshipped outside of the truth. The place for serving the Lord was not in the mountain there in Samaria where Jesus spoke with this woman who needed the water of life. The place of service unto God was not going to be the temple in Jerusalem that Zerubbabel had built and Herod had decorated to replace Solomon's temple that had been destroyed. The place for worshipping God was announced here by Jesus as a place where God would be worshipped in spirit and in truth; and the only place where God can be worshipped in that way is in His house, **“which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”** (I Tim. 3:15). The only way a person is going to serve the Lord today in a way that is acceptable unto God is in and through a true New Testament missionary Baptist church. A church started by some man, or by a group of people who got together one day and thought the community needed a church of that particular denomination is not a true church. For it to be acceptable unto God, it must have descended from that first church which Jesus instituted Himself while here during His earthly ministry; and if it did descend from that church with an unbroken line of succession, it will be recognizable because it teaches and practices the same things that first church did. Jesus said, **“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”** (Matt. 16:18). **“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen”** (Eph. 3:21). He won't get glory in it if it's not His kind. His kind of church is still in the world, and will be until Jesus returns; and you can't serve the Lord outside of that kind of church (and just having the name Baptist doesn't mean it's His kind – you'd better check what's on the inside).

You won't believe what you want and serve God; you'll believe what He says. Something isn't true because you like it or some human being whom you look up to says it or because it fits conveniently into your lifestyle. The truth is what God says is truth. Jesus said unto the Father

in His High Priestly intercessory prayer, **“Thy word is truth”** (John 17:17). The popular modern notion is that truth is whatever you agree with at this moment in time. The truth is what God says, and you cannot serve Him unless it is **“in sincerity and in truth.”**

Something else that is required to serve the Lord is revealed by Joshua: **“and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.”** All those other things you've been serving and which you've been carrying around that your fathers served have to go. The Lord **“is a jealous God.”** He will not have any rivals. He will not have you trying to serve Him and holding on to some other god. He will not allow you to put something else first in your life, or give someone else the place that belongs to Him in your heart. He will have the preeminence, and you will give it to Him, or else you will not serve Him at all! The things that once ruled your life are to be put away, and God is to be followed with a full heart. God wants first priority with regard to your affection and your attention, and He has the right to receive it. Look at all He has done for you.

How about you today? **“Choose you this day whom ye will serve.”** Who are you going to serve? Who are you going to serve today? Who is going to have control over your life, and for what reasons? Something wonderful about serving the Lord is revealed by the words of Joshua: **“but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”** No matter what choice the rest of the children of Israel made, Joshua was going to serve the Lord; and all that were in his house and under his direction, guidance, and protection were going to be taught to do the same so long as he had anything to do with it. Your serving or not serving the Lord is going to affect others: **“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself”** (Rom. 14:7). You will serve the Lord regardless of what others do, or you won't serve Him at all. I wonder what choice you that are husbands and fathers and heads of households are going to make today (or will you let others decide for you?). Joshua made the decision for all that were in his house. Why? Because it was his house and he was responsible for all who were in it. When you don't serve the Lord, you won't get to blame the coach of the ball team who scheduled the game in conflict with church; the dean of the college who scheduled the class when church services were being held; or the employer who wanted you to work when you should have been at church. The only one to blame is you: **“choose you!”** And your age, young or old, does not exempt you from this charge. Young people, you will choose! Are you going to serve the Lord?



From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



Deliverance from the Fear of Death

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15).

This great, grand and glorious text thrills the hearts of all of God's people. It sets forth the mysterious incarnation of our Redeemer, and the reason why God was manifest in the flesh. It reveals the state of those Christ came to deliver. It shows the result of His redeeming work was twofold: He destroyed the devil that had the power of death and delivered believers from the fear of death by dying for them. Now let us carefully look at this text that we may glean some precious truths for our spiritual edification.

THE STATE OF THE UNSAVED

Those whom Christ came to deliver spent their life in fear of death. This is the natural state of all men previous to their deliverance by Christ. In their natural state of sin and ruin they are subject to bondage. It is difficult for even the most secure and careless to entirely exclude from the mind all thought of death and its consequences in the state beyond the grave. These questions enter their mind: What is to be my latter end? What scenes await me in the untried state of being to which I am hastening as fast as time can carry me? These questions press the mind and then come fear and dread to agitate and disquiet the soul.

It is the thought of death that is terrible, not so much death itself. Many attempts are made by the unsaved to stifle the consciousness of being in a state of bondage through fear of death. Some seek to live in brutish ignorance of their state and prospect; others try to put off all serious consideration of their latter end, burying themselves in the pursuits of earth and time. Still others drown their convictions in pleasure, infidelity, alcohol, and drugs, while they flatter themselves with hopes of deliverance, though they know not how or why they are to escape. But such things are a refuge of lies and the hope of a fool. There is bondage through fear of death, and it matters not that some attempts are made to rid the mind of it.

Job declared: **“They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not**

the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof. The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief. The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face. In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light. For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death” (Job 24:13-17).

Men fear death because it often comes to them unexpected. They know not the progress of hidden mortality. The leaf fades suddenly and silently, and so do we. Death, the king of terrors (Job 18:14), comes with a noiseless step, shod with wool, to silently steal away our soul. He is not seen, he is not heard, he is not suspected; till all at once his cold shadow falls upon us, and his dark form stands between us and the light of the living world. No awful handwriting appears on the wall to warn us of our doom as it did Belshazzar. No solemn message comes to us from the unseen world as it did Hezekiah. We know not the time, nor the manner of our departure. A great uncertainty surrounds our flight from this world.

Death is a terror to the unsaved because it brings great loss to the carnal man. It removes the worldly man from all his earthly possessions and enjoyments. It sends him destitute into the invisible world without any creature-comforts. When death approaches vigor, beauty and health decay; riches, honors and pleasures fly away; plans, pursuits and hopes die. When the stroke of death falls nothing of all a man possesses on earth can afford him one moment of comfort as he descends the dark valley. In his extremity he has no God to whom he can look for support, no Savior to whom he can commit his departing spirit, and no hope that, though deprived of all earthly things, there is laid up for him in Heaven a treasure that shall never fail. **“Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death”** (Prov. 10:2).

When an unconverted man comes to die he has no hope in Christ. Therefore, he is surrounded with fearful darkness,

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Deliverance from

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and he sees no light before him. As the world recedes from his view it withdraws every ray of light and leaves nothing for his dying eyes to rest upon except impenetrable darkness and despair. His former pleasures and profits, his fame and fortune, are fled like a bird from a tree. From the past he can derive no comfort and the future is all cheerless uncertainty. He knows not whether this thick darkness has any morning. The sea he is about to travel is dark and doleful, and he knows not to what shore it may bear him! These awful fears bring great torment in his last minutes on earth.

Death is a terror to lost people because they know their soul must survive the death of the body and that it must stand before the bar of God. **“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”** (Heb. 9:27). They know they are sinners before a holy God. As they approach the closing scene they feel the sting of sin which is death. They realize they are going unprepared into the presence of their God and Judge. They expect nothing from His righteous tribunal but the sentence of condemnation to Hell. Nothing can deliver from Hell and death but an interest in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and this they have no hope in at all.

Death is to be feared because of the loneliness and the darkness of the tomb. Man dies alone. He goes on his dark, mysterious journey for the first time in all his existence without anyone to accompany him. Friends and loved ones are beside his bed, but they must stay behind. As he takes his last look at this world, there comes upon him a sensation new, strange, and inexpressibly miserable--the feeling of being alone in his darkest hour. Oh, the chilliness and loneliness of this awful moment. Bacon said: “There is no passion in the mind of man so weak but it mates and masters the fear of death.”

When an unsaved man comes to die he anticipates terrible evils and sees no escape. This is the most fearful part of the bondage spoken of in my text. It is the consciousness of sin and of exposure to punishment on account of it that gives death its sting and the grave its terror. No man conscious of unpardoned sins can think of dying and going into the presence of the Judge of all the earth without alarm. Where can a man held in such bondage look for deliverance? There is none out of Christ. Reason suggests none. Conscience allows none. The Bible declares there is none. Hence such a soul knows he is unprepared to meet God, and he has nothing to look forward to save a future overhanging with thick clouds of gathering wrath!

Such is the condition of a man

approaching death with no hope in Christ. God has planted this fear of death in the heart of men for their own eternal good. Men need to prepare for death because it is certain and the time of it uncertain. If men do not prepare to meet God, they will experience great loss and find no alleviations under them; they will find themselves alone in thick darkness and see no light before them. They will anticipate evil and see no way of escape. Such people should tremble at the very thought of dying. Oh, the tragedy of a Christless death, a Christless funeral, a Christless coffin, and a Christless eternity!

Those who know not God and have not obeyed the gospel are the willing slaves of the fear of death. They are in a depressed and miserable condition; they are like slaves under a cruel master. They have no freedom, no comfort, no peace of mind and conscience. **“In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! And at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! For the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see”** (Deut. 28:67).

THE DELIVERANCE WROUGHT BY CHRIST

Christians must die even as others, but there is a vast difference between the death of the righteous and the wicked. Death to a righteous man is gentle and peaceful: **“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace”** (Ps. 37:37). It brings an end to the believer's suffering and agony. It is misery's cure. The righteous are not alone in death: **“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me. . .”** (Ps. 23:4). Christ in our last hours on earth is a covert from the storm, a refuge in the time of need, a light in the hour of darkness. We leave our few earthly goods for treasures in Heaven. We depart from a world of darkness to a world of everlasting light. Thus we can resign ourselves to death with the quietness of a child going to sleep. Death to the righteous is the door by which the soul passes to Christ and Heaven.

Having risen from the dead, Christ has poured the light of immortality over the darkness of the grave. The Son of God has entered the grave before us. He has sanctified it for His people and embalmed it with the hope of immortal life. He rose from the dead as the first fruits of them that slept. Death is now a conquered foe. It has no dominion over them that sleep in Jesus. His resurrection is the pledge and pattern of ours. The Christian looks with calmness upon death, for Christ burst the bars of death and rose with **“the keys of hell and of death”** (Rev. 1:18). Our Savior **“hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the**

gospel” (II Tim. 1:10).

Christ came to deliver His people from the dread of death and all the anticipated evils in the future world. The dread of death is gone because sin is gone. A Christian has nothing to fear in death or the grave. The blood of Christ has washed away his sins. The Spirit of grace has recreated him in the image of God. He is pardoned and accepted in the Beloved. For him death has no sting, over him the grave can boast of no victory, and the second death has no power! On the dying bed, in the grave, at the judgment, in the spirit world, the believer is under the eye and protection of his Savior. Of what should he be afraid? Death to him is like falling asleep after the toils of a long and wearisome day, and then suddenly awaking in a beautiful world. **“Blessed are the dead which die I the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them”** (Rev. 14:13).

How true are the words of the old hymn that we sing in our church:

Farewell, vain world, I'm going home,

My Savior bids me come,

Sweet angels beckon from on high,

Then, O how sweet to die.

I'm glad that I am born to die,

From grief my soul shall fly;

Sweet angels beckon from on high,

Then, O how sweet to die.

I'll praise my Savior while I've breath,

I'll praise Him after death;

I'll praise His matchless name on high,

Then, O how sweet to die.

I soon shall pass this vale of death,

When I shall lose my breath;

And then my happy soul shall fly,

Then, O how sweet to die.

A pardoned soul needs no fear of death. To die is gain, for to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord. Death to a true believer is only deliverance from this body of sin and death. When we have Christ as our Savior, this is all we mean by dying. That part of our nature which believes in Jesus can never die. Sickness cannot hurt it, nor fever waste it, nor fracture mutilate it, nor death dissolve it. The ship may be broken on the rocks, but the passenger will live and reach the shore. The tent may be leveled to the ground, but the tenant will survive. When the believer drops this robe of flesh, he will take his flight to be with His Lord and his departed loved ones and friends. When the Lord calls him by death he shall go without delay, for his home in the body was but a passing day.

Thank God that Jesus Christ has delivered His people from the fear of death. Praise Heaven that this deliverance from the bondage of death is perfect. It meets all our wants and wishes; it rescues us from all our dreads and dangers; it stands connected with eternal life and resurrection glory!

THE MEANS OF THIS DELIVERANCE

Our Redeemer delivered us from the bondage of death by dying Himself. It was by means of His death that he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil. By dying Himself He delivered those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Christ conquered by dying; by death He abolished death. His death was necessary to effect the deliverance spoken of in my text. It was through death that He brought the Devil to naught. It was not by His life, nor His example, nor His teachings, nor His miracles. Our Savior turned Satan's forces against him and made death itself the instrument of the destruction of the Devil.

Man is a slave, not to death, but to the Devil who has the power of death. The Devil is divinely permitted to exercise the power of death in a secondary sense only, as absolute dominion belongs only to God (Deut. 32:39; I Sam. 2:6; Job 2:6; Ps. 68:20). A slave of sin himself, like Spartacus, the Roman slave, the Devil became the leader of slaves, which now includes the human race (Rom. 6:16). By subtle arts the Devil brought death into the world, being a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). As the god of this world the Devil is a monarch in the realm of death, originating, controlling, and struggling to perpetuate his disastrous sovereignty over men.

In order to destroy death Christ had to destroy the monarch of death. The destruction of the Devil, the lord of death, Christ accomplished by His death on the cross. His death was strictly an expiatory sacrifice for human guilt. By dying in and through holy obedience, as Adam had died in and through transgression and guilt, our Savior wrest the sting from death and lifted its curse from the soul. The death of our Redeemer was the wages which our sins deserved--the penal infliction of the law suffering the wrath of a holy God. The stripping of the Devil's power of death was accomplished by the laying down of Christ's life, **“that through death he might destroy.”** Christ by dying delivered His people from the fear of death, destroying its venomous sting, and finally by annihilating all its effects in the resurrection of the body.

The covenant people were sinners, transgressors of God's law, and obnoxious to its curse. They were frail beings of flesh and blood. In order to redeem them from the curse of the law, Christ must be made like them; otherwise, they could never be made like Him. The Son of God had to assume our nature, to partake of flesh and blood, to become like one of us, that He might suffer and die in our stead, make atonement for our sins, and open a way in which God might be just while He justified a people. Christ was delivered for our offenses and rose again

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. What is gluttony and why is it always associated with drunkenness (Deut 21:20; Prov. 23:21) or a person who drinks too much (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34)?

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Gluttony as defined in the dictionary is the practice of excessive eating and drinking. Gluttony and drunkenness are both sins of intemperance characterized by self indulgence and lack of self control. Perhaps the reason why they are paired together in Scripture is because they are sins that often go hand in hand. Through the years Baptists have done fairly well in preaching against the sin of drunkenness. However it is rare to hear anyone condemn the sin of gluttony.

Every day believers are responsible to surrender every moral faculty to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We are required by the Word of God to: **"...present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"** (Rom. 12:1). This surrender involves the realization that we **"...are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"** (I Cor. 6:20). Our mind, spirit, will, body, soul, every fiber of our being belong to the Lord and we are to dedicate ourselves to live for His glory. I Corinthians 10:31 declares: **"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."** In light of these Scriptures it is absolutely essential that believers strive to bring their fleshly passions and appetite for food and drink under the control of the Holy Spirit. Temperance or self-control is a very important aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Galatians 5:24-25 declares: **"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."**

The age in which we live is rife with over-indulgence and excess. The world of advertising thrives on the intemperance and fleshly passions of people. One of the reasons why obesity, drug abuse, and alcohol abuse are so rampant is because very few people exercise self control in our society. Now is the time for sobriety, self-control, a clear mind, and a pure body dedicated to the glory of God and the preaching of the Gospel to a world of lost sinners. Romans 13:11-14 states: **"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for**

now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

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"And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard" (Deut. 21:20).

"For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags" (Pro. 23:21).

"The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children" (Matt. 11:19).

"The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners" (Luke 7:34)!

"Gluttony" is excessive eating; it is the act or practice of eating and drinking to excess. The reason why "gluttony" is associated with drunkenness in my opinion: if you are drunk then you drank too much, i.e. you drank excessively, in other words, you over did it to the point of being drunk and you would be "gluttonous" in your drinking, the same as overeating (of course no one is guilty of that today, are they?). And as Proverbs 23:21 puts it, a "gluttonous" person will come to poverty because all they care about is their own belly or their own self.

I heard an evangelist's message and I have used it in a sermon a time or two. He stated, "One of the biggest deceptions in America today is the booze industry. You talk about truth in advertising; they're the liars of liars on television. You can't watch some major sporting

event without it being crammed down your throat. When I grew up, football players drank milk and ate wheaties. Now they chew red man tobacco, drink light beer, and snort cocaine. And these are the heroes of our young people in America today. The liquor industry shows on the TV advertisements, the bubbles, the excitement, and the thrills and laughter; always showing good looking women and always masculine, macho type men advertising for them in the liquor industry. And they show the good times and they make it appear that you cannot be successful unless you drink their kind of beer. And you're not really with it and you're not really in unless you're doing it. I want to ask that industry one question? Why don't they show the other side of the picture? Why don't they show those that have been killed by drunk drivers, and why don't they show the husbands that come home and beat their wives half to death and smack around their children...why don't they show that on the TV? They're liars, they're frauds, they're cheats, they do not tell you the truth, and they do not show you the whole picture." There are many foods and drinks we are influenced by because of the commercials on TV that really encourage "gluttony"!

Concerning Proverbs 23:21 John Gill says this, "They consuming their substance upon their bellies, in eating and drinking; And drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags; excessive eating and drinking brings drowsiness to men, unfits them for business, and makes them idle and slothful; and spending all on their bellies, they have nothing for their backs, and are clothed in rags."

The "glutton" as well as the "drunkard" is depicted as idle, and if idle, then that only allows for more sin to creep into one's life more readily. It's not politically correct today, but many years ago a "glutton" would have been called a "drunken bum"!

As for the charge against Jesus and John for being "drunkards" and "winebibbers" in Matthew and Luke, well that's very evident that the Pharisees and the lawyers didn't like their message and they tried every way to discredit Jesus and John and make them look bad in the eyes of the people. The same thing goes on today in our churches, if there are one or two who don't like the message the pastor brings they will talk bad about him behind his back and amongst their selves and try to find ways to discredit him. Years ago I had a member come to me and said, "There are some in the church that don't like some of the things you're doing" I asked, "Like what?" Well I can't tell you that, but if you guess what they are I'll tell you if your right or not." So, it is a different time but the same old junk and accusations, all because they don't like the message.

If there was less time spent pointing

the finger toward others, and more time pointing the finger toward the Scriptures, we would have fewer empty pews. God Bless!

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The Hebrew word used in the first two references is "zalal" which Strong's has as "a primitive root; to shake (as in the wind), i.e. to quake; figuratively, to be loose morally, worthless or prodigal:-- blow down, glutton, riotous (eater), vile." I usually like to first of all let the Bible translate itself. "Zalal" is used eight times in the Old Testament and in the sum total of defining itself, I would say that gluttony is being wildly intemperate, or riotously carnal. Both drunkenness and overeating (as we usually define gluttony) are excessive sins of carnal lusts, so they are appropriately linked in all four Scriptures mentioned.

"And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton (zalal), and a drunkard" (Deut. 21:20). **"Be not among winebibbers; among riotous (zalal) eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton (zalal) shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags"** (Prov. 23:20-21).

Carnal sins typically put an undue emphasis on the desires of the flesh, to the neglect of the needs of our spiritual nature. Food is not a bad thing- in fact it is a blessing from the Lord; but to fixate ourselves upon this blessing and to begin to abuse it by loving it more than God, is where many of us cross the line into iniquity. Wine is the same abusable blessing from our Heavenly Father. God, Himself takes credit for these dual blessings. **"And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart"** (Ps. 104:15). Deuteronomy 33:28, **"...the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew"** (Deut. 33:28). **"Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine"** (Gen. 27:28).

But what happens when we become gluttonous? We are emphasizing the creation over the Creator, are we not? **"Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections"**

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Just what is a faithful church member? Is it just someone who attends all of the church services, or is there more required?

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Sometimes I challenge my congregation concerning their faithfulness by asking them this question: "What would our church be like if all of our members acted just like you? If they prayed as often as you do... studied the Bible as often as you do... visited the shut-ins as often as you do... witnessed of God's glorious gospel as often as you do... loved the Lord as much as you do...?" What would YOUR church be like? Selah! Think about it!

The question got me to thinking. **"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God"** (I Cor. 4:2-5). The Apostle was going to leave all judgment as to his faithful stewardship in the hands of God. If you and I do the same, will the God that knows our thoughts and heart-desires be able to judge us faithful? We don't get to compare ourselves to others, but only to the standards of God's Word!

If you want a list of things that you must do to be a 'faithful church member'- that is a Biblical list...! 1) Be blameless and without open sin in your life. 2) Be the husband of one wife, or the wife of one husband---cherish and adore them. 3) Be vigilant and aware of the dangers on every side of you, your family and church. 4) Be sober and discreet in your relationships with others- a godly inspiration to all other members. 5) Make your life one of good and orderly behavior- all of your priorities properly placed to give glory to God- in home and church. 6) Be hospitable! God loves a cheerful giver and that should be a chief characteristic of every church member! 7) Be apt to teach- at all times desiring to talk with others about our Saviour Jesus Christ and the riches of His blessings to each member. 8) Don't be given to alcohol along with it's carnal friends and

activities- stay pure and keep the Lord's church pure... 9) Don't be a quarrelsome striker- but be a known peacemaker in the church- a child of your Heavenly Father! 10) Don't be greedy of filthy lucre- esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. 11) Be patient and gentle to all, compassionate and full of pity to the empty souls and lives around your church. 12) Don't be a brawler- stirring up trouble, but love your enemies, suffering loss of them that they might see Christ in you and your church. 13) Don't be covetous, but be content with such things as God has bountifully provided... but never satisfied that you, personally have done enough for the Head of the church. 14) Make your house a consecrated home, honestly managed according to the dictates of God's Word, supporting every mission work of the church. 15) Know your place in the family and perform the duties required of a husband (head), wife (helpmeet) and children (in subjection) and realize that these carry over into the church. 16) Don't be a novice- a juvenile Christian- but grow up... ! Learn more every day and put it into practice... 17) Lastly, as a faithful church member, we must have a good report of those within and without the church; not being a hypocritical, pretend Christian and just playing church.

I guess most of you know by now, that the qualifications of a bishop, in I Timothy 3:1-7, were used to make the 17 steps to being a faithful church member. How appropriate that a bishop should pastor a flock where ALL follow the Word of God! Selah! Think about it!

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"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27).

"I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours" (John 4:38).

"Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the

beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord" (Rom. 16:12).

"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (I Cor. 15:10).

"Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (Phil. 2:16).

"And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life" (Phil. 4:3).

"And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted" (Rev. 2:3).

The above Scriptures all have the same thing common, the word **"labour."** As I have heard many times, there are many "pew warmers" in the Lord's Churches, and sometimes they are asleep more than awake, O the things we pastors see. Those who come to all the church services are truly faithful, for some that is the most that they can do, but for the rest I am not convinced that is being faithful. As we can tell, also, by the above Scriptures, Paul was most thankful for those that helped him in all areas of his ministry and he felt the need to mention them.

Taken with the Scriptures I have read over the years, my opinion of a faithful church member is one who uses their God given talents (singing, teaching, play the piano, etc.), who willingly takes an active role in the cleaning, repairs, and other things that are needed to help take care of the house of the Lord. A faithful church member is not only there every service, but takes notes and listens intently to what is being preached. A faithful church member is one that sees to the needs of others and makes visits to those who are struggling, whether physically or spiritually. A faithful church member is one who welcomes the saints and visitors as they come into the building, instead of just sitting there.

I believe there are even preachers who aren't faithful church members. They only show up to preach and then leave and think that they have fulfilled their duties. I think the pastor should be at every work day, clean the restroom if need be, and do and be an example to others more than any other church member. Was not Jesus a servant as well? If the pastor fails to be an example then how can he expect the people to be any different?

I hear a lot today about pastoral authority. What about just being a servant for the Lord Jesus Christ and be the example He asked us to be (Luke 7:5-12). I can put a song book away, pick up a piece of paper off the floor, and clean the toilet as well as preach. I am not above that, are you?

The three most important things to me in this life to be a faithful church member is to put God first, Christ second, and the church third, and to surrender my life so that they are the most important things in my life.

I will close with this verse of Scripture and a comment, **"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"** (Heb. 10:25). If we exhort one another, then are we not labouring, and if we are labouring are we not faithful?

To answer the question in a nut shell; yes, there is more required to being a faithful church member. But also remember that the Word of God should be the most important thing we desire in being a faithful church member. Remember the story of Martha and Mary? (Luke 10:38-42). No doubt we need to learn balance! God Bless!

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There are plenty of lost, religious people who faithfully attend all the church services throughout our land. Obviously, there is much more that is required to be considered a faithful church member than merely attending all the services. In fact, faithful church attendance is probably one of the easiest aspects of the Christian life.

The word faithful as defined in the dictionary is: 1. strict or thorough in the performance of duty. 2. true to one's word, promises, vows, etc. 3. steady in allegiance or affection. 4. reliable, trusted, or believed. Each of these definitions aptly describe a genuine Christian who is committed to the glory of God and the commission of the Lord's church by manifesting a faithful and consistent testimony.

What is a Faithful Church Member?

1. A regenerated believer who has been given the gifts of repentance and saving faith in Jesus Christ. This individual has also been led by the Holy Spirit to submit to scriptural, Baptist baptism which adds him to the Lord's church (Acts 2:41-47). Thus, he is saved by grace, scripturally baptized, and submissive to the truth, as well as the authority of the Lord's church.

2. He/she is committed to cheerful obedience and submission to the Word and commands of God (John 14:15; 15:14; I Thess. 2:13; I John 2:3-6; 5:2-3). You can't be faithful without a living

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Deliverance from

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for our justification. He gave Himself a sin-offering, a ransom for us, that by His stripes we are healed and by His death we are saved. Having redeemed His people by the price of His blood, He delivered us from the wrath to come. Believers now have peace with God. They are now enabled to triumph over death and Hell.

The born-again believer is delivered from the bondage of death by the atonement of Christ made by offering Himself as a sacrifice for sin. The death of Christ spoiled principalities and powers. By bringing in everlasting righteousness for the children whom He came to redeem, He has destroyed for them the deadly power of their spiritual enemy, the Devil. Christ has freed us from the bondage and fear of condemnation. A blood-washed soul can now sing on the borders of the grave in the face of the king of terrors: **“For 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”** (II Tim. 1:12). He can say with the psalmist: **“The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. . . Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling”** (Ps. 116:3, 7-8).

Nothing but unbelief, or disobedience, or ignorance of this liberty, can hold men in bondage to the Devil. All his basis of accusation before God, all his power to terrorize the elect on earth is nullified and removed, for the judgment of believers ended at the cross. Satan has no power, no rights over us. The old lion may roar, he may hinder us in our journey, he may oppose us in our service to God; but he cannot subject us to fear and bondage because God has reckoned to us the full value of Christ's whole work. The sting of death is sin, but Christ bore the sin and put it away! If you are not free from the Devil's bondage of fear, it is either from ignorance of Christ's work, or lack of reliance upon it!

CONCLUSION

Infidelity is to be rejected because it leaves man without any hope in the hour of death. What does it do for its disciples when the soul most needs support? Does it offer any compensation for the loss of life by death? Does it shed any light on the darkness of the tomb? Does it remove from the conscience the dread of death? No! It takes away everything and gives nothing in return. It is barren of all good, peace, comfort and hope. In the soul's extremity it has no word of consolation to utter. Its conjectures are cold and comfortless in the hour of death.

But the gospel of Christ speaks peace

to a soul at the hour of death. It points to the favor of a reconciled God and to a home in His heavenly kingdom above. Faith in Christ throws a bright and cheering light over all the dark scenes of death and eternity. The Savior scatters blessings innumerable along the entire path of life and assures the departing spirit of better things to come. Infidelity rejects all of this as a fable. But what does it give in return? Nothing, absolutely nothing! Unbelief is a destroyer! It pulls down but it does not build up.

If you would be free from the bondage of fear and rejoice in the liberty of the sons of God, then commit your all to Christ for time and eternity, follow wherever He shall lead you. This will bring an end to doubts, fears, and gloomy bondage to Satan. A heavenly light will shine on all your way through life, and this light will be your harbinger of eternal day when life is over. Death will hold no terrors to you; you will look upon it with hope and meet it with peace. You will sing with joy and triumph as you pass the valley of death and ascend to Heaven to dwell in the presence of your God and Savior: **“Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (I Cor. 15:54-57).



Forum #1

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(Rom. 1:25-26). When we fixate our desires to please ourselves and have not the desire to be a faithful steward of our earthly possessions, then we are being gluttonous. Selah! Think about it! **“And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living”** (Luke 15:11-13).

I love the following passage. I think it will explain what is the OPPOSITE of gluttony. Whatever we do, do it for the Lord! **“Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no**

work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest” (Eccl. 9:7-10).

The sin of gluttony? It's a self-centered life that brings no glory to God and no joy to man. Just stuffing ourselves selfishly in a rat-race of lust and depravity... Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



Forum #2

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relationship with the Word of God. Look up the verses and see for yourself. Better yet, memorize them and put them into practice!

3. He/she is committed to carrying out the Great Commission the Lord gave to His churches. Every faithful member ought to be an active witness by sharing the Gospel message with everyone (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15). Friends, family, coworkers, school mates, and everyone within your sphere of influence ought to know that your life is committed to Christ and the spread of the Gospel.

4. He/she must be steady in their allegiance and affection for the Lord's church. A faithful church member will seek to build up rather than tear down the Lord's church through faithful attendance, tithing, prayer, edification, worship, and love (Heb. 10:22-25). Someone who is given over to gossip and talebearing is not a faithful church member. Someone who fails to tithe and robs from God is not a faithful church member. Someone who does not love God's people is not a faithful church member. Someone who attends church only when it is convenient for them is not a faithful church member.

5. He/she must love, respect, and pray for the pastor that the Holy Spirit has appointed to feed the flock of God (Eph. 6:18-20; I Thess. 5:12-13). I don't believe that people should worship or reverence the pastor, but they must love him for the truth's sake.

6. He/she must be committed to having a genuine testimony of righteousness in and out of church. You can't live one way outside of church and another way inside of church. Every faithful church member must strive for consistency in their every day life (Titus 2:10-14). A faithful church member will teach and practice the truth in private and public, at home, in the workplace, and in society at large.

Perhaps one of the best ways to describe a faithful church member is set forth in the Church Covenant which was formulated by J. Newton Brown in 1832. The text of the Church Covenant is as follows:

“Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the

profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

“We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

“We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour.

“We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Saviour to secure it without delay.

“We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.”

TOM ROSS



Cry of Creation

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cannot refer to the children of God, for they are expressly distinguished from the creation of which Paul speaks. Neither can it refer to wicked men, for they have no wish for the manifestation of the sons of God. Infidels, skeptics, and atheists do not believe in any such possibility as the manifestation of the sons of God. The unsaved masses are not looking for any advent of spiritual bliss. It cannot be said in any sense the unconverted world is subject to sin not willingly. The whole of unconverted mankind shall never be introduced into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Such would imply that all mankind would be saved---a thing everywhere refuted by the Bible.

I understand by the word creation in Romans 8 all animate and inanimate nature as distinguished from mankind.

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The Greek word (ITISIS) occurs in the New Testament 19 times. In our KJV it is translated "creature" 11 times, "creation" 6 times (Mark 10:6; 13:19; Rom. 1:20; 8:22, II Peter 3:4; Rev. 3:14), and once it is translated "building" (Heb. 9:11) and once "ordinance" (I Peter 2:13). The usual meaning of the word in the New Testament is creation, not necessarily extending beyond this world and not excluding mankind. However, the context in Romans 8:19-22 limits the meaning to inanimate and irrational creation so far as relates to this planet. It has this meaning throughout the 8th chapter of Romans (v. 39).

THE CREATION SUBJECTED TO VANITY

When God created the beings destitute of intelligence and the world void of self-conscious life, He pronounced it "very good" (Gen. 1:31). There was nothing but good in all creation. There was no imbalance or lack of harmony, no disorder, disease or death. All that God made was well-made and free of defect. Not only was every part good, but it was all together "very good."

Man's primal innocence was surrounded by nature in her primal beauty. But man sinned, and in consequence of sin, he drug nature into decay and death. The fall of creation paralleled the fall of man. All creation was cursed and the serpent was cursed above all other creatures of the field (Gen. 3:14). The ground was cursed to bring forth thorns and thistles because of Adam's sin (Gen. 3:18). The entire planet became "subject to vanity" and experienced "the bondage of corruption."

Adam was in Eden with the beasts, the lion, the tiger and the lamb. The instant that he sinned, each animal was seized with a new instinct and raged against him. Since the fall there has existed the enmity of one creature to another. The brute creation is now subject to tornadoes and tempests just like man is. Animals are cruelly treated by evil men and made food for man's lusts. Man makes some animals serve him by pulling the plow in order to grow food to eat from the ground which is cursed.

The cause of the creation's subjection to vanity is not from their original tendencies, or any fault in the beings themselves. It was all because of man's sin that they suffer as they do. How great an evil sin brought upon the whole world! It has polluted the heavens and earth. It has compelled the entire creation to witness the dishonor done to the Creator. When man ceased his allegiance to God the brute creatures and nature rebelled against man.

Just what did Paul mean by "being subject to vanity"? It means all things in

nature, instead of being applied to their holy and legitimate end, are employed in promoting sinful and criminal ends. The sun shines on the thief who steals. The stars guide the course of ships of war. Wood and stone are used to build houses of iniquity. The bowels of the earth supply gold and silver to satisfy men's avarice. The rain waters the crops of God-hating men. Inferior creatures are often used as instruments of sin. This was not meant to be. Much of creation is being used in a manner God never intended.

This old earth is in the restless bondage of corruption. The very air we breathe is dust from the carcasses of dead men, animals and plants. The grain reaped from the fields and the flowers which bloom grow forth from the fatness of the grave of corruption. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away" (I Pet. 1:24). The psalmist wrote: "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed" (Ps. 102:25-26).

The earth is weary of being a place for graves. The sun is tired of shining upon desolate fields and barren deserts. The air was not created to be breathed by slaves. The fire that warms us was not designed to burn martyrs. The stones of the fields were not intended to build prisons. Music was not meant to drive people wild like modern music does. Trees were not originally made to hang men upon. Precious metals were not to be used to make idol gods and heathen temples. All of this perversion of nature demonstrates how it has been made subject to bondage.

CREATION GROANS

The present creation is not moving upward in the evolutionary process. Instead, it groans and cries out for relief from the bondage of corruption. Every crushed ocean shell, every rotten log, every bubbling brook is the earth "groaning" and "travailing" in pain. Every bark of a dog, every moo of a cow, every neigh of a horse, every quack of a duck, every hiss of a serpent, every croak of a frog, every meow of a cat, every crow of a rooster, every gobble of a turkey, and every minor key of millions of birds are but cries for deliverance from the bondage of corruption. The whistling of the wind, the sound of thunder, the flash of lightning, the roar of a mighty earthquake are but nature's voices crying to God in sympathy with man's condition.

The Bible often mentions the groans of all creation. Jeremiah wrote: "How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end"

(Jer. 12:4).

The prophet Joel spoke in this manner: "The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. . . . The vine is dried up, and the fig tree, . . . the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men. . . . How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. . . . The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness" (Joel 1:10, 12, 18, 20).

Isaiah penned these words: "The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left" (Isa. 24:4-7).

Sin is such a burden to the whole creation. The world of animate and inanimate nature cries out against this awful curse upon earth. The Bible says that the stones cry out of the walls (Hab. 2:11) and the land cries out (Job 31:38). The voice of nature cries out in the heat of burning deserts and the waving grass of the endless plains. Every thing in nature from weeds to worms is groaning and signing for relief. In their own peculiar way they are saying, "Oh, come day of joy and gladness when the sons of God shall be manifest to men and angels!"

Creation is conscious of the great load lying upon it because of man's wickedness. Nature is not as it should be. It cries out for a better day. Look at the wild rose in the field and the rose in your flower bed which grows under ideal soil conditions. By aid of man one is rich and beautiful while sin has made the other poor and insignificant. See in all this the evidence of hidden possibilities. Here is nature's revelation of her greater abilities. When the curse is lifted all the hidden virtues that cannot now develop shall show their grandeur as we have never dreamed possible.

Even the brute creatures seem to sense their suffering because of man's rebellion against God. Have you ever watched a horse or a dog die? Is there not a look in the poor creature's eyes, as it looks upon its master so pitifully, which says it longs for deliverance? The Apostle Paul said these lower creatures groan to be liberated, and these groans are neither final nor fatal. One day they all shall "be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

CREATION RESTORED

Just as the fall of nature paralleled the fall of man, even so the restoration of nature shall be contemporaneous with the restoration of man. This restitution of all things awaits the return of Christ and the unveiling of the sons of God. The whole earth is going to be renewed. There is to be a glory conferred upon all creatures suitable to the glory conferred upon the children of God.

When creation is liberated the words of the psalmist will come to pass. In Psalm 96:11-13 he wrote: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof, Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." In verses 7 and 8 of the 98th Psalm he wrote: "Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together."

These passages can mean nothing less than the seas, the rivers, the hills, the plains, the fish of the sea, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, and every living creature shall in some manner express joy at the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom on earth. All creation shall own its returning Lord and join in a tribute of praise to Him. In Revelation 5:13 John foretold this coming day: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Spiritualizers of the Scripture are quick to assert this is highly figurative language of which the meaning is uncertain. I disagree. Call me literally a literalist if you will. I had rather be literally a literalist than little if ever a literalist. I believe the God who made all creation is capable of giving all things the ability to express themselves. In Eden the serpent conversed with Eve in a language, suggesting animals may have had originally the ability to speak. Balaam's ass spoke to his master in Numbers 22:28-30. The sea can roar, the wind can whistle, the trees can wave their branches, the birds can sing, the mountains can quake, and the heavens can declare the glory of God (Ps. 19:1-3). In Luke 19:40 Jesus said the stones could cry out. Revelation 10:4 says: "The seven thunders. . . uttered their voices."

What a stupendous time when all creation enjoys the glorious liberty of the children of God. Then gold and silver shall no longer beautify the shrines of idols nor gratify the miser's avarice. Music shall be

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Cry of Creation

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lifted from its degradation and made to magnify and praise its Creator. The key note of every song shall be Christ is Lord. Every star shall point to the Morning Star; every flower to the Rose of Sharon; every stone to the Rock of Ages; every lily to the Lily of the Valley; every drop of water to the Water of Life; every seed to the Seed of the Woman; every vine to the True Vine; every living thing to the Firstborn of every creature. The ocean shall mirror forth His brightness and the chime of the waves and the rush of the winds shall tell forth the glory of Him who made and sustains them.

The very instant the sons of God are manifest, creation shall experience a new and glorious genesis. Its groans shall be transposed into songs, its sufferings into joy and praise, its restlessness into perpetual peace. The desert shall bloom as the rose, briars and weeds will vanish, the earth shall cease its shivers, the red throat of the flaming volcano shall be mute, and all the shame and tragedy of a sin-smitten and a Devil-hurt world shall be for ever terminated! All creation, freed from its prison bonds, shall sing and echo with unending harmonies the glory of their Creator. Every atom of earth shall be full of His love and redolent with His praise.

CONCLUSION

The world today is intensifying its cry for relief. Earthquakes, hurricanes, tidal waves, and tornadoes are on the increase (Matt. 24:7). There is soon to appear **"signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars"** (Luke 21:25; Rev. 6:12-13). The very **"powers of heaven shall be shaken"** (Luke 21:26). The stars of heaven shall fall unto the earth. The heavens are to depart as a scroll when it is rolled together. Every mountain and island will be moved out of their places (Rev. 6:13-14). The awful physical catastrophes of the tribulation period are the last and loudest cry of nature for relief from the curse.

Consider again verse 19 of the text: **"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."** The term **"earnest expectation"** means "a waiting with the head raised and the eye fixed on that point of the horizon from which the expected object is to come." Lost souls on earth are not looking for the manifestation of God's sons. Even some Christians are not looking for the Lord to come. But such is not the case with all creation. The second coming of Christ is nature's "earnest expectation." Animate and inanimate creation looks away from themselves, eagerly expecting and welcoming the revealing of the sons of God.

Dear friend, where is your deepest interest? Are you looking for the return

of Christ? Can you say from the heart, **"Abba, Father?"** Are you among those of whom the apostle says; **"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God?"** Can you pray, **"Our Father, which art in Heaven?"** A child can repeat it, a Romanist can mutter it upon his beads, a parrot might be taught to talk it, but only a heart that has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit can pray it.



Spiritual Nobility

By Rosco Brong
(1908 - 1985)

A Proper Regard for God's Word Marks God's True Noblemen

"These (Jews at Berea) were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Earth's peoples commonly think of men as being more or less noble according to their notable deeds, according to their titles conferred by royalty, or according to their inheritance of such titles. God here describes for us a higher nobility--the spiritual nobility of men touched by the grace of God.

If we can understand this statement about the Bereans, with its implications, we can perhaps form some estimate of the measure of our own nobility as we appear to God.

WILLING TO LEARN

First, then, the Bereans were willing to learn. Theirs was not a "know-it-all" attitude: they were eager to hear a message which held some promise of improvement of their condition.

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Prov. 12:15).

Of ignoble souls God has said: **"Behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it"** (Jer. 6:10). So the Thessalonian Jews that believed not were moved with envy and so troubled the city that Paul and Silas went from there to Berea to find a more noble people.

Jesus quite plainly tells the difference between ignoble and noble souls in John 3:20-21:

"Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest

his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

NOT TOO CREDULOUS

On the other hand, while the Bereans were eager to learn, they evidenced a healthy skepticism in that they **"searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."** Not to be infatuated by every new preacher that came along, they checked what sounded like a new message with what they knew to be established truth.

"The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going" (Prov. 14:15).

Pitiable indeed are those religiously silly souls described as **"ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"** (II Tim. 3:7).

Surely the nobility of the Bereans appears as much in their caution against being misled as in their eagerness to be led aright.

BELIEVING THE BIBLE

God's true noblemen acknowledge the truth and authority of His Word above all else. Preachers and popes, traditions and councils, may be wrong---and usually are---but God's Word is always right, and all right.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16-17).

We cannot err so long as we believe and obey God's Word. Satan well knew this: hence his insidious attacks upon this Word. Aside from the "big lie" technique of open condemnation of the Bible and furnishing counterfeit scriptures, Satan has two main lines of sneak attack: casting doubts upon the infallibility of revealed truth and adding other "authorities" as equally infallible.

The first method is that of so-called "modernism" (though it was first used in the garden of Eden), also called "liberalism" or "neo-orthodoxy" (though it is neither liberal, new, nor orthodox): the argument that the Bible is not purely and verbally the Word of God, but merely "contains" the Word of God along

with much error which the ministers of Satan will be glad to help us screen out.

But according to the Bible itself, **"The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times"** (Psalm 12:6).

More cunning and more effective than piecemeal denial of Scripture is Satan's method of setting up rival "authorities" such as custom, tradition, preachers, or popes as of equal infallibility with the Bible. This naturally leads to forced interpretations of Scripture to suit human authority, and manifold additions to the faith from outside the Bible.

"Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:6). Being God's noblemen, the Bereans remembered this warning of His Word, along with the reference to false teachers in Isaiah 8:20:

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

FACING RESPONSIBILITY

Finally, the Bereans showed their spiritual nobility by their recognition of their own individual personal responsibility to read, understand, and accept the message of God's Word for themselves.

No proxy religion here---no craven attempt to avoid responsibility by trusting some human teacher, church, or synagogue to "interpret" God's Word for them. No: on the human side their eternal destiny was in the balance, and each soul must search the Scriptures for himself.

Actually the word for **"searched"** here in the original language suggests that they carefully examined and inquired into the Scriptures. And in their nobility, in their realization of their own need, in their concern for their own salvation, they continued this examination, this inquiry into the Scriptures, **"daily."**

"THEREFORE many of them believed" (emph. RB). So we read in the inspired record.

So it will always be in this day of salvation when noble souls honestly and earnestly examine and inquire into the holy Scriptures. If you have not yet tried to be so noble, try it now!



- A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS -

By Timothy Hille
of Ashland, Illinois

Chapter Twelve - The Law of Child-Bearing

This chapter records the command of God concerning the purification of a woman after giving birth. This ceremonial purification points to the need of purification and cleansing from sin, into which all are born. A people

who have been represented unto God by an acceptable sacrifice for sin; for whom peace has been made by through the shedding of blood; and who have an high priest over the house and things of God interceding for them, ought to live in an holy manner, serving the Lord.

Chapter Outline

i. Unclean through birth - the case of the birth of a male child: vs. 1-2

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A Study in Leviticus

(Continued from page 54) ◊

- ii. Circumcision of male children: vs. 3
- iii. The time of purifying: vs. 4
- iv. The case of the birth of a female child: vs. 5
- v. The offerings for cleansing after giving birth: vs. 6-7
- vi. The offerings provided for the poor: vs. 8

I. VERSES ONE AND TWO.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel.” As with that which has passed before in this book, these things were God’s commands to the children of Israel. God defines the principles of holiness. Many today are saying that Christians are free to do as they please in serving God. The truth of the matter is that we are free to do all that the Lord commands and to follow His will. We are free from forms and ceremonies and ritualism in Christ; but we are also free from sin, free from self-righteousness, free from self-will, and free from the vain philosophies of men. God’s Word is the measure of obedience: as Jesus said, **“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me”** (John 14:21), (I John 2:4-5). Many others today are saying that some commands of the Lord Jesus are more important than others, which they use as an excuse for disobeying the so-called “lesser” commands (Matt. 5:19, Luke 16:10). The important truth here is that God’s Word is the authority in all things for the children of God. The children of Israel were to obey that which was delivered to them by their God-given leader, Moses.

The case is here given of a woman who had **“conceived seed, and born a man child.”** After having given birth, she was considered unclean for seven days. She could not participate in religious services. Any who came into contact with her were ceremonially defiled themselves, and had to be ceremonially purified. **“According to the days of the separation of her infirmity shall she be unclean.”** The spiritual teaching behind all of this is that man is born in sin (Ps. 51:5, John 3:6, Rom. 5:19). In Adam, the first man, all became sinners, being the inheritors of his fallen, sinful nature. Marriage and childbirth are not sinful in themselves (Heb. 13:4). All men are sinners by nature, being born in sin. The ceremonial uncleanness of the woman after giving birth points to the inherent sinfulness of every person: **“they that are in the flesh cannot please God”** (Rom. 8:8).

II. VERSE THREE.

All male children in Israel were to be circumcised eight days after having been born. This was a sign of the covenant between God and Israel as the

seed of Abraham, to whom were given the promises of blessing and eternal inheritance. This rite was not only for physical health, but was a token of the putting off of the flesh with its sinfulness and corruption (Gen. 17:9-14; Rom. 2:28-29, 4:1-13; Acts 15:7-11). These rituals and observances of the law are not necessary to the saving or keeping of a soul; for we are saved by the grace of God through faith in His only begotten Son (Phil. 3:3, Col. 2:10-17). That which is spiritually profitable is faith and being made new in Christ (Gal. 5:6, 6:15).

III. VERSES FOUR AND FIVE.

Following the circumcision of a son, the mother was ceremonially unclean with regard to the tabernacle and holy things for an additional thirty-three days, making a total of forty days. During this time she was not to touch any **“hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary.”** In the case of the birth of a daughter, the mother was unclean for two weeks, and restricted as to holy things for an additional sixty-six days thereafter, making a total of eighty days.

“The exclusion of the woman for so many days from the sanctuary, and all participation of the holy things, signified that our original corruption (that sinning sin which we brought into the world with us) would have excluded us for ever from the enjoyment of God and his favours if he had not graciously provided for our purifying.”¹

IV. VERSES SIX THROUGH EIGHT.

After the time of purifying had been fulfilled, forty days for a son, and eighty days for a daughter, then the mother was to bring a burnt offering and a sin offering **“unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest.”** These being offered pointed to Christ as the One who takes away our sins, and whose blood cleanses us from even the sinful nature which we received in Adam (II Cor. 5:17-21). The pains of childbirth point to the curse of sin, of which every woman bears a part, as Eve bore a part in bringing sin into the world (I Tim. 2:13-15, Gal. 4:4-5). No matter whether a son or daughter was born, a sacrifice for sin was required in order **“to make atonement for her.”**

“A lamb of the first year” was to be brought for a burnt offering, **“and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering.”** If the woman was too poor to bring a lamb, then she was to bring two birds of the designated kind, **“the one for a burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering.”** Together these offerings point to Christ as the propitiation for our sins through whom we are cleansed spiritually and have access to God, whether we be Jew or Gentile, male or female, rich or poor, bond or free (Luke 2:21-24). **“And the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.”** This woman could now partake in the services of the

tabernacle. These things dealt merely with ceremonial cleanness, but did not purge the conscience from dead works and sin-guiltiness. Only the sacrifice of Christ can cleanse the heart and make a person alive to God through faith in His blood. Christ travailed that through faith in Him we might be made the children of God.

NOTES

1. *Matthew Henry’s Commentary.*



Flee the Wrath to Come

To this wrath and displeasure of almighty God you are justly liable, because you have sinned against Him. Surely you are not so ignorant as to be unacquainted with this awful and important truth. What? Has conscience never testified, “that you have left undone the things you ought to have done, and done the things you ought not to have done?” Do you not know, that “the thoughts of the imagination of the heart of man are evil, only evil, and that continually; and that **“if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”** Are you not a transgressor of the law of God the great standard of eternal rectitude? Have you uniformly loved, and supremely worshipped the adorable Jehovah, whose character is distinguished for its boundless excellencies? Have you never uttered His venerable name, at the mention of which Hell trembles, and Heaven adores, but with profound reverence and ardent affection? Have you constantly and willingly obeyed the reasonable commands of those whom God has placed over you? Does your past history testify, that you have sanctified the day of rest, and set apart its hours for the divine glory, not thinking, speaking, or performing your accustomed thoughts, words and actions? Have you never been angry with your brother **“without a cause?”** or indulged unhallowed thoughts; or robbed God of the homage of your heart and life, which are His unquestionable due? or borne false witness against your fellow creatures? or coveted what was not your own? Have you been grateful to your great Benefactor for His ceaseless liberality, and returned again “according to the benefits bestowed on you?” Especially have you been thankful for the **“unspeakable gift,”** and cordially and heartily embraced the messages of God’s love revealed in the gospel? Ah! deceive not thyself: it is not more plain that the sun has shone around thy path, than it is, that thou art a sinner.

And if a sinner, thou art justly liable to punishment. This is evident from the nature of things, and from the testimony

of the Scriptures. Can an infinitely righteous being regard with an equal eye those who have been guided by a supreme regard for His holy will, and those who have contemned in principal and practice His most sacred injunctions? Impossible. Has He not testified in the most solemn manner, that he **“will by no means clear the guilty?”** that “though hand join in hand, he shall not go unpunished?” that “the soul that sinneth shall die?” He has. Punishment and sin are inseparable. Until God shall cease to be faithful and holy, that until He shall cease to be God, the sinner, living and dying in his iniquities, must be exposed to infinite danger. Others have not escaped His righteous wrath due to their transgressions. Reader! how will thou? Is there any place where thou canst hide thyself from all-seeing eyes? Is thine arm sufficiently strong to contend with impotence? Has thou any good reasons to adduce in judgment, sufficient to justify thee in having sinned against a Being of infinite rectitude, to Whom thou hast ever been unspeakably indebted, Whose goodness is extensive as His boundless dominion, and permanent as His everlasting throne? How will thou bear the tormenting reflection, that for the most contemptible pursuits, and low and momentary gratification, thou hast thrown away, vilely and foolishly thrown away, the favour of Jehovah, the incorruptible crown, and an eternity of consummate of inconceivable blessedness? How wilt thou endure to be the prey of “the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that can never be quenched?” Ah! will not the thought of the mansions of bliss, which now you will not seek, but which will then be for ever unattainable, be a fearful addition to your future misery? Arise, “O sleeper, and call upon God.” Flee from the wrath to come.

A refuge, an all-sufficient refuge, is provided. Yes, when divine justice demanded the punishment of the sinner--when unsullied holiness affirmed, that polluted creatures could never be admitted into the realms of glory---when infinite faithfulness pronounced the fatal words, Death is the due of the sinner; and the threatening must be fulfilled: then, animated by unutterable pity, and matchless love, the eternal Son of God undertook our cause, assumed our nature, and by His obedience and sufferings even unto death, the ignominious death of the cross, He made an atonement, and wrought out a righteousness on behalf of all, who in every age, from a sense of their misery, should believe on Him for life and salvation. With His expiring breath He exclaimed, **“It is finished!”** “He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification,” and is “able to save unto the uttermost, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

This is a divine refuge. It is Jehovah’s
◊ (Continued on page 56)

Flee the Wrath to

(Continued from page 55) ◊

own appointment. The astonishing sacrifice was given by Himself. **“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”**

It is a free and open refuge. Thou art as much at liberty to flee to it, as the Israelites who were bitten by the fiery flying serpents, were to look on the brazen serpent elevated by the prophet for their salvation. Thou art not more free to breathe the vital air, than thou art to believe on the Son of God.

It is a tried refuge. O ye multitudes of the redeemed, who have come out of great tribulation, and washed your robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, say, for ye know, is it not “a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief?” Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and millions of lesser name, all testify as with one voice, “that whoso believeth on Jesus shall never be confounded.”

It is the only refuge. All others must be utterly renounced and abandoned. **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”**

It is a sufficient refuge. “His blood cleanseth from all iniquity.” “And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

And it is a glorious refuge. God appears in this way of salvation unspeakably lovely. Here mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other. Here Deity appears “full-orbed, with His whole round of attributes complete;” nor does it appear.

“Which of the letters best is writ, The power, the wisdom, or the love.” It is so glorious, that the apostle pronounces it to be **“worthy of all acceptation”** that angels perpetually celebrate it on their golden harps, and with increasing interest investigate its unfathomable mysteries, that in forming an estimate of the divine character, all His other works may be passed by as comparatively unworthy of our attention, through the cross, shall be manifested to principalities and powers, the manifold wisdom of God, that all the other productions of His hand, though confessedly, in many points of view magnificent, shall be swept away, but the labours of His love in redeeming poor sinners are destined to survive the ruins of the world, and to live for ever.

And will you not flee to it? **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”** Would he who is perishing with hunger derive any benefit from provision, he must partake of it. Would the individual, who is dying, gain

any advantage from a sovereign remedy, it must be applied. And if you would derive any benefit from the GREAT ATONEMENT, you must believingly look to it, and rely on it. **“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”**

By thy own lost and perishing condition, considered as a sinner, righteously condemned by the holy law of God---by the certainty and duration of that misery and ruin which await thee, dying without an interest in the great Sacrifice---by the near approach of death, and the awfulness of future judgment---by the unspeakable sorrows and love of

a suffering and dying Saviour---by the indescribable value of thine immortal soul---and by the ecstatic enjoyments of everlasting felicity, flee, O flee, from the wrath to come. Reader! thou canst not escape from the wrath of God due to thy sins, if thou neglectest this great salvation. Give an answer to Him whose eye is now, and ever on thee. Wilt thou believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved? Or will thou continue to reject Him, and die eternally? Remember **“he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life!”**

(The Baptist Magazine, May 1818)



THE

BIBLE NEWSPAPER

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

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

NEW HAMPSHIRE HOUSE DEFUNDS PLANNED PARENTHOOD

(WNS)--The New Hampshire House of Representatives voted 207-147 on Jan. 18 to pass a bill stripping state funding of Planned Parenthood and any other group performing elective abortions. The 60-vote majority was plenty to pass HB 228 on to the state Senate, but not enough to override a potential veto from Gov. John Lynch. Last October, the House Health and Human Services Committee — consisting of 13 Republicans and five Democrats — voted 12-5 to kill the bill on the House floor. O'Brien urged legislators to ignore that report and support the bill instead.

COLORADO SENATE COMMITTEE PASSES CIVIL UNIONS BILL

(WNS)--A bill seeking to create same-sex civil unions in Colorado passed a Senate committee on a 5-2 vote Feb. 15. One Republican voted with Democrats to pass the Colorado civil unions bill out of the Judiciary Committee. Hundreds of people packed the capitol for the emotionally charged hearing. Homosexual activists claimed civil unions are necessary in order to care for their ill partners. But Colorado already has a designated beneficiary law, which allows anyone — married or not — the access they need to care for each other. Marriage supporters point out that efforts toward civil unions are really aimed at eventually redefining marriage. Colorado voters passed a constitutional amendment defining marriage as one man and one woman in 2006, and rejected an initiative virtually identical to the civil unions bill in the same election.

GINGRICH DISCUSSES GAY

ADOPTION

(WNS)--In a CNN appearance in mid-January, former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich strongly supported state-funded adoption agencies' rights to follow their own consciences when deciding what kinds of homes are best for the children they are placing. Hostess Soledad O'Brien challenged the idea that faith-based adoption agencies, such as Catholic Charities in Massachusetts and Illinois, were forced to close after being told they had to make a choice between following their faith and continuing to do business with the state. Massachusetts has legalized same-sex marriage, and Illinois has legalized civil unions. Catholic Charities of Boston dropped out of the Massachusetts adoption business in 2006 after a legislative effort to protect its religious freedoms failed. In Illinois, the various Catholic Charities affiliates around the state have been forced to scale back their operations since a law creating same-sex civil unions passed last year; since losing their state contracts, the groups have sent their state referrals to secular agencies, but have not closed their doors.

5TH CIRCUIT: TEXAS SONOGRAM LAW CAN BE IMPLEMENTED

(WNS)--On Jan. 10, a three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a Texas law requiring abortionists to show women sonograms of their preborn babies at least 24 hours before performing abortions is constitutionally sound, and may be implemented. The law has been blocked since August, with abortion advocacy groups claiming it was “vague” and “compelled speech” from abortionists, violating their First Amendment rights. The law also requires abortionists to make the baby's heartbeat

audible to the woman and explain what happens to the baby during the abortion. Women are required to sign a form noting they've been given all the information.

KENTUCKY PASTOR OPENS LEGISLATIVE SESSION WITH CONTROVERSIAL PRAYER

(WNS)--A Kentucky pastor invited to open a budget address in January shocked everyone by praying fervently — and specifically — against a gambling expansion bill just moments before Gov. Steven Beshear took the podium to tell legislators why they need to pass it. Hershael York, a pastor at Frankfort's Buck Run Baptist Church, and a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, prayed, “May [elected officials] never resort to leveraging vice and avarice to pay our bills. Help us to admit we cannot truly love our neighbor as ourselves and then scheme to get his money by enticing him with vain hope. May they not lead this state to share profits from an industry that preys on greed or desperation. Help us to foster salaries, not slot machines, to build cars and enable jobs, not license casinos and seduce the simple into losing what they have. May the decisions they make and the judgments they render be consistent with Your eternal character and truth.”

FREE-SPEECH CASE APPEALED TO SUPREME COURT

(WNS)--The Thomas More Law Center on Jan. 24 appealed the case of a Southern California teacher to the U.S. Supreme Court. Bradley Johnson, a high school math teacher in the Poway Unified School District near San Diego, had banners hanging in his classroom for 25 years with mottos such as “In God We Trust,” “One Nation Under God” and “God Bless America.” For the last 30 years, the school district has had a policy allowing teachers to use their classrooms for displays of personal belief — a policy other teachers at Johnson's school have taken advantage of by hanging up Tibetan prayer flags and posters of the Dalai Lama, Malcolm X and Hindu sayings. In 2007, the school told Johnson his banners needed to be removed, while the other displays remained. A federal district court in 2008 upheld Johnson's First Amendment rights, but a three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the decision last year — then turned down a request for an en banc hearing by the full court.

NEW YORK SENATE COMMITTEE PASSES CHURCH/SCHOOL BILL

(WNS)--A New York State Senate committee passed a bill on Jan. 24 as the first step toward overriding a New York City policy banning churches from holding weekend worship services in rented public schools. The city's Department of Education gave churches their eviction notice in late December, after the U.S. Supreme Court refused to rule on a 16-year-old viewpoint-discrimination case of a church in the Bronx

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that was kicked out of a public school. The city has given some 60-odd churches serving primarily poor neighborhoods until Feb. 12 to find other facilities to call home. If the bill does not pass, New York City apparently would be the first major city nationwide to ban churches from meeting in public schools. Several peaceful demonstrations protesting the policy have already taken place; Cabrera, who is also a pastor, was one of several people arrested for a show of civil disobedience earlier this month.

9TH CIRCUIT: CALIFORNIA MARRIAGE AMENDMENT UNCONSTITUTIONAL

(WNS)--In a split decision, a three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Feb. 7 the California amendment defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman unconstitutional. ProtectMarriage.com, the coalition of groups defending the amendment, known as Prop. 8, in court, said they will decide next week whether to file their appeal with the full retinue of judges at the 9th Circuit or the U.S. Supreme Court immediately. No same-sex marriages will take place in California until all appeals have been exhausted. The majority wrote that because the state Supreme Court had granted a "right" that was later removed, Prop. 8 violates both the California and U.S. constitutions.

NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE PASSES SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BILL

(WNS)--The New Jersey legislature passed a bill seeking to make the Garden State the eighth state to pass a same-sex marriage law. "Then it goes to the governor's desk — and the governor has indicated he will veto the bill," New Jersey Family Policy Council President Len Deo said. But more than anything, Deo said, marriage advocates need to keep standing up for what's right. "Obviously we need to pray. We need to be involved," he said. "We need to push back. It's not a slam dunk. It's going to be a difficult road for us here in New Jersey." New Jersey has had same-sex civil unions since 2007 — a step that has ushered in same-sex marriage in several states.

VERMONT INTRODUCES SAME-SEX DIVORCE BILL

(WNS)--Twelve years ago, Vermont became the first state in the nation to legalize civil unions, granting all the basic rights and privileges of marriage on same-sex couples. It followed up in 2009 by becoming the first state to legalize same-sex marriage without being instructed to do so by a court. As a result, it became a destination spot for same-sex couples looking to tie the knot. Now, it could also become the first state to grant same-sex divorces. According to H. 758, which passed the House Judiciary Committee on a 9-2 vote, "there are many same-sex couples

who established a civil union or married in Vermont who are no longer together, yet they continue to be legally bound with no recourse other than moving to Vermont and becoming residents." Under current law, same-sex couples have to live in Vermont for at least six months before they can dissolve their civil unions. H. 758 would expedite the process by allowing them to check a box on their application forms in the future.

ROMNEY AND THE POLITICS OF THE POOR

by D.C. Innes

(WNS)--Mitt Romney's not a bad man. He just sounds like it sometimes.

Like when he says, "I'm not concerned about the very poor." Does he kick beggars? Of course not. He was talking about where he would focus his efforts for economic recovery.

"I'm not concerned about the very poor. There's a safety net there, and if it needs repair I'll fix it. I'm not concerned about the very rich; they're doing just fine. I'm concerned about the heart of America, the 95 percent of Americans who are right now struggling."

But how could the frontrunner for the Republican Party's presidential nomination allow those words in any context to come out of his mouth in public? Are the poor an abstraction to him, people he just doesn't think about much at all? But whether the poor are 5 percent of the population, as he suggested, or 15 percent as the Census Bureau would have us believe, they are a pressing moral issue for anyone who holds responsibility for government.

In a fallen world, God establishes government to protect us against each other, but especially the weak against the strong. Thus, an important part of the job for anyone in government is to defend the poor. The biblical writers often show a special concern for them, in particular that rulers guard the poor against those who would take advantage of their vulnerability ("devour" them, Proverbs 30:14) and ensure their fair treatment in court (Exodus 23:6).

By contrast, Gov. Romney, like most Republicans and virtually all Democrats, thinks the poor are no longer his concern once they have a state-provided system of properly functioning "safety nets." But the problem with safety nets is they often become either hammocks or snares. Too many people don't bounce out of them and onto their feet. They take up multigenerational residency in them, and those safety nets are administered by masses of bureaucrats who are happy to keep these people as clients indefinitely. Government provides more effectively for the poor when it protects their ability to provide for themselves, ensuring a genuinely fair process and securing stable communities.

Interestingly, God, who calls rulers His servants (Romans 13), says nothing about government safety nets. The Bible exhorts people instead to private charity. People are to lend and give freely to a neighbor who falls into poverty (Deuteronomy 15:7-

11). Many passages instruct people not to harvest too thoroughly so that the poor can glean for themselves what was left behind (Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Isaiah 3:14). This was private charity, but it required hard work from anyone who wanted to receive it. The Apostle Paul cautioned churches to reserve diaconal support only for the truly helpless (1 Timothy 5:3-16).

The Republicans should make a point not only of leaving the middle class alone but also of guarding the poor against the powerful (including against their friends in Congress). They will have a winning strategy for electoral victory from now until kingdom come.

On many levels it is unwise not to care about the poor.

"Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him" (Job 29:12).

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS CHRISTIANS ARRESTED IN CHINA

(WNS)--Chinese authorities arrested

nearly 50 members of Beijing's largest unregistered church on Jan. 1 after the congregation decided to continue meeting outdoors for Sunday worship services. Members of Shouwang Church began meeting outdoors last April after Chinese authorities blocked access to their indoor meeting space. Police deemed the outdoor meetings illegal and detained hundreds of church members attempting to assemble each week. Church leaders said they began 2012 by attempting to rent indoor facilities again, but reported that Chinese authorities told landlords to refuse their applications. When a few dozen members gathered at the outdoor meeting place on New Year's Day, Chinese authorities immediately detained them. Bob Fu of the Texas-based ChinaAid said the Jan. 1 arrests show that Chinese authorities are "determined to continue their crackdown on independent religious groups in the coming year."



A Nonconformist

By John Massie
of Wayne, West Virginia

"And be not conformed to this world. . ." (Rom. 12:2).

The people of God are unlike the people of the world. His people are special unto Himself, because He made us so and put a difference between us and the world. In Exodus 11:7 this is verified by the words of the Lord when He said: **"The LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."** This is immediately after His decree that all the firstborn in Egypt would die about midnight the day the Passover lamb was slain.

Our ways are not like those of the world. We walk by faith, they walk by sight. We believe that the Word of God is our guide and counselor; they follow the imaginations and ideas originating in their own minds and the minds of others. They think their actions and lives should be directed in the course of man's reasoning, with support from what they believe to be a "good conscience." We who are saved do not trust in our own mental processes of reasoning, knowing the many failures therein; rather we know His Word is our only unfailing standard of life, fully trusting all His Word as absolutely infallible and with power to bring all things to pass that He has promised. We have passed from death unto life through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. They are under condemnation, walking according to the course of this world. Many other comparisons could be made, but this should suffice at this point.

God has always commanded us to be separate from the world, to walk in



His ways and enjoy His blessings. The world knows not God and can only walk carnally, in the vanity of their mind. In Leviticus 18:3 God tells Israel not to follow the doings of the land of Egypt from which they have been delivered, nor were they to practice or do after the land of Canaan, the land which they were to inherit from the Lord. The Lord also commanded that Israel was not to make marriages with the heathen nations (Deut. 7:3). James said in 4:4 of his epistle that a friend to the world was an enemy of God. The apostle Paul in II Corinthians 6:17 said: **"Come out from among them, and be ye separate. . ."** The world holds no luster for God's people, so let's heed and **"be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."** God help us to do it!

Let's now take a look, according to the Scriptures, at a few of the ways of the world which we are not to be conformed to.

1. The Pharisees and scribes wanted to be in favor with the world, particularly with those of their own kind and who shared their self-righteous philosophies. They loved to do those things that drew attention to themselves; they wanted to be seen of men, and so set about to do those things that would attract attention. For example, when they tithed or made a gift for some cause, they wanted to advertise it before men; and this is not pleasing to the Lord, for He says in the

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sixth chapter of Matthew not to sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites. And He did call them hypocrites! Our alms are to be given in secret, and our Father, He says, "Will reward us openly."

2. They wanted also to be seen of men when they prayed, either in the synagogues or corners of the streets. No doubt they desired greatly to pray in flowery language and with wisdom of men's words, that the unknowing world may be impressed and speak vain words of praise to them. The Lord said: "**Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.**" The rewards of men, may we always remember, pass swiftly away, as a declining shadow, but the rewards of our God are forever! May we always be found searching for the ways that please Him. In this we have great storehouses of heavenly treasures.

3. The Pharisees also were very quick to judge something or someone as wrong, if something was done or someone said aught against their practices or code of ethics. They condemned others of little matters but could not see their own atrocious abominations. They had beams in their eyes, and so their vision was much hindered. Yet they searched for the splinters in the eyes of others. All of these things they did, because they rejected the counsel of God and His commandment to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Rather, they went about to establish their own righteousness, and so remained under condemnation. "**We will not have this man to reign over us,**" they said, speaking of our Lord.

4. Another belief of theirs was that sickness and disease should not be healed on the Sabbath day. They conformed to this world (their world) by accusation that Christ was a blasphemer, because He performed many miracles of healing on the Sabbath. If done by others, in their eyes it was wrong; if done by themselves, they had a way to justify it, always! But Christ said: "**It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.**" "**Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.**" God help us to be transformed through His power that worketh in us mightily!

Many other things could be said about the abominations of the Pharisees, but suffice it to say that they opposed everything that Christ did or said in their hearts, because they knew not God who sent the Anointed One.

The ways of the world look good to those who know not Christ in pardon and forgiveness of sin. It is easy and natural for them to conform to the world, and quite impossible for them to do otherwise. Only those who know the power of Jesus Christ in their hearts have a desire to keep any of His commandments. Even we who

know Him spend much too much of our time walking after the ways of the flesh, rather than tuning our ears to the voice of His Word. We should always have a prayer in our hearts to walk in the Spirit that we not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

May we now look at a few of the ways of the world that God would keep us free from.

First, let us conform to the blessed thought and aim of spiritual strength that the Lord saved us to serve Him. It is an inherent characteristic of man that he be lazy. The great majority of the world only wants to do what they can get by with. This inactive state of man is easy to fall into, and many (most) Christians have their witness thereto. This leaves a great harvest, and few laborers. These same who lack zeal for the Lord try feebly to justify their laziness by saying, "The Lord will save His elect and take care of His people, regardless of what we fail to do." True, all of the elect will be saved, but God uses men to do His work. He uses men to preach His glorious gospel and to provide the needs of His people. And remember, every thought, word, and action of ours that is to the praise and honor and glory of His eternal name will have a sure reward. A loss of reward through failure to do for Him will also bring a time of remorse and misery somewhere along the way.

Secondly, those who love the world love to entertain the thought of being rich. This is man's law of success---to have a name of being rich. How this lifts up his head in pride! Nothing will stop him from giving his dedicated best to this end. The idea of being rich is his "heaven." A man that is rich in his own eyes and in the eyes and minds of others that think likewise is a poor man in the sight of God. The Lord Jesus says: "**Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. . .**" Further, He says: "**Labor not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.**" "Acknowledge Him in all thy ways, and He shall direct thy paths." The treasures of God are not the same as the treasures of men laid up on earth. The treasures of God are hidden in Jesus Christ---the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. These are treasures of the heart, experienced and known in Him; not that which can be counted or set in places to be admired and valued of men. Be not conformed to the riches of the world, for they will soon pass away.

Thirdly, the world would have us be conformed to the idea that higher education from the institutions of higher learning is what men need to enhance man's environment in the world. The promulgation of education oftentimes brings with it the desire for places of might in the world, or positions of power. It is a natural vain instinct of man to want recognition in the world, as being over others, in actual decrees of laws or influence or persuasion that they can bring to bear. The ultimate goal, of course,

is for them to gain more power and influence, to be looked upon as something great, and to have pleasure in seeing men bow to them, even in worshipful attitude. But what does God say? Jeremiah gives answer and warning: "Though you build your nest as high as the eagle, I will pull thee down from thence." These have a promise from the Lord, moreover. "**He that exalts himself shall be abased.**" Be not conformed to this world in the aspirations of a place of might, power, and authority. The Lord says again in Matthew 20:26: "**But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.**" It continues in verse 27: "**and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.**" Let us be renewed in transformation of mind by desiring to minister, for this is the Lord's instruction to us. He Himself ministered for us. Can we do less for Him?

Fourth, some in the world look up to those having a college education, thinking that these are wise and something above the ordinary and average person. There are those too, that think themselves wise in the ways of the world, without necessarily having a higher level of education or advanced training in a particular skill of some kind. When the stiff neck of pride causes one to think himself to know more than most others, he or she sets themselves on a pedestal of vanity. They close their ears to the real things of life (which are in Christ), and they go after and promote those things that bring praise and honor from men. They speak of their own glory, and will stop at nothing to gain remarks of praise from men. Little do they know just how meager is their knowledge. Oftentimes the hand of the Lord falls heavy upon them (if they are saved), that their hearts may be tried, that they may become humble, and acknowledge their nothingness before the Just One.

It is better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. This is told us in Proverbs. The Word of God also tells us in I Corinthians 3:18: "**Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.**" The Word teaches us very expressly that apart from the wisdom that God gives, man has none. It is only what we think of Christ and do for Him that matters. All time taken in trying to exalt oneself in worldly wisdom is time spent in vanity and is sinful, for God says: "**For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.**" How good and how pleasant life would be for us if we spent more of our time with Christ in the forefront of our thoughts! And how joyful our hearts and souls would be each time we put these thoughts into action for Him! But man is a boastful creature in the flesh, and he likes thoughts of being rich, mighty, and wise. These are just a few of the ways of

the world that we are not to conform to, but rather we are to consider and help the poor, and with lowliness of mind to esteem others better than ourselves. The worldly mind says, "Take care of yourself;" the spiritual mind says, "Look on the needs of others."

The natural man cannot heed the things of God. He puts faith in himself and in others, not knowing how vain and meaningless it is. The highest and most exalted of men of the world can only look to those of the world for support. They will not abide, "**For vain is the help of man**" ---we are told in Psalms. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to the world, but unto us who are saved; it is the power of God. Unregenerated man looks to another man of his liking, and in whom he has confidence for hope of a better worldly life; but all of these things---man's wisdom, riches, might---will pass away with the using. Consider that the Eternal Word says, "What is a man profited though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" His life passed quickly, as a vapor, with no hope of Christ. He will not see the day of immortality; neither hear the shout nor the trumpet. Rather than being caught up to meet the Just One in the air, his grave will claim him for more than 1,000 years; and at the conclusion of this millennium he will face the great white throne judgment and be assigned to the lake of fire forever. He will hear the eternal death knell: "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity, for I never knew you." These thoughts would inject the sure seed of insanity, if they were to linger any length of time. How horrible the thought of Hell and its miseries and darkness! To conceive the piercing death of the soul and the agony of the denial of looking Our Righteousness in the face and the absolute knowledge of His absence for eternity, is far more than the human mind can fathom.

Many other ways of the world could be set forth if time and space would permit. Just to mention a few others: (1) The thoughts and opinions of men taken and subscribed to as being what is needed for the betterment of man. (2) The world puts high values on pleasure. (3) The world considers entertainment a necessity. This could probably be defined as laughter without meaning, time wasted, with no real benefits following. (4) The world seeks counsel of men as a guide of their own conduct. (5) Every man's ways are right in his own eyes. (6) The world tries to effect peace through their own efforts. (7) The world has eyes of lust.

Let us now try to put some spiritual light on these errors and vain ways of the world, as listed.

1. The Word of God is not a book of thoughts and opinions. It is a word of absolute truth, received by faith through

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the power of the Holy Spirit. Whosoever hearkens to the commandments and statutes of the Lord will not want any good thing. Thoughts and opinions of men will often bring troubles and woes, but the Word of God will bring peace and joy to the heart of the believer.

2. The man of God (the believer) knows that suffering will be experienced as he serves the Lord. Moses, the Scripture tells us: "Choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." To suffer for the cause of Christ is pleasure to the saved. Pleasure as known of the world is abomination.

3. Entertainment is the desire for self-satisfaction. Whatever the natural desire may be, when time is at hand to waste, the flesh goes after its fulfillment. The saved man, who seeks to do the will of the Lord, seeks not a time of laughter and the satisfying of carnal desires; but rather a blessing through the manifestation of the power of God. He wants to rejoice in knowing that he has done something to the praise and honor of the Mighty Christ. His heart's desire and prayer to God is that he may see a soul saved. He experiences great blessing in speaking words of life to lost souls, and words of inspiration to greater things for those who know Christ as the Great Shepherd of the sheep.

4. The world seeks the counsel of men to guide them. The born-again believer seeks the counsel of God, for the Word of our God shall stand forever. This is not so with the most brilliant of men---their word passes with their passing. The counsel of the Lord, on the other hand, stands to all generations. Hear Him as He speaks in Proverbs 8:6: "**Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.**" In verse 7 He says: "**For my mouth shall speak truth. . .**" In verse 8 He continues: "**All the words of my mouth are in righteousness.**" We could go on indefinitely. The Christian says with Solomon: "Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he shall direct thy paths." Praise God for His infallible counsel!

5. Every man thinks himself right. I am reminded here of what the Lord told the Sadducees in answer to the question as to whose wife a certain woman would be in the resurrection. He said: "**Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.**" It takes the power of the Holy Spirit to show a man how wrong are his thoughts and how undone he is. The Holy Spirit will convict him of his sin, and show him the One who is right in all His ways, if it pleases the Father to draw him. What a contrast---being right in worldly eyes---and being right in the eyes of Him who imputes righteousness

to His elect.

6. The world tries to bring peace. The world speaks often of peace, and nations go through conferences and sundry methods of efforts of peace. But peace can only be had through the Prince of Peace. Listen to the Word of God in Isaiah 32:17: "**And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.**" It is obvious now that those of the world cannot bring peace, because they cannot have a work of righteousness. This can only be done by those who have Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith. "**Let the peace of God rule in your hearts,**" says the Word. A cessation from active conflict is not peace, and even this is only for a short-lived time. Christ only gives peace---through faith in His blood; and apart from this, there can be no peace. Christ says: "**. . . in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation. . .**"

7. The world has lustful eyes. The eyes of man are never satisfied. This is told us in the Word of the Lord. The natural man goes after what he wants, be it wrong and unlawful. The Scripture tells us: "Then lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." The man of the world knows not how to make a covenant with his eyes, as did Job. He does not consider sin, nor ponder its consequences. He sees things that he wants and lusts for, being filled with an insatiable desire from Satan. The man of God who wars a good warfare, however, asks the Lord to remove the lusts of the flesh; and that he be empowered to walk in the Spirit, that he not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. He likes to remember the words of life: "**Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.**" The saved man constantly battles the desires of the flesh, knowing its consequences and penalties; the unsaved man loves his sin and lays elaborate plans for its furtherance. We should pray without ceasing, that we may hearken to His words: "**Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.**"

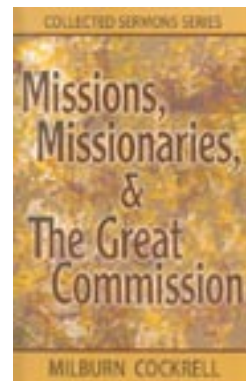
As stated at the beginning, the people of God are unlike the people of the world. May God help us always to present His people as opposed to the ways of the world, for the Lord said in John 17:16: "**They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.**" Praise the Lord for His unspeakable grace and power that makes us different!

"**And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**" He said also: "**If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.**"



NEW BOOKS AVAILABLE

We have just finished printing another book of the late Elder Milburn Cockrell's sermons. This book is a collection of sermons dealing with the subjects in the title. The book contains 96 pages. The retail price of the book is \$8. Plus S&Hs



FEMINISM Woman and Her Work

by J. W. Porter
(Hardcover)
\$20
Plus S&H

Berea Baptist Hymnal

(Third Edition)

\$10
Plus S&H
(There is no discount on hymnals.)

Shipping Chart

Order Value	Add
Minimum	\$5.00
\$25.00-49.99	\$6.00
\$50.00-74.99	\$7.00
\$75.00-99.99	\$8.00
\$100.00 and Up	FREE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Liverpool Independent Baptist Church of Liverpool, New York (north of Syracuse) is searching for a sovereign grace pastor. The church believes in the doctrines of grace, the local church, and is pre-trib and pre-mil. Interested brethren should contact Bro. Greg Sigworth at (315) 677-3819.

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

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 1-1-2012 to 1-31-2012

Beginning Balance\$1,680.47

RECEIPTS:

Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY100.00
.....425.00
TOTAL2,105.47

EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time (US) 360.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES\$360.00
..... \$1,745.47
Interest + .04
..... 1,745.51
Less Corbin, KY des.-443.72
ENDING BALANCE\$1,301.79

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance\$603.72

RECEIPTS:

TOTAL603.72

EXPENDITURES:

WCTT160.00
ENDING BALANCE\$443.72



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 1-1-2012 to 1-31-2012

Beginning Balance\$1,247.84

RECEIPTS:

Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX 50.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL 36.42
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX 50.00
Bible Believer's B.C., Naples, ID100.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV326.90
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY150.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL 25.00
Faith M. B. C., Lynn, AR 25.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY100.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK35.00
Harold Flynn, Craigsville, WV 50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV 100.00
Janet Stevens, Marion, KY 15.00
L. H. Farrell, Des Allemands, LA 80.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC 50.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN50.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA25.00
Subscriptions212.00
Dividing checks150.00
Anonymous\$1,186.00
Sub Total\$3,519.45
TOTAL\$5,297.32

EXPENDITURES:

Printing 581.00
Postage 651.08
Wages 2,300.00
FICA 175.90
Dividing checks 150.00
Supplies104.96
Total Expenditures\$3,962.94
..... 1,041.22
Bank Charge 13.00
ENDING BALANCE\$1,028.22

Don't Call Me Reverend!

By E. G. Cook
(1898 - 1986)



I can find in the Bible concerning the ordaining of Baptist preachers (that was the only kind of preachers in that day) is that of elders. I have heard the title of "elder" objected to because that title is worn by Hardshells. But I have never heard the title of "reverend" objected to because it is worn by Holy Rollers.

In Isaiah 14:13-14 we find Lucifer all puffed up with pride as he tells us of the wonderful things he was going to do. And the climax of them all was "I will be like the Most High." As a result of this he became just the opposite of the Most High. Still he has never stopped trying to be like the Most High in all outward appearances. Only one time in all the Bible do we find the title reverend. In Psalms 111:9 we find it applied to God Himself. Old Satan cannot wear God's title himself, but if he can get some of the Lord's own preachers to wear it, he feels he has been a success after all. I most certainly do not mean to say that Baptist preachers who wear the title of reverend are intentionally trying to "be like the Most High." But if I were to assume that title for myself, I fully believe that is the way God would consider it.

So far as I am able to learn the title "reverend" was never used in connection with a mere man for at least fourteen hundred years after all those elders were ordained in New Testament times. The word "reverend" in Psalms 111:9 comes from the Hebrew word YARE. This word is used more than 300 times in the Scriptures, but only one time is it translated reverend. Other meanings of this word YARE are dreadful, feared, terrible. The title "terrible" would seem to fit some preachers I know better than "reverend."

According to the Oxford Universal Dictionary the title of "reverend" was first applied to persons of age and

character in 1449. In 1485 the deans in the Catholic Church were given the title of "Very Reverend" and the bishops were called "Right Reverend." God's title was "Reverend," so in order for the deans and the bishops to be more highly honored than God, they used Very Reverend for the deans and Right Reverend for the bishops. It would seem that by this time man would have been satisfied just to leave God that far behind. But it seems there is no limit to man's carnal desires, not only to be like the most High, but to go beyond Him.

So in 1642 the Arch-Bishops began to be called Most Right Reverend. Just how much more reverend can you be than that? Three years later in 1645 just exactly two hundred years before the Southern Baptist Convention was born, the title of "reverend" was applied to the clergy as a whole. The Catholic Church had already taken over the matter of saving people. They just dash a little water on a person's head, and there you have it. That is so much more comfortable than hanging on a tree for six hours by means of nails driven through the hands and feet. Then they had already taken over the matter of forgiving sins. If you have the money, I understand you can have the sins you have already committed forgiven, and even the ones you plan to commit next weekend. Surely they have the most convenient religion in all the world. Now that they had taken over God's function in the matter of saving people, and forgiving their sins it was a little thing for them to take over His title. All this will culminate in the man of sin in II Thessalonians 2:34. But if you notice in Revelation 19:20 our Lord does not even go to the trouble of killing that old rascal. He just casts him into the lake of fire alive.

There are two undeniable and indisputable facts found in the New Testament concerning the title for a preacher. One is that the title of elder is Scriptural. The other is that somebody has substituted another title for the one God gave to His preachers. So it seems to me that if Baptist preachers would investigate the origin of their title, they would prefer the one given to them in

God's Word rather than one given to them by the Catholic Church. If Baptists would discard all the junk the Catholic Church has sold them through the centuries, they would find they had a lot more room for Bible truth.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Big Creek Baptist Church of Wayne, WV would like to announce their Spring Revival scheduled for Monday, March 19th thru Friday March 23rd.

Speakers are Elders John Fry, Tom Ross., Tom Hysell, Pete Horn and Joe Collins.

For more information please contact Pastor Matthew Stepp at (304) 807-5063(M) or (304) 522-1261(H) or by email at mnbstepp@suddenlink.net.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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