March 5th, 2017

The Berea Baptist Banner

Volume XXXVII, Number III

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

Being Conformed

By Todd Bryant
of Northport, Alabama

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

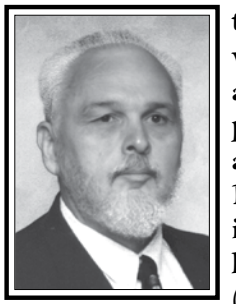
"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29).

Sadly, the two preceding verses tend to be almost avoided, especially in sovereign grace circles. We have pounded the doctrines of eternal security into the heads of our people and have left out the importance of good works. Although we know we are not saved by what we do, we affirm that works are important. The doctrine of the preservation of the saints is not a license to sin and should

◊ *(Continued on page 2)*

David's Dance

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma

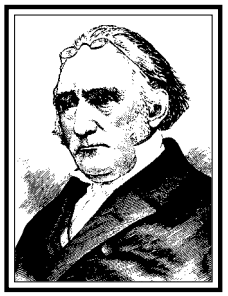


It never ceases to amaze me the lengths to which people will go to justify their actions. The Lord said it so well! **"For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man glutonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children"** (Matt. 11:18-19). The human heart is so

◊ *(Continued on page 4)*

Slavery to Public Opinion

By Francis Wayland
(1796 - 1865)



"But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (II Cor. 10:12).

It is too obvious to need illustration, that upon our social nature a large part of our happiness essentially depends. We become members of civil society as soon as we enter upon our existence, and our right to its protection and care is universally acknowledged. We instinctively concede to all born of woman the privileges which belong to humanity, and guarantee even to a helpless infant the free enjoyment of them all. This is evidently one of the noblest impulses of our common nature, and that heart must be morally diseased in which it does not beat with the power of an irresistible

◊ *(Continued on page 6)*

Christ Is All In All

By Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 – 2002)

"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11).

Christianity is simply Christ. All good is summed up in Him. All things worth having and worth being are to be found in Him. Without His person there is nothing left that is distinctively Christian. Other religions

◊ *(Continued on page 15)*

He Must Increase

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

My text comes from John 3:30, **"He must increase, but I must decrease."** These are the words of John the Baptist as he speaks of the Saviour, Jesus Christ. When you read the context, you find that the Jews came to John questioning him about the Lord Jesus. They thought that John might be offended because many folks were becoming followers of Jesus. In fact, many of John's disciples were leaving John, and following Jesus the Christ – the One that

◊ *(Continued on page 18)*

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1. To honor God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To preach the gospel to lost sinners.
3. To spread the whole counsel of God's Word.
4. To encourage God's preachers and to strength-en His churches in the most holy faith.
5. To motivate God's children to a closer fellow-ship 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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Being Conformed

(Continued from page 1) ◊

not be treated as such. It is unfortunate, however, that the time has come where you can hardly tell the saint from the sinner, and in many cases, the sinner is the most saintly, or at least his fruits seem to be.

Jesus declares in John 15:18: **"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."** And, in the 20th verse: **"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."** The minor problems that we face today, as Christians, can hardly be called persecution. They can scarcely be compared to the sufferings of Christ or any of the apostles. Even many of the laymen of the New Testament suffered martyrdom. The question then should be posed, "Why are we not persecuted today?" The laws of the land are not holding back sinful men from hating us, for they hated Christ without a cause (John 15:25). The Jews broke many of their own laws in order to crucify Christ. They did not hate Him because of His breaking any laws, but rather the contrary. They hated Him because of His perfect holiness. Perhaps this is the reason we are so liked.

We are not able, while in our present condition, to reach a state of perfect holiness. However, we are to strive to that end. That is where we are falling short today. We are more concerned with "blending in" with our present surroundings than we are working for the cause of Christ. This is called *"being conformed to this world"* and this is wrong, according to our text.

Just to pose a question, when we go on vacation, are we concerned with settling in and making a life for ourselves there, or, do we realize we are only there for a few days? Do we concern ourselves with the necessary things of life, or, do we just enjoy the gleanings of our vacation spot? This might sound silly on the outset, but, I can assure you, it is not. According to Philippians 3:20, our conversation, or citizenship, is in Heaven. Therefore, this world is just a place we are in for less than a second in the scope of eternity. We do not need to worry ourselves with the things of this world. We should, as servants of God, remember where we are from and work to better our eternal abode.

In Matthew 16:26, Jesus poses the question: **"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"** This is a question asked by Christ--the Savior of men. I believe it is worthy to be considered. Most things in this world only do harm to our relationship with Christ and our soul. Just because we are eternally secure in the blood of Christ does not mean our spiritual life can not be harmed by our life here upon Earth. We are so worried about gaining riches and helping our family members to do the same that we generally forget God and rarely concern ourselves with the salvation of our own family. What can you help a family member to gain that would be more valuable than salvation? What can you give them in this world that would be worth the price of eternity in the lake of fire? The Lord has blessed us with salvation and faith in His Son. We need to daily share that blessing with others in hopes that God will empower it and

◊ *(Continued on page 3)*

Being Conformed

(Continued from page 2)

bring salvation to them.

In Matthew 6:19-24, Christ instructs us to **"lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."** Are we laying up treasures in Heaven? I would have to say that the majority of people are concerned with laying up treasures here. We rarely even think of working for treasures in the life to come. We should, however, remember that our time here is but a breath. Our time in Heaven is eternal. I would rather go through life in this world as a beggar and be rich in the world to come than to have all of my works burned up at the judgment seat of Christ. All of the possessions you have here will be left here when you die. I think of the phrase, "He who dies with the most toys, still dies."

Does the world see us as being different? I should hope they would. The term "Christian" is a name that was given to the saints because of their Christ-like appearance. That is what we need to be striving towards. We need to be different than the people in this world. We need to be conformed to the image of Christ. We will be at the resurrection, but, through sanctification, we need to strive to conform to His image today. According to Matthew 6:24, we **"cannot serve God and mammon."** We can not serve God and this world, too. The more we "fit in" to this world, the more we are conformed to it. The more we strive to be like Christ, the more we appear just to be sojourners in a foreign land.

In II Corinthians 6:14-18, we are given instructions about not being **"unequally yoked together with unbelievers."** Paul goes on to ask what fellowship we, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, have with unbelievers. This, no doubt, is one of the reasons for Christians today being conformed to this world. This is why our churches are looking for ways to let sinners in. How can we be in the midst of sin and not take part? Ultimately, we can't. For a while we might be able to ward off evil. But, we will fail the test if we do not stay away from these worldly situations. The crowd you hang around influences the way you act. You will do what your friends do, for the most part. We are commanded to be separate---a peculiar people.

Has God ever allowed His people to remain in idolatry? Is not the worship of the things of this world idolatry? Look at the chastening hand of God upon the nation of Israel today. They broke His commandments. They went after other "gods." God has scattered them over the face of the Earth today. They are an example for us to learn from. They will be saved in the days to come as will a saint that falls under the chastening of God. However, as it is with the Jews, chastening is tough-love. God deals with His people correctly. He brings His children back in a way that works. Deuteronomy 4:24 states: **"For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire,"** even a jealous God. Remember this as you build up wealth in this world and leave God out of your daily life.

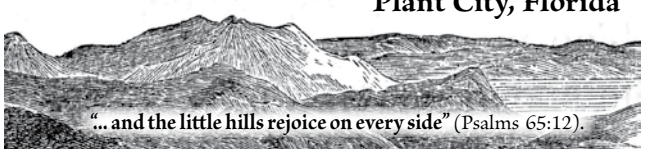
In our text verse (Rom. 8:29), we are told that we were predestined **"to be conformed to the image of"** Jesus Christ. We need to strive to this end. We, as Christians, need to do the work that God has given us. We need to try our best to conform ourselves to Christ's image. How do we do this? First, we get into the Word as much as possible. For years, through the Dark Ages, the printed Word was kept from the people. Today, we have it at our disposal. We need to learn as much as we can to better serve God. Secondly, we need to pray without ceasing. We need to stay in prayer to God that He would cause us to be more like Christ---that He would lead, guide and direct our every step and that we would follow as we should. Thirdly, we need to keep company with Christians. Whether we do this in homes, church, or revival meetings, it needs to be done. There is no option to attending church. If you are concerned with your treasures in Heaven, there is no option to the others either.

Take this article as an attempt to motivate God's children to forsake this world and take up the cross and follow Christ. It is my desire that Christ's churches would be filled with mature Christians who have a concern for their fellow man---churches who are not afraid to carry the gospel forth as we have been commanded to do, and members who desire to hear the words: **"Well done, thou good and faithful servant"** (Matt. 25:21).

END

Little Hills

By Nathaniel Hille of Plant City, Florida



"... and the little hills rejoice on every side" (Psalms 65:12).

The New Birth #12
Evidences of Having Been Born Again—Part 5

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God..." (I John 5:1). The apostle John writes that belief that Jesus is the Christ is evidence one is born-again. Believe literally means to place confidence in; to entrust to. Many people have a head-knowledge of the historical events surrounding Jesus, but they fail to have saving-faith in Him and to be born again.

John Gill stated, "True faith in Jesus Christ is believing with the heart unto righteousness (Rom. 10:10), or a looking to, and trusting in the righteousness of Christ for justification; His blood for pardon and cleansing; under a sense of guilt and filth; and a laying hold on His atoning sacrifice for the atoning of our sins and peace with God. Faith is a reception of Him as the only Savior and redeemer, or a dependence on Him for life and salvation which is followed by love to him, a subjection to His gospel and cheerful submission to His commands."

Have you this kind of faith? Or a mere head-knowledge of historical events that took place nearly 2,000 years ago? Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed of God to bear the sins of His elect people at Calvary's cross? That He is the Son of God, chosen of God to suffer the wrath of God in your place at Calvary? Do you have saving-faith?

David's Dance

(Continued from page 1) ◊

deceptive as to be able to say one thing is right in one instance and the direct opposite is right in another. Truly, **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it"** (Jer. 17:9)? The multitudes of Jews in Jesus' day certainly proved that, and nothing has changed about the deceitful desperately wicked hearts of men everywhere.

Every sot on skid row knows the Scripture, **"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities"** (I Tim. 5:23). Many of them can preach a pretty decent sermon on what the Bible says about wine, and often do so in order to justify their behavior. But they omit other Scriptures that bear on the subject of substance abuse, such as: **"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any"** (I Cor. 6:12) and: **"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak"** (Rom. 14:21).

Once, after I preached on scriptural baptism in the Yukon Territory, an Anglican woman who had heard the message came to me and said, "The word sprinkling is in the Bible." Yes it is! It is in the Bible four times: all in the Book of Hebrews. Two verses there have to do with the Old Testament Jewish sprinkling of the blood of bulls and goats and two verses refer to the blood of Christ. But this poor woman thought she could justify – and perhaps did justify in her own mind – that sprinkling was acceptable to God in the place of dipping or plunging. Her deceitful heart loved "sprinkling" and so she attempted to justify the heretical practice of infant sprinkling just because the word is in the Bible, even though it is used of things totally unrelated to "sprinkling" in place of baptism.

You and I must exercise great care to insure that our own personal prejudices do not enter in and affect our interpretation of what the Bible says! We must study thoroughly and honestly with a determination to let the Bible say what it says. We must adjust our thinking, theology and actions so that they are in accord with God's Holy Book! May God give His people grace to do that very thing! And in connection with dancing, we must not let our deceitful hearts that may love dancing, or that may love crowds and think dancing is a way to win folks to Jesus seek to justify dancing by saying, "David danced."

So we come to the subject of King David's dance. His action is used by professing Christians – even by some called Baptists – to justify ballroom dancing, sensual gyrations both in time and out of time with modern "rock" music, country dancing of all sorts including "square" dancing, motions of wild sexual abandon, (called by one preacher "vertical foreplay" and even to choreographed "interpretive dances" in religious meetings in so called houses of worship. (Pardon my plain speech, but people speak plainly today – too plainly, I think – so I will exercise myself in that direction just a little. Frankly, I am shocked to hear conversations in which subjects are discussed, statements made, and words used that in my youth were never discussed in mixed company even among the ungodly. And if you do not know what mixed company is, that just shows how far downward has been the descent of American society during my seventy-two years!)

Now the Bible says: **"And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod"** (II Sam. 6:14). May I hasten to add that this preacher does not believe that it is an accident that in the same verse where we are told of David's unseemly behavior we are also told what he was wearing. He was "uncovered" only in the sense that he had laid aside his kingly garments and was attired as a priest going about his work, (see II Samuel 6:20 for his wife's false accusation). We are given additional information as to David's attire on this occasion in I Chronicles 15:27: **"And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen... David also had upon him an ephod of linen."** Now if anyone knows about linen they know it is not "see through" nor clinging. Besides his robe of linen, he wore the vestment of the priests, called an "ephod." No doubt David also wore a tunic, or under-robe, but over all his clothing he wore this "ephod" which was also linen and hung around his neck and covered both his front and back much like a long apron. Thus David showed his awareness that he was about holy work in bringing the Ark of the Covenant home. Remember he had been afraid to bring the Ark of God home prior to this so he was being very careful to show that he was humbly, and as a servant of God, doing what he was doing.

Now for a brief consideration of the context in which our text concerning David's dance appears. The Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant: that wooden, gold-covered chest with the two beaten-work gold angels that hovered over its lid which was the mercy seat: that holy thing that belonged in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle – and which would later be placed in the Temple. David went to war with the Philistines and won back the Ark.

Now David was like a lot of Baptists. They are all in favor of pagan worldly ways if they seem to impress folk and might win them – all to the glory of God, of course! I think that had David lived in the days of the conquest of Canaan, he would have been first in line to hew the stones of the altar where he worshipped. Hewn stones were much more impressive, beautiful and in keeping with the worship of the pagans of that era. But God said: **"And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it"** (Ex. 20:25). If you understand the principle involved in the matter of not hewing the stones for God's altar you will no doubt admit that many Baptists today are guilty of disobeying the spirit and intent of this ancient command to Israel – all in order to appear more socially acceptable and to get a crowd. But that is another subject.

So David and his fellows – knowing full well that God had ordained that priests should carry the Ark by means of long poles that fit through rings on the sides of the Ark – nevertheless adopted the world's way. It was more impressive, dignified and appealing to do it the new-fangled way. So here is what they did and what happened as a result: **"...they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that**

◊ (Continued on page 5)

David's Dance

(Continued from page 4) ◊

was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day. And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me? So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obededom the Gittite. And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obededom, and all his household. And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness" (II Sam. 6:3-12).

This last long passage tells us of God's judgment upon Uzzah for doing what any one of us would have done. Now it should be noted that the Philistines had returned the Ark to Israel an earlier time by putting it on a new cart (cf 1 Samuel 6:7 ff). Perhaps this is where David got the idea of putting the Ark of God on a cart. If so, he was imitating the pagans in what he did. And he probably was doing that very thing, for the idea came from somewhere. But back to our text: when the oxen that were pulling the cart on which the Ark rode stumbled and shook the Ark, Uzzah did not want to see that holy thing fall to the ground. So he did the natural thing: he did the right thing: he put out his hand to steady the Ark. As a result of his well-intentioned act, God killed Uzzah that day. But, someone objects, he was only doing what he thought was a good and necessary thing! Hear this: when it comes to both the worship and service of God, doing the right thing is accursed of God when you are going about the worship and service of God in the wrong way in the first place. Now that last may be a bit of a convoluted sentence so perhaps you should read it again! If what you are doing is unauthorized by God in the first place, nothing "right" that you may do is acceptable to God! Your "right" actions are wrong if what you are doing is wrong in the first place. I do not know how to make that principle any plainer. The death of Uzzah proves that! God killed him!

The actions described in the last long text were unauthorized by God. No doubt David and his cohorts thought putting the Ark of God on a new cart was perfectly acceptable, more modern than the old way, and more dignified than having it carried by a bunch of sweating struggling priests. But the whole method was wrong and so what Uzzah did was wrong even though it was right to keep the Ark from falling to the ground. Because of this right act in doing a wrong thing God killed Uzzah that day.

As a result we are told that **"David was afraid of the LORD that day"** and **"would not remove the ark of the LORD"** to Jerusalem. After leaving the Ark three months in the house of Obededom, David was told how that God blessed that man and his household. So David humbled himself and went back and did things God's way this time. We read: **"And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings"** (II Sam. 6:13). Note: "they bare the ark!" The priests carried the ark as God had ordained in the first place! David did God's work God's way this time and God blessed him and Israel for his obedience. And so it was that after the priests took six steps they stopped and offered sacrifices to God. At this time we are told: **"And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod"** (II Sam. 6:14).

Now let us examine David's "dance." The Hebrew word translated "danced" is found here and only one other place and that is verse 16 where we read: **"And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart."** So this Hebrew word is only used of what David did this one time. It is not used of the dances of anyone else in the Bible. Do you reckon God knew what He was doing in having this word chosen and used rather than another word which means another kind of dancing?

James Strong, a Methodist, gives the first meaning of the Hebrew word translated "danced" as to "whirl." John Gill, the old Baptist commentator, says, "...not a set dance, or along with others; but he leaped and skipped as "car" [sic], a lamb, does..." [brackets added]. His was not a choreographed dance. It was not a sexual or sensual dance and cannot rightfully be used to justify either "interpretive" dancing or "social" dancing.

The Hebrews, like other peoples, had their set dances, most often it seems, performed by the women, but the Hebrew word transliterated karar (kaw-rar') is never used in the Bible of such dancing as they did. David's whirling around and leaping for joy were merely the expressions of his great joyful excitement at God's acceptance of his bringing the Ark home. He was not in any kind of house of worship, but rather in the open air and showed that he cared more that God was pleased than he cared for his dignity as king. Who among us has not seen a young child overcome with joy who cannot remain still, but "dances" about not able to contain himself? That was the dancing of David!

Michal, Saul's daughter and wife of David, criticized him for having laid aside his kingly garments and for behaving in an undignified manner before the ordinary people. That David's action was one of self-abasement and humiliation of himself as king was the issue is made clear by his words to his wife: **"And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants**

◊ (Continued on page 6)

David's Dance

(Continued from page 5) ◊

which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour" (II Sam. 6:22). So what David did was not a beautiful stylized dance at all. Nor was he dancing "with" someone else. Nor was he immodest or naked. He humbled himself as an expression of his joy because of God's acceptance of his act of bringing home the Ark of God.

As bad as things were in the church in Corinth, Paul never dealt with them dancing in church services though there was much else wrong there. And there is not the slightest hint in the New Testament that anyone anywhere performed "interpretive" dances in that era. And interestingly enough, in the most joyful of places, Heaven itself, there is no mention in the Bible of anyone ever dancing there now or in the future. It seems to me that if "dancing" is right for churches today, it would be found in the worship of God in Heaven, but it is not! There is no basis in David's dance for any kind of modern dancing in church services or on social occasions, but of course those who want to justify themselves and their carnal actions will no doubt not be swayed at all by the facts. **"But wisdom is justified of her children"** (Matt. 11:19), Jesus said and of course 'tis true.

That Michal displeased God for criticizing her husband is clear for we read: **"Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death"** (II Sam. 6:23). But that is not an argument in favor of dancing, rather a lesson on pride.

END

Slavery to Public

(Continued from page 1) ◊

passion. On our instinctive social and moral elements rest the whole fabric of government and law. Remove these, and though we might be gregarious we could never form a commonwealth, and the physical force of the individual would confer the only authority known among men.

Allied to the social element of our nature are various accessory impulses of acknowledged power. Among these may be reckoned the simple love of companionship. A sane human being instinctively shrinks from being alone. Solitary confinement for life is deemed by many more terrible than death. So abhorrent is this condition to our nature that it frequently terminates in insanity. The conception of an intelligent being condemned to eternal banishment from every living thing is one of the most terrible that the imagination can create.

Intimately associated with the love of companionship is the desire for the esteem and affection of our fellowmen. We all desire our companions to adopt our practices and coincide with our sentiments. The more distinctly we observe in others this moral parallelism with ourselves, the more readily do we form acquaintances, and the more rapidly does acquaintance ripen into intimacy. It is, on the other hand, painful to find ourselves segregated in feelings, sentiments, and action from our fellows; and when, in fact, a dissimilarity exists, our first impulse is to conceal it, lest, by chance, we should forfeit somewhat of their good opinion. Our Saviour alludes to this as the cause of much of the pain which would attend upon a profession of his religion: **"they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil"** (Luke 6:22). He, on various occasions, takes special care to strengthen them against this form of persecution as one which it would be hard to bear and difficult to withstand.

It is, however, evident that this accessory of our social nature is wisely implanted within us. From this universal impulse arise many of the choicest amenities of daily intercourse. We are thus reciprocally guarded against the infliction of unnecessary pain; and hence an incalculable amount of mental disquietude is banished from the earth. He who disregards this impulse of his nature, and derives pleasure from collision with the opinions and practices of his neighbors, soon finds himself in a condition in which collision is impossible. Men gradually withdraw from him, and leave him in the undisturbed enjoyment of his cherished opinions. From this love of esteem, and the unwillingness to forfeit it, flow all the courtesies of refined society, the laws of universal good breeding, and that studiousness to avoid giving unnecessary offense, which should ever regulate our intercourse with our fellow-men of every rank, of ever position, of every degree of refinement, and every grade of social cultivation.

But while all this is acknowledged, it is apparent that this excellent tendency of our nature may easily be carried to excess. Its foundations are laid in the relations which men sustain to each other, as beings endowed with the same sensibilities, and invested with the same inalienable rights. Our relations to the Creator depend upon very different principles, and it is essential to the perfection of our moral character that every impulse should be subject to the love and obedience which we owe to our Father who is in Heaven. If this love of companionship, this longing for the good opinion of others, is permitted to stifle the monitions of conscience, and paralyze our love of rectitude; if it lead us to say what we know to be false, or do what we know to be wrong; if it cause us to ignore the government of God, and thus, in practice, exclude the Most High from the government of His universe, then I think we all must allow that the love of human approbation has carried us somewhat too far. This conflict between impulse and obligation did not escape the notice of the Saviour. How can ye believe, said He, who receive honor one of another, and not the honor which cometh from God only?

That an antagonism between our moral principles and our love of human esteem is likely to arise in a world lying in wickedness, is sufficiently apparent. **"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"** (Ps. 14:1); and we are everywhere surrounded by men who are practically guilty of this precise folly. The most comprehensive charity must admit that men are, in general, lovers of pleasure, of power, of wealth, of social position, rather than lovers of God. From the principle of companionship to which we have alluded, they desire all men to bow down to their idols, and worship the images which they have set up. Nor is this quite all. Conscience, though stupefied by sin, is painfully aroused by a living testimony to the frivolity and wickedness of a life without God. We naturally turn away from that which gives us pain, and hence he who resolutely obeys God will frequently find himself in a small minority; it will be well

◊ (Continued on page 7)

Slavery to Public

(Continued from page 6)

if he is not, like the prophet of old, apparently alone. In addition to this negative distress, he will frequently be called upon to suffer from the malice aroused by his determined opposition to the practices prevalent around him. It is thus that every step in our probation on earth becomes a test of moral character. The question is arising every day, and many times in the day, shall we **"obey God rather than man"** (Acts 5:29)? The authority of the Creator and of the creature are thus set over one against the other. We must decide which of the two we will obey, and his servants we are whom we obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.

It is thus that the love of companionship tempts us to disobey God. But it frequently goes much further. We even plead companionship in evil as a justification of evil itself. If our moral convictions are at variance with our conduct, we silence the voice of conscience by the reflection that we are no worse than others. If God forbids the deed which we are about to do, we do it nevertheless, replying to our Maker, that all the world does it also. Thus, what we would confess to be wrong if we did it alone, we claim to be right if we do it in company and by concert. We seem to suppose that though it would be madness for one man to contend with Omnipotence, a multitude of men may do it with impunity. At last, having silenced the monitions of conscience, we yield ourselves up to the current of public opinion, and without a moral struggle float onward towards that eternity in which we and all born of woman will shortly be engulfed.

It may perhaps surprise us to observe how universal and all pervading is this soul-destructive tendency. It meets us everywhere, and meet us at all times during our progress through life. It spreads its snare for us as we leave the cradle, and follows closely on our track until we step into the grave.

The little child is no sooner capable of holding intercourse with the intelligent beings around him than he finds himself enveloped in this unhealthy moral atmosphere. He hears, in the nursery, as the justification for wrong doing, that some one else did it also. He quickly learns the lesson, and, when conscious of fault, enters the same plea in exculpation. When convicted of misconduct, he has only to show that brothers and sisters have been equally guilty, and it seems as though his innocence were established, and that the parents whose precepts he has violated can accuse him of no wrong. Thus was it at the beginning. The Lord God said, **"Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, the woman whom thou gavest me to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat"** (Gen. 3:11-12).

The instructions of parents may in some measure have corrected these evil tendencies, and the young immortal may have learned to make some accurate moral distinctions, when a new world opens upon him, the world of the school room. He soon finds that the children around him have very different notions of right and wrong from those which he learned at home. Words reach his ear which he has been taught to consider wicked and degrading. In the sports in which he engages, treachery and deceit may form a part of the amusement. Tyranny over the weak and defenseless is the rule rather than the exception. All this, however, must be kept secret from parents and instructors, and if this can be done only by prevarication and falsehood, it matters not; every scholar is bound, right or wrong, to shield the rest from punishment. If the boy questions the right of all this, he is told that the rules of the family and the rules of the school are very different things; that there is no wrong in the acts which he has considered wicked, for all the boys do them; and, in a word, unless he conform to the manners of the society in which he lives, he will be treated as a traitor, fit only to be the butt of boyish ridicule and the object of daily annoyance. The young immortal hesitates. There is placed before him, on the one hand, the teaching of parents and the sanctions of the Bible, and, on the other, the maxims of Satan enforced by all the power of boyish public opinion. This is a critical moment in the history of a child. He may with noble heroism stand firmly for truth, and honesty and God, and thus from the first build up his character in righteousness. Too frequently, association with wickedness inflicts a stain hardly ever erased. His mind is divided in its affection between truth and error. He is capable of being moved in either direction by the force of the public opinion around him. His character at home and at school are strangely at variance. His future, henceforth, depends not on himself, but upon the accidental associations into which he may be thrown. This is almost the best that can be hoped for. It is well if he has not by degrees become partaker in every form of evil, ready to inculcate defiance of principles upon the innocent stranger, and proud of being a ringleader in every form of boyish depravity. Thus is it, that so early in life the love of companionship and fear of public opinion have planted within his soul the seeds of treachery, violence, selfishness, and thorough dissoluteness of principle.

The youth thus instructed enters upon another stage of his career. His is removed from home to a more advanced institution of learning. Under the discipline which he has left, the evil tendencies which surrounded him were checked and frequently arrested by the eye of the instructor in the school room, and the precept and example of parents by the fireside. Domestic religion may daily have recalled to his recollection and teachings of the Bible, and conscience thus quickened may have held him back from the grosser forms of sin. He was continually receiving from his parents affecting proofs of self-sacrificing love. Brothers and sisters were watching his progress with trembling anxiety, and he could not be unaware that they all were looking forward to his success, as one of the brightest spots in their anticipations of the future. These redeeming influences have not been without their effect. Though his heart, under the discipline of the school room, has in many places grown callous, there remain some fibers within it, which still palpitate with generous emotion. The word home still exerts its magical power over his affections, and he would shrink from giving pain to those who love him so tenderly. But now his condition is, in many respects, dissimilar. The home of his childhood, hallowed by so many delightful associations, is exchanged for a residence in a college. He is to be separated for

(Continued on page 8)

Slavery to Public

(Continued from page 7) ◊

months, it may be for years, from all who love him best. He is no longer a witness to their self-denials. He no more hears their words of encouragement and affection. Left to his own guidance, with the means provided by parental love, he is to work out his own destiny in the new world upon which he has just entered.

At first, a distressing feeling of loneliness settles heavily upon him. He instinctively craves society of some sort, and soon finds that this craving can easily be satisfied. His acquaintance is quickly sought by older students, who soon initiate him into all the mysteries of the new society. It is not long before he finds that many lessons are to be learned, besides those specified in the published course of study. There exists here an unwritten code of laws, in many respects quite unlike that with which he has been previously acquainted. He learns that one law governs his intercourse with students, and another his intercourse with instructors. To lie to a student is mean, to lie to an officer is innocent, it may even be honorable. The principles which regulate his conduct to students are very different from those which regulate his conduct to the rest of the world. His associates form a society by themselves, governed by such laws as its public opinion may enact, and right or wrong they are bound to stand by each other. Deceit, dishonesty and malice are only disreputable in our intercourse with the protected class. The grosser crimes affect unfavorably no man's standing provided they are committed in comparative secrecy, and to conceal them from the uninitiated every man holds himself unreservedly committed.

The young man, if he be not thoroughly corrupt, is for a time bewildered. He can not comprehend these distinctions of moral obligation. He has been taught that right acknowledged no modification of circumstances, but was pure and unchangeable as the throne of God. He had always believed that duplicity was mean, that deceit was contemptible, that the very suspicion of falsehood inflicted on the character a stain like a wound, that vicious pleasure was a sin against God, and that to abuse the self-denying love of parents was a crime of which none but the most abandoned could be guilty. If he remonstrates against some act of meanness or wickedness, he finds to his surprise, that his remonstrance is seconded by no one. He is told that such things can not be wrong, for all the fellows do it; and he learns that this announcement is clothed with a power which he can scarcely comprehend. Those antiquated notions belong to a state of society quite unlike that into which he has now entered. Honorable men here acknowledge no laws but those enacted by the public opinion of the little world around them. He observes the men by whom this public opinion is created, and he finds them in general to be the idle, the ignorant, the dissolute, and the profane. He, however, soon learns that this public opinion is a fixed fact, and that its origin is not to be too closely investigated. He is moreover assured that everybody submits to it, that it punishes with isolation and multiplied annoyance the rebel against its authority, and that he had better be careful how he sets its mandates at defiance. He begins to reflect seriously upon his position. Here is the very crisis of his destiny. If strong in manly virtue he resolves to hold fast to his integrity, and acknowledge no higher law than the law of God; if rising to the dignity of a disciple of Christ he scorns the enticements of sin and despises the threatenings of sinners; if looking calmly at all that may come upon him he determines on no occasion, be it great or small, to swerve from his allegiance to truth and honor and the fear of God, he has determined his character for life. No severer trial in the future, probably, awaits him. No temptation will henceforth take him at a disadvantage. His path is onward and upward. With the blessing of God, his success is as certain as his life. He can not fail, for he holds in his own hands the power of being victorious. He has vanquished the vanquisher of millions, by defying public opinion when it is a defier of the Most High God. Let him pursue this path to the end of life and he may, by the blessing of God, leave an inheritance for humanity which they will not readily consign to oblivion. But if he take the opposite course, if yielding to the love of companionship, and quailing before the frown of a vicious public opinion he first temporizes, then surrenders principle in things that seem ambiguous, then associates with the vicious and depraved, and, at last, silencing the voice of conscience, acknowledges no law but that imposed upon him by the men whom he despises; every manly and generous sentiment will soon be clearly scooped out of his heart. Friends on earth and angels in Heaven will weep over the change that has passed upon the lost soul. He left his father's house a worshipper of God, pure in principle, virtuous in conduct; looking forward to the future buoyant in hope and confident of success. He returns thither shipwrecked in faith, beggared in hope, conscious of the degradation which is written on his flushed forehead and in his treacherous eye, the fawning and impious worshiper of a public opinion which though he servilely obeys he can not but thoroughly despise.

If leaving the snares which beset the path of the young, we observe the pursuits of maturer life, we may not unlikely fall upon similar experiences. Were we invisibly to pass through the marts of trade, we might probably meet with much that would deeply interest a thoughtful mind. We might perhaps learn that light weight and short measure were in many cases indispensable to profitable business, that to tell a lie to the customer is no untruth, for he need not believe it unless he chooses, that welling a vicious adulteration at the price and in the place of a genuine article is not dishonest if people are willing to buy it, that to defraud the revenue is no wrong, if it be not discovered, that a false oath at the custom house involves us in no guilt, if a clerk is willing to perjure himself for us, that to monopolize the necessaries of life in order to fleece the community and double the price of the poor man's loaf is one of the legitimate uses of capital, and that to dupe the unfledged in the stock market is nothing more than a pleasing divertisement. We might wonder at all this, and be surprised to behold engaged in it men who would grieve to be suspected of dishonor. Were we, however, in a moment of calm reflection to ask them whether such things are right, the answer would probably be, why, not exactly right, but what is the use of talking, for every body does it? Thus men seem to think that what every one would acknowledge to be wrong if it were

◊ (Continued on page 9)

Slavery to Public

(Continued from page 8)

done by a single individual, every one believes to be innocent if it only be done by the multitude.

Should we turn now to public life, one might possibly there also find some rare examples of this power of sin. Could we listen to the private discourse or the more private thoughts of the men who devote themselves to the service of their country, we might possibly learn that discourse about political principles was designed only for the uninitiated, that patriotism was a word useful only for a political canvass, that a man liable to be troubled with conscientious scruples, was a very useless, or as it is said, a very impracticable member of a party, that on questions involving the dearest interests of humanity, a man may, without the least offence, take any side that promises him a majority, that he may change his opinions as often as necessity requires, provided always that it is not done clumsily, that he can never expect to rise to power unless he loves party better than principle, or even personal honor, and, in a word, that religion, truth, morality are one thing, and politics quite another. We should thus learn that there is a large class of actions, actions affecting the highest interests not only of ourselves, our children, our fellow-citizens, but the interests, social, moral and religious, of the whole human race, in which it is innocent for us to ignore every principle derived either from the love of God or the love of our neighbor. If we press this consideration upon men, what reply shall we probably elicit? They will tell us, not that it is right, but that it has been so always and every where, and that now especially such is the universal practice. It would not be surprising if they should turn upon us and ask, who would be such a fool as to be in a minority for the sake of an idea, or sacrifice his political prospects for a barren adherence to impracticable rectitude.

But if leaving the men of the world, we turn to the church of Christ, shall we find that even here the fear of God has triumphed over the fear of man? By observing the communicants at the sacramental table, we find those who profess the name of Jesus intermingled with other men in all the departments of active life. They are to be seen among students, professional men, merchants, mechanics, manufacturers, brokers, and politicians of every grade and every political party. Should we ask them whether in their several relations they make it their first concern to obey the Master, they would probably inquire with some astonishment whether we suppose that the precepts of Jesus Christ are to be understood literally. Should we modestly intimate that Christ spoke very plainly, they would inform us that to obey the law of Christ strictly, would separate them from all men, that the course which they pursue can not be wrong, for every body pursues it, and that, upon the whole, it is certainly better to do a little wrong, than by shutting ourselves out from the world, lose all our influence over it.

But let us open our eyes upon the men around us who claim to be, by way of eminence, the world. What are the gods which these immortal beings worship? They are worshipers of pleasure more than lovers of God. They bow down before the lusts of the flesh, and lust of the eye, and the pride of life. The objects for which they live are the various forms of sensual enjoyment, political power, social position, and luxurious display. They congregate by thousands in those resorts where vanity may be satisfied, if satiated it can be, where the senses are stimulated to intense excitement, and where fashion scoffs at the prudery which shuns the appearance of evil. Every one knows that this ceaseless pursuit of sensual pleasure banishes from the soul every thought of eternity, benumbs our moral sensibilities, and renders us powerless to resist the temptations which it spreads everywhere around us. Nothing can be more at variance with a heavenly mind than a life of thoughtless worldliness. But are the men and women who avow that they are living for this world the only worshipers at the shrine of fashionable sensuality? Alas! too often shall we see in the midst of this giddy throng, enjoying its pleasures to the uttermost, many of the professed disciples of the lowly, cross-bearing, crucified Jesus of Nazareth. You ask, Can such things delight a soul that has been transformed into the image of Christ? Can these childish vanities satisfy affections that are placed on the eternal God? Do the followers of the Messiah find the print of His footsteps here, and did we not see them in the garden with Him? When we press these questions on such disciples as these, we are told that they would lose caste unless they followed the examples of those who hold the social position after which they aspire, and beside this, it is all perfectly innocent, for they find associated with them Christians of every denomination; and yet more, conformity to the world is necessary in order to render the religion of Christ attractive to the giddy and thoughtless. We urge upon men of the world the saying of Jesus, **"Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God"** (John 3:3), and they tell us they can not see the necessity of any moral change, for these regenerated men are in no respect different from themselves. Thus Christians disobey Christ because men of the world do it; and the men of the world disobey Him because Christians set them the example.

But let us pause for a moment, and ask where do we now find ourselves? We have only to generalize this principle, and whereunto will it lead us? The voice of conscience is silenced, the distinction between honor and meanness, between virtue and vice, between right and wrong is abolished; the law of God is trampled in the dust; the Judge of the whole earth has no longer any jurisdiction; and all this is accomplished by the simplest possible process. Nothing else is needed than that you and I, the creatures of yesterday, declare that though we defy God and crucify His Son afresh, we have nothing to fear, for we do it by companies and we do it in concert.

But amidst all this flimsy folly and audacious wickedness, God has not left Himself without a witness. He has taken special means to caution us against this wide-spreading delusion. If there be a single child of Adam beguiled by this miserable sophistry, it will not be on account of ignorance that could not be dispelled, but because he has loved darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil.

In the first place, reason and conscience abundantly teach us that no relation whatever exists between many and few, and innocence and guilt. Right and wrong, innocence and guilt, depend on the moral relations of the parties, and not upon

(Continued on page 10)

Slavery to Public

(Continued from page 9) ◊

the number of the actors. If ten men lie, each one of them is an individual liar; nor is the matter altered if they agree to the same lie, and all unite in affirming it to be the truth. If twenty men agree together to do a mean thing, every one of them is individually despicable. If a hundred men are false to their country, every one of them is a traitor, and as an individual must he answer for it. I do not deny that companionship and concert may, in some respects, modify the character of a moral action. If a man act alone he may act thoughtlessly, and from sudden and ungovernable impulse; but if a number of men agree together to do an act, they must do it deliberately. If they organize themselves into an association to do it, they manifest a still more settled determination. Thus piracy is always held to be more atrocious than murder; and an organized banditti deserves more condign punishment than an individual thief.

But lest this should not be enough, God, in the revelation which He has given us, has made known His moral attributes, and the relations which we sustain to Him. He is the Creator and Preserver of all, the Legislator, and rightful Governor, and Proprietor of the universe. He justly claims of all His intelligent creatures universal obedience, and obedience which springs from boundless gratitude and illimitable love. **"...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..."** (Mark 12:30). All other things are created, God alone is the Creator, holy, just, true, all compassionate and all merciful. The greatest crime of which it is possible for us to conceive, is for a creature on any account, or for any reason, or under any inducement, to disobey God. What then must be the guilt of setting aside the authority of God by deliberate consent, and installing in its place the opinions and example of men, nay of men even weaker and more wicked than ourselves. It is exchanging the true God for a lie, and worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator Who is blessed forevermore.

In His written Word God has left us some impressive lessons on the subject which we are now considering. In the early history of our race, the worshipers of the Most High had followed the examples of the ungodly, until all flesh had corrupted its way, and the earth was filled with violence. Century after century had the infection spread, until only one family remained which held fast to its integrity. It was then that Jehovah interfered, and, saving only eight persons, overwhelmed with a flood the world of the ungodly. Though the whole race was united in companionship in evil, the judgment of God slumbered not, but brought upon every individual sinner unexpected and remediless destruction.

At a later period, the cities of the plain had sunk down in loathsome sensuality. A preacher was sent to reprove them for their wickedness and warn them of their danger. To all his remonstrances every individual was able to plead that there could be nothing very wrong in their conduct, for no man was in particular more corrupt than his neighbor. One family alone was exempt from this general pollution; the rest had become so preeminent in wickedness, that their name has become a by-word to the ages. At last their cry came up to Heaven, and no intercession could save them. A deluge of wrath swept them away, and, with the exception of this single family, they all sunk into the burning abyss, and are set forth as an example suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Nor are the Scriptures wanting in examples of those who, in the face of contumely and persecution unto death, have scorned companionship with sinners, and boldly avowed their allegiance to God. We read of Moses, who chose **"...rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt..."** (Heb. 11:25-26). We are told of the three noble Hebrews, who, in sight of the furnace heated sevenfold, calmly replied to an Oriental despot, **"...be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up"** (Dan. 3:17-18). We have the example of Daniel, who, when the decree was signed forbidding the worship of any God under pain of a dreadful death, and when a whole realm was bowing submissively to the blasphemous enactment, **"...went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime"** (Dan. 6:10). The Holy Spirit has set before us such instances for the imitation of all the sons of God. Nay more, they reach us that when we refuse at all hazards to become partakers in sin, we are then the objects of the special care of our Father in Heaven. We may, it is true, be surrounded with hosts of the ungodly, but more are they that are with us than those that be with our enemies; for the mountain of which we stand is encompassed with chariots of fire and horses of fire, sent from on high to be our invisible but mighty protectors. Nothing can harm us if we be followers of that which is good.

But all human examples pale in the presence of that illustrious example which came down to us from Heaven. The Messiah visited our earth not only to make an atonement for our transgressions, but to teach us how we should live in the midst of a world in rebellion against God. Observe the position which He chose for the accomplishment of His object. Was He surrounded by millions bowing before Him in lowly adoration? Did He by conforming to the manners of Jew or Gentile, ally Himself to the wealthy, the powerful, the intellectual, or the refined? Did He by pandering to the vices of the multitude gain over the masses to His cause? Did he by pandering to the vices of the multitude gain over the masses to His cause? Did the fear of standing alone ever move Him to adopt the principles or conform to the practices of sinners? Did He ever quail before the tyranny of public opinion in rebellion against God? You know His history. He stood up alone, and resisted unto death the whole power of a world lying in wickedness. No temptation could allure, no danger could alarm Him. Neither the opinions nor examples of earth's teeming millions ever moved Him an hair's breadth from the line of perfect love to God, and perfect charity to man. No association either with the lofty or the lowly ever palsied His tongue when the cause of truth, or piety, or charity required Him to speak. The prince of this

◊ (Continued on page 11)

Slavery to Public

(Continued from page 10) ◊

world came, and had nothing in Him. Amidst a world of faithless,

"Faithful only he,
Amidst innumerable false, unmoved,
His loyalty he kept, his love and zeal,
Nor numbers nor example with him wrought,
To swerve from truth, nor change his constant mind,
Though single."

If such were the Master, what must be the disciples? And those His disciples who walk not in His footsteps?

A few Galilean fishermen imbibed His spirit, separated themselves from the world, and became His chosen and inseparable companions. With them He traversed the mountains of Galilee and threaded the streets of Jerusalem. With them He shared His scanty meals, and spread His homely couch. He knew no distinction among men, but that which is made by moral character. **"For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother"** (Matt. 12:50). Day by day He enlightened their understanding, invigorated their principles, enlarged their conceptions, and thus prepared them to engage in the conflict with a sensual, frivolous and ungodly world.

By the Spirit which descended upon Him from on high, they were enabled to follow in His footsteps. Few and feeble, poor and illiterate, they went forth boldly to subdue rebellious nations unto God. Every people, every political party, every religion, every priesthood, all the usages of society, all the maxims of trade, all the investments of capital, all the reverence for antiquity, all the seductions of the arts, all the blandishments of poetry, and all the magic of eloquence were arrayed in deadly hostility against them. They met it all and came off from the conflict victorious. But in what manner was that victory achieved? Was it by yielding themselves up to the seductions of a sensual age, by submitting their consciences to the dictation of rulers, or conforming their lives to the maxims of the world around them? You all know how they lived and how they died. In every place and in every company, they fearlessly avowed their principles in the presence of persecution unto death. They had but one question to ask, "is it right in the sight of God to obey God rather than man?" and by the answer to that question, the course of their conduct was decided. Everywhere they proclaimed the teachings of their Master, and exemplified His precepts by a holy life and blameless conversation. It was thus that they have exerted a power over humanity to which the history of our race presents no parallel. Thus they commenced that moral movement which is so perceptibly changing the destinies of mankind, and which can never be arrested until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. Thus did Christ and His apostles achieve their victories. This then is the model of a Christian life, and we are disciples of Christ, in just so far as we are individually conformed to it.

If this be so, the principles which govern a Christian's life must place him in direct opposition to the opinions and maxims of impenitent men. He acknowledges the supreme authority of the eternal God, they bow down and worship the public opinion of a world lying in wickedness. The one looks to the present, the other to the future. The one acts for time, the other for eternity. The one follows in the footsteps of Christ, the other in the footsteps of his enemies. Lives so diametrically opposite can never coincide, for we can not serve God and Mammon. Let each man inquire for himself, which manner of life he was chosen, for on the choice which he has made depends his eternal destiny.

Would it not be well for every one of us to pause for a moment and consider well our prospects for eternity? The objects which now interest us so deeply will soon have passed away forever. Every one of us will soon have laid aside this earthly tabernacle, and uncovered spirits stand in the presence of our Omniscient Judge. Companionship in sin will avail us nothing, for every one of us must give account for himself unto God. Public opinion will yield us no protection, for there every mouth will be stopped, and the whole world be guilty before God. What will it profit us to have sinned in company and defied the Almighty in concert? Our plea will only seal our tenfold condemnation, and our dwelling place forever must be with the devil and his angels.

Some among us hope that we have taken shelter under the cover of the atonement, and are trusting in the merits of Christ for salvation. But what are the conditions on which we are permitted to rely on the great sacrifice for sin? The Saviour Himself has told us. Unless a man **"...deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"** (Matt. 16:24), he can not be my disciple. What evidence have we that we are resting under the shadow of the atonement, if we have neither denied ourselves, nor taken up the cross, nor followed Christ? In vain do ye call me Lord! Lord! and do not the things that I say. What will it avail us, at the last day, to aver that multitudes with us made the same profession of discipleship, that we denied Christ in masses, and put Him to open shame in company? We thus with our own mouths pronounce our own condemnation.

When the question was asked, Lord are there few that be saved? the answer returned was, Strive to enter into the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able. Are there any among us who are thus striving, who hold themselves aloof from all companionship with fashionable sin, whose standard of duty is the Word of God, and whose pattern of life is the example of Christ? Are there any among us in whose daily conversation Christ is set forth, and who joyfully suffer ignominy for the name of Jesus? Are there not some among us who esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the companionship of the ungodly? God be with you and strengthen you, ye saints of the Most High. Men may cast out your names as evil, but be of good cheer, your names are written in the Lamb's book of life. The path that you tread may be rough and wearisome, but it leads directly to the city of the living God. There is not a reproach that you bear for Christ, which shall not work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Trials may await you, for in the world ye shall have tribulation, but **"Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"** (Luke 12:32). Your eternity will be with the Forerunner in whose footsteps you have trodden, and with the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven. **"And one of the elders answered, saying**

◊ (Continued on page 14)

The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Did Jesus preach a different Gospel to the Jews such as "accept me as king" rather than Paul's Gospel? Tennessee

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Gospel in the New Testament is the Greek word, "euangellion" as a noun, and "euangelizo" as a verb form and as one can see from the English letters, is where we get the words evangel(ist/ism) from. The simple meaning of these Greek words is "a good message" or as we commonly hear: "the good news." Selah! Think about it!

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:6-8). Now, obviously, there are many "good messages" out there, from the news of a son coming home from war, to my daughter getting an "A" on her report card. But in the Bible, as the apostle declares, there is only one good message worthy of being called the Gospel. The one referred to by Paul as **"the gospel of Christ."** Selah! Think about it!

Certainly, no gospel message preached by Jesus Christ is "accursed," so it cannot be different from Paul's. And likewise, the Gospel has not changed in these "modern" times, either. The Gospel succinctly defined by the Bible is: **"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"** (Mark 1:1). Jesus, Himself reveals what the good news of the Gospel is later in the chapter: vs.14-15, **"...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."** If you are still scratching your head and wondering what the "good news" is, read that first verse again! The **"...gospel of Jesus Christ"** is defined as the "good news of Jesus Christ." The fact that Jesus exists, and has come to fulfill the Kingdom of God.

No mere news of a physical kingdom for the Jews is worthy of the title, Gospel, in the New Testament. Jesus' message never was of a kingdom to the Jews alone, or even the twelve tribes of Israel. He is the One speaking to a Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), marveling at the faith of a Roman centurion (Matt. 8:10), and granting the petitions of a Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:26). The gospel of the kingdom that Jesus preached (and John the Baptist before him) was a spiritual kingdom entered into by saved sinners that believed the good news of Jesus Christ. They believed that He was the Son of God! Compare the gospel of Christ and the Apostle Paul: First, Christ to Nicodemus in John 3:16-18, **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."** Next, the Apostle Paul: Acts 16:31, **"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."** Again in I Timothy 1:15, **"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "...For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"** (Rom. 14:17).

The Gospel points sinners to Christ! Repent and believe! Repentance and faith! **"...have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Acts 20:20-21). There is no modern evangelistic plan of salvation- that of 'do this and that,' and you will be saved. There is a PERSON of salvation- that is the God-Man Jesus Christ! Repent (change) and believe in HIM! Turn or burn!

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him" (John 9:35-38). That is the Gospel! Both the gospel of Christ and the gospel the Apostle Paul preached. It sure is good news! Do you believe? Selah! Think about it!

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The question seems to imply that there were conflicting gospels preached by Jesus and Paul. Nothing could be farther from the truth. No, Jesus did not preach a different Gospel to the Jews. There is only one Gospel that qualifies as the good news and it is clearly revealed in I Corinthians 15:1-4: **"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."** The **"scriptures"** Paul was referring to were the Old Testament promises, prophesies, types, and shadows that had reference to the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Christ crucified, buried, and risen again as the only way of salvation for God's elect is the focal point of Scripture which prompted Paul to proclaim: **"For I determined not to know any thing among**

◊ *(Continued on page 14)*

The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Are all the books of the Bible for Gentiles or only Paul's epistles? Tennessee

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All the books of the Bible are meant to be profitable for all men whether they are Jews or Gentiles in light of II Timothy 3:14-17: **"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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, throughly furnished unto all good works."** Certainly the **"all scripture"** Paul is referring to would include the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures. Romans 15:4 declares: **"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."**

All Scripture is profitable for Jews and Gentiles, but not all apply specifically or equally to the Gentiles. For example, the civil and ceremonial laws that governed Israel were specifically designed for them as a nation. Gentiles may profit from the principles contained in those laws, but they are not applicable to them. Jews are forbidden to eat the flesh of swine, whereas there is no such restriction for Gentiles. Although some would argue that we would be healthier if we refrained from eating pork. I am so glad that God allows us to eat anything we can give thanks for (I Tim. 4:4-5)! It may be better for my body not to eat bacon, but it would wreak havoc on my emotional and mental health which would ultimately affect my spiritual health, so I am forced to eat bacon and other delicious porcine delicacies.

I would urge every reader to earnestly study the whole of Scripture, praying that God would show you wondrous things out of His law. May God give us all the grace to obey the admonition found in II Timothy 2:15-16: **"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babbling: for they will increase unto more ungodliness."**

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In this New Testament age that we live in (2017 A.D.), there really is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. **"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"** (Rom. 10:12-13). The nation of Israel is the vehicle that the LORD Jehovah dealt with fairly exclusively before the first coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, but after He personally instituted His church (Matt.16:18, Luke 6:12), the distinction pretty much vanished, as Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophesies. After the ord raptures out His New Testament age saints with the Baptist churches, He will again turn to the nation of Israel, but until then—consider this the Age of Grace. Selah! Think about it!

If one is looking for a distinction between the Apostle Paul's epistles and the remainder of the Bible, it is missing from the pages of God's Word! The Word of God, Itself identifies its purpose in many ways:

1. It is written for our salvation! **"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"** (II Tim. 3:15). If that is Paul's perspective, it is also John's and Ezekiel's: **"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name"** (John 20:31). **"...Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. ...for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye"** (Ez. 18:30-32).

2. It is written for our admonition and example! **"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come"** (I Cor. 10:11). Just as the Apostle Paul speaks of the relevance of the Old Testament, so to does every New Testament writer that quotes from the ancient Word of God! **"Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me"** (Dan. 4:1-2). King Nebuchadnezzar writes the fourth chapter in the first person! He wanted EVERYBODY to know **"...all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"**

3. It is written to reveal prophesy! **"And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe"** (John 14:29). **"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure"** (Isa. 46:10). The Bible will be relevant even in those days of great tribulation in Daniel's 70th Week! **"And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: ...But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things"** (Mark 13:21-23).

Is the Old Testament outdated? ...replaced by the New? The answer is a definitive: NO!! Why then would the Old Testament be quoted in the New Testament

◊ *(Continued on page 14)*

Forum #1

(Continued from page 12)

you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). The truth that there is only one Gospel, and that God allows for none other, is forcefully declared in Galatians 1:6-9: **"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."** The fact that Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, identifies the Gospel which he preached as **"the Gospel of Christ"** should forever settle the issue. In addition to that, the apostle makes it clear that anyone who deviates from the gold standard of the Gospel of Christ is not only a heretic, but that he is one that will be accursed, condemned, and consigned to the Lake of Fire to be punished with the eternal and infinite wrath of God.

This question also implies that some falsely assume that there is a different way of salvation for Jews than there is for Gentiles, or that there are dispensational changes in salvation. Again, I cannot say this strongly enough, there is only one way of salvation as revealed in Scripture from Genesis through Revelation for Jews and Gentiles alike, regardless of the color of their skin or the culture in which they live. It is only through Jesus Christ who declared this truth with such force there should be no misunderstanding at all: **"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"** (John 14:6). I would urge every reader to carefully read the four Gospels and see how often our Lord explained to the disciples His purpose in coming was to die, be buried, and raise again from the dead according to the Scriptures! I would argue that the very first time the mission of Christ is set forth in the New Testament is stated in Matthew 1:21-23: **"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."** John the Baptist clearly understood the spiritual significance of the incarnation and the mission of Christ when he proclaimed **"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29, 36). John was clearly intimating that the vicarious sacrifice of Christ extends beyond elect Jews to include elect Gentiles throughout the whole world. John the beloved apostle would later confirm this truth when the Spirit prompted him to write: **"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."** The only folks found singing the praises of God in Heaven are those redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

TOM TOSS

END

Forum #2

(Continued from page 13)

as authoritative? 68 times **"...it is written..."** occurs in the New Testament referring back to the Old! 29 times in the gospels by our Lord, 32 times by the Apostle Paul in his epistles, and 7 more times in Acts and the other epistles! It is as sure as the Old Testament refrain of **"thus saith the LORD...!!"**

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). Jesus Christ assures us that the new does not replace the old, but only FULFILLS the promises, prophecies and types—all with various repercussions, but never annihilation! (Acts 20:21-29). The ceremonial law may have been fulfilled and perfected, but the moral law is eternal and applicable to every generation! If there is imputed sin, there of necessity is present the culpable law of God! (Rom. 2:11-16, 26-29, 5:13-14; Gen. 9:4-7, 18:19-23, 19:13, 19:24-25, etc...) God has covenants, not only with Israel and the churches in their various ages, but also with ALL of mankind, found in both Old and New (Gen. 9:8-17, 17:20; Ps. 103:17-18; Isa. 42:5-12; Acts 2:39; Rev. 5:9, 14:6, etc...)

Read ALL of God's Word and make application in our lives every day from both the Old and New Testaments! Our lives will not be complete without them both! Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP

END

Slavery to Public

(Continued from page 11)

unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple..." (Rev. 7:13-15). **"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes"** (Rev. 7:17).

The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar;
Who follows in his train?
Who best can drink his cup of woe,
Triumphant over pain,
Who patient bears his cross below:
He follows in his train.

The martyr first whose eagle eye
Could pierce beyond the grave;
Who saw his Master in the sky,
And called on him to save.
Like him, with pardon on his tongue
In midst of mortal pain,
He prayed for them that did the wrong:
Who follows in his train?

A glorious band, the chosen few
On whom the Spirit came;
Twelve valiant saints, their hope they knew,
And mocked the cross and shame.
They met the tyrant's brandished steel,
The lion's gory mane;
They bowed their necks the death to feel:
Who follows in their train?

A noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice,
In robes of light arrayed.
They climbed the steep ascent to heaven,
Through peril, toil and pain.
O God! to us may grace be given,
To follow in their train?

END

Christ Is All In All

(Continued from page 1)

may be separated from their founders. But separate any truth of Christianity from Christ, and it has lost its peculiar character. Christ is all in all.

ALL IN ELECTION

You cannot separate the doctrine of election from Christ. He was the first One the Father elected: **"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. . ."** (Isa. 42:1). I Peter 2:6 tells us Christ is **"elect"** and **"precious."** God the Father said of Christ: **"I have exalted one chosen out of the people"** (Ps. 89:19).

The Father chose us in Christ: **"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. . ."** (Eph. 1:4). Grace **"was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began"** (II Tim. 1:9). Election did not find us in Christ, but it put us there. The elect were chosen to be saved by Christ: **"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ"** (I Thess. 5:9). Those chosen to be saved by Christ are **"created in Christ Jesus"** (Eph. 2:10), and they all come to Christ (John 6:35, 37). All of those to share in the benefits of Christ's atonement will be finally conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29).

Out of Christ no one was elected to be saved, and no one out of Him will be saved. Whenever you think of sovereign election, you should always think of Christ as the covenant Head of the elect. Christ is all in all in election.

ALL IN CREATION

Creation was in a very special sense effected by the eternal Word: **"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. . .the world was made by him. . ."** (John 1:3, 10). **"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him"** (Col. 1:16). Without Christ's agency, His motion, His exertion of power, nothing was created. All the planets, the stars and moons; all the rivers, seas, and lakes; all the mountains, hills, and valleys; all beasts and birds, all the plants and creeping things were made by Christ. Without Him the world would have never been; yea, we would have never been!

Whenever we think of the glories of creation may we always think of Christ as **"the beginning of the creation of God"** (Rev. 3:14). By that expression we are not to understand that Christ was the first creature God made, as heretics and cultists claim. Rather, we are to see in Christ the first cause of creation. The word for **"beginning"** (*arche*) must be taken in the active sense, meaning "source" or "origin." It could be translated **"the beginner of creation,"** the One from whom all created things originated. Christ as the eternal Creator stands outside of time. In creation Christ is all in all.

ALL IN THE SCRIPTURE

Christ is the treasure hid in the field of revelation. His glory fills the sacred pages of the Bible. Jesus Christ said: **"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me"** (John 5:39). In one of His post-resurrection appearances to Cleopas and another disciple it is said of Him: **"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself"** (Luke 24:27). **"Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph"** (John 1:45).

Christ is the theme of the whole Bible. He is seen upon every page of it. In Genesis He is the Seed of the Woman. In Exodus He is the Passover Lamb. In Leviticus He is the atoning Sacrifice. In Numbers He is the smitten Rock. In Deuteronomy He is the Prophet like Moses. In Joshua He is the Captain of the Lord's host. In Judges He is the Great Deliverer. In Ruth He is the heavenly Kinsman. In the six books of Kings He is the promised King. In Ezra He is the Restorer of the Temple. In Nehemiah He is the Restorer of the nation. In Esther He is the Advocate of God's people. In Job He is my Redeemer. In Psalms He is my all in all. In Proverbs He is my Pattern. In Ecclesiastes He is my Creator. In the Song of Solomon He is the Bridegroom. In the prophets He is the coming Prince of Peace. In the four Gospels He is Christ coming to seek and to save. In Acts He is Christ risen from among the dead. In the epistles He is Christ at the Father's right hand. In Revelation He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

It was to Christ to whom Abel looked when he offered a better sacrifice than Cain (Heb. 11:4). It was of Christ Enoch prophesied before the flood (Jude 15). It was to Christ Abraham looked on Mount Moriah (John 8:56). It was Christ of whom dying Jacob spoke to his sons (Gen. 49:10). It was to Christ to whom Israel was directed in the wilderness (I Cor. 10:4; John 3:14). It was to Christ of whom all the prophets from Samuel to Malachi spoke (Acts 10:43; I Pet. 1:11). When it comes to the Scriptures Christ is all in all.

ALL IN REDEMPTION

Christ alone is the Redeemer, and without the shedding of His blood, there is no redemption from sin. Redemption was laid up in Christ: **"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"** (Eph. 1:7; cf. Col. 1:14). There is no remission of sins without redemption, and there is no redemption without Christ. **"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"** (Rom. 3:24).

Christ as our Surety paid the redemption price: **"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men"** (I Cor. 7:23; cf. I Pet. 1:18-19). There were no joint purchasers with Christ for the satisfying of God's justice. Christ **"by himself purged our sins"** (Heb. 1:3). Only in Christ do we have **"redemption"** (I Cor. 1:30). How wonderful to know we have a Redeemer (Job 19:25). Those who have Christ have **"plenteous redemption"** (Ps. 130:7), for in redemption Christ is all in all.

ALL IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

According to I Corinthians 1:30, God has made Christ **"righteousness"** unto us. Adam made his seed sinners (Rom. 5:12). Jesus Christ made His seed righteous: **"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous"** (Rom. 5:19). Jesus Christ is *Jehovah-tsidkenu,* **"THE LORD OUR RIGHTOUSNESS"** (Jer. 23:6).

In the eyes of a holy God: **"There**

(Continued on page 16)

Christ Is All In All

(Continued from page 15)

is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). The best righteous acts of men are **"filthy rages"** in the sight of God (Isa. 64:6). The law is holy, righteous, and good, but it cannot make a sinner such. **"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"** (Phil. 3:9; cf. Rom. 3:21-22). God counts our faith in Christ as righteousness: **"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"** (Rom. 4:5).

Some expect to make themselves acceptable to God by their prayers, alms, morality, and church going. These things cannot make us righteous in the sight of God. Christ's righteousness is the only robe to cover us (Rom. 3:22). When it comes to being righteous in the sight of God, Christ is all in all.

ALL IN SALVATION

Spiritual and eternal salvation is the great concern of the quickened sinner. He wants a salvation which culminates in eternal life. He desires to be rescued from the wrath of God and the curse of the law. He seeks restoration to God's favor. Such a person comes to see that there is salvation only in Christ: **"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"** (Acts 4:12). Out of Christ there is no salvation. It is blasphemous as well as foolish to suggest any other savior.

Christ is not some guru or great teacher. He is man's only Savior. The salvation of man is entrusted into the hand of Jesus the Messiah. There is no one who can save but Christ. Salvation is in the person and work of Christ, His blood and righteousness. It is Christ or Hell. When it comes to salvation Christ is all in all.

ALL IN SANCTIFICATION

God has made Christ our **"sanctification"** (I Cor. 1:30). As our Sanctifier, He sends forth His Spirit into our hearts to burn up the dross and to make our graces sparkle like gold in a furnace (Rom. 15:16). By nature we are not holy, for before we came to know Christ we walked in wickedness. Conversion made a great change in us. When Paul addressed the Corinthian church he wrote: **". . . them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. . ."** (I Cor. 1:1-2).

Has Jesus Christ been made of God your sanctification? Are you walking in all holy obedience to the will of God? When Christ is made our sanctification He is owned and acknowledged as our all in all. The crown is set on His head. When it comes to sanctification Christ is all in all.

ALL IN THE CHURCH

Jesus Christ is the Founder and Foundation of His church: **"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter** (*Petros,* masculine, a large piece of rock), **and upon this rock** (*petra,* feminine, a huge rock like Gibraltar) **I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"** (Matt. 16:18). In the Bible the church is called the house of Christ (Mark 13:34; Heb. 3:6). Christ is the Head of the church, and the church is His body: **"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all"** (Eph. 1:22-23). The only sovereign and supreme head of the church is Christ. He has the pre-eminence in the body. He is the intelligent Director of all church affairs.

Christ purchased the church of God **"with his own blood"** (Acts 20:28). It is the only blood-bought institution on earth. It is the place where Christ receives His glory in this age: **"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"** (Eph. 3:21; cf. II Cor. 8:23). It is the only body which has Christ as its Savior: **". . .and he is the savior of the body"** (Eph. 5:23). The church is the institution in which Christ works in this age (Rev. 2:1).

The church is not greater than Christ. Of what worth are splendid buildings, gorgeous ceremonies, and legions of ordained men, if Christ is not magnified? Of what worth is the Christian ministry, if it does not lift up Christ? Of what benefit is a robed choir and special singers, if they do not exalt Christ? All the church does should honor Christ. In all church affairs the members should be governed by what Christ wants---not what the clique or the convention wants! Without Christ the church could not exist, for it would have no Head or Savior. When it comes to the church Christ is all in all.

ALL IN THE ORDINANCES

The example, authority, and mode of administration of baptism all goes back to Christ. When we are baptized we are baptized into Christ: **"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"** (Rom. 6:3). In baptism we put on Christ: **"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"** (Gal. 3:27). In baptism we picture the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Of what worth is the proper aim, the proper mode, the proper authority, or the proper subject unless we see Christ? It is a worthless ceremony---a shadow without a substance---a shell without a kernel---a type without an antitype! When it comes to baptism Christ is all in all.

The elements in the Lord's Supper are symbolic of Christ's flesh and blood. This is why it is called **"the Lord's supper"** (I Cor. 11:20), **"the Lord's table,"** and **"the cup of the Lord"** (I Cor. 10:21). Of the memorial supper our Lord said: **"This do in remembrance of me"** (Luke 22:19). What is the Lord's Supper without Christ? A table of bread and wine at which we may drink damnation to ourselves. A scriptural Lord's Supper must show forth the Lord's death, for when it comes to the Lord's Table Christ is all in all.

ALL IN LIFE

The purpose of human life is that we may come to know Christ and enjoy Him forever. That is the most important thing: **"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I might win Christ"** (Phil. 3:8; cf. John 17:3). What are national, ceremonial, and social distinctions, without a saving knowledge of Christ? They are no more than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Serving Christ is all that really matters in this present life. One has said: "Only one life and it will soon be past; only what is done for Christ will last!" The song writer has said:

Living for Jesus a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do,

(Continued on page 17)

Christ Is All In All

(Continued from page 16)

Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,
This is the pathway of blessing for me.

Living for Jesus who died in my place,
Bearing on Calvary my sin and disgrace,
Such love constrains me to answer His call,
Follow His leading and give Him my all.

O Jesus, Lord and Savior,
I give myself to thee;
For Thou, in Thy atonement,
Didst give Thyself for me;
I own no other Master,
My heart shall be Thy throne,
My life I give, henceforth to live,
O Christ, for Thee alone.

The Christian life is what Christ was, what He said, what He did, and what He promised. It is a life of constant dependence upon Christ as bread to the body (John 6:35, 48-51, 53-58). Christ must live in us (Gal. 2:20; II Cor. 4:10-11). With Paul, I can say: **"For to me to live is Christ"** (Phil. 1:21). When it comes to the Christian life Christ is all in all.

ALL IN DEATH

Blessed are those who die in faith and union with Christ (Rev. 14:13), and cursed are those who die without Christ. Our Savior can give us victory over death and take away its sting: **"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?. . .But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"** (I Cor. 15:54-55, 57). Death does not separate the true believer from Christ. Rather it brings him into Christ's immediate presence: **"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord"** (II Cor. 5:8).

There is no dying safely without Christ. Those who know Christ need not fear death. Christ will be spiritually present with us as we draw near the river of death that leads to the promised land. We will not have to cross Jordan alone: **"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). Jesus Christ has turned the King of Terrors into the Prince of Peace. When it comes to dying Christ is all in all.

ALL IN THE SECOND ADVENT

The second advent is the return of the same Jesus who went away over 1900 years ago. The first time He came veiled in human flesh; the second time He will come in all His glory and with the holy angels. **"We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"** (Phil. 3:20). We are **"waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (I Cor. 1:7). That is our blessed hope (I Tim. 1:1; Titus 2:13), for all other hopes have failed.

The dead saints are to be raised at His coming and the living saints translated: **"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"** (I Thess. 4:16-17). We shall hear the voice of the Son of God (John 5:28-29) and be made like Him (I John 3:2). When it comes to the second advent Christ is all in all.

ALL IN THE JUDGMENT

"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31; cf. Eccl. 12:14). The wicked must **"stand before God"** (Rev. 20:12), and of the righteous it is written: **"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ"** (II Cor. 5:10). How solemn the thought of standing before Christ, the Judge of all the earth, and of having to give an account of ourselves to God (Rom. 14:12)!

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). As the Judge of all the earth, Christ is the only one who can give absolution. Those who know Christ as Savior have little to fear at the judgment bar. The Judge is our Advocate and High Priest. He will say to the Father: "These are some of those for whom I shed my blood and rose again for their justification." When it comes to the judgment Christ is all in all.

ALL IN ETERNITY

What would Heaven be without Christ? Well did the psalmist ask: **"Whom have I in heaven but thee?"** (Ps. 73:25). Heaven would be Hell without Christ. The glory of Heaven is to see the vision of Christ: **"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me. . ."** (John 17:24). Christ is the center of attraction in the heavenly land. The redeemed cast their crowns at His feet and chant to Him the praise of ceaseless anthems.

The happiness of Heaven is to be forever with the Lord (I Thess. 4:17). Oh, to see Him, live in His presence, and enjoy Him for eternity! Never again will we be separated from him after the rapture. When we enter eternity, more so than ever before, we shall realize Christ is all in all.

CONCLUSION

1. A Christless religion is worthless. It is folly to join anything with Christ in the matter of salvation. Some put together Christ and Mary, or Christ and the church, or Christ and the preacher, etc. Angels are guardians and guides, but not saviors. There is no salvation in the most illustrious patriarchs, the holiest priests, the greatest prophets, the noblest apostles, or even the most courageous martyrs. If you want to be saved go directly to Christ.

2. Christ is not enough for some professed Christians. They must have Christ and Christian entertainment. They must have Christ and something for the young people. They must have Christ joined with fun and frolic. Such people do not really know Christ, for if a man has the Sun of Righteousness he has no need of a flashlight. The believer is complete in Christ and content in Christ.

3. Christ is the supreme good. Put what you will in the balance with Christ, He will outweigh them all. He who has Christ needs no more. The man who has the Fountain of the Water of Life has no need of a broken cistern that can hold no water. The best good is not good without Christ, nor the worst bad with Him. Let us make Christ our all in all.

4. If Christ is all, no seeking sinner should despair. You need nothing since Christ is your all in all. It is great folly and misery to keep at a distance from Christ (John 5:40; Eph. 2:12). Is Christ your all in all? If not, you have nothing at all!

He Must Increase

(Continued from page 1)

John pointed them unto.

Well, despite what the world might have thought, John the Baptist was not "in it" for the money, or for the fame, or for the power. He was doing what he was doing in order that God might be glorified. In fact, it seems that John the Baptist was willing even to encourage men to follow Jesus instead of following himself. This was the reason that he said, **"He must increase, but I must decreases."**

It seems that our text verse makes it plain that John the Baptist had a sincere desire to put Jesus Christ first. In fact, it was his desire and his calling to put Jesus Christ before himself, even in the sight of men. Now, I want us to use our text verse as a starting point for a brief study of the character and service of John the Baptist.

HUMILITY

As we have seen from our text verse, it is very evident that John the Baptist was a humble man – indeed a humble servant of God. Let us read some of the words of John the Baptist in our text verse and surrounding verses: **"John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear be witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all"** (John 3:27-31). John the Baptist was certainly a humble man, and a humble servant of Jesus Christ. Elsewhere, when questioned about John the Baptist, Jesus Christ had this to say about John: **"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"** (Matt. 11:11). So, here we have Jesus Christ referring to John the Baptist as one of the greatest of men **"that are born of women."** And yet, John would humbly say, **"And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose"** (Mark 1:7). John knew of the might and greatness and glory of the One that would follow him. Therefore he said, **"... he that cometh from heaven is above all"** (John 3:31). I believe this is what Jesus referred to when He said, **"...notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."** Because, though Jesus Christ was lightly esteemed while here on this earth; and though He had left Heaven to take up the lowly position of a servant; still, He was **"from heaven,"** and was God, and was therefore **"above all."** I think it is easy to see that even the man who was declared to be among the greatest of the prophets (John the Baptist – see Luke 7:28), knew humility, and set himself below the Christ, and in His service.

Certainly, every child of God that would seek to serve God ought to have an attitude that expresses humility. The Apostle Paul said, **"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith"** (Rom. 12:3). When any man thinks that he is something, then he becomes nothing. This is a very appropriate proverb; and, indeed, it is backed up by Scripture: **"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"** (I Cor. 10:12). The servant of God ought to always consider that if John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul expressed humility, and knew that they could only stand as God gave them grace, then, we should also demonstrate humility, and make it plain that our strength or faith or service does not come from ourselves, but from above.

BOLDNESS

Though John was a humble man, still, he was bold in his service unto God, and in his preaching of the kingdom of God. We find that the beginning of his ministry is recorded this way: **"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"** (Matt 3:1-2.) John went everywhere, warning men about their own sinfulness, and about their need to repent. He pointed men to Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and he did not fear to loudly proclaim the Word of God. He was not afraid of the men and the powers that be; he sought only to do those things that pleased God, even if it meant that his own life might be in danger.

This should be something that we endeavor to do as well. We, all of us, ought to seek to boldly proclaim the Word of God, and the gospel of salvation. Do not be afraid to tell men that they are sinners! If we do not tell them, how will the gospel have any effect? The gospel is not meant to save the righteous (or those that we might give false comfort to, in that we allow them to believe that they are good and righteous); but, the gospel is meant to save sinners. Therefore, let us boldly proclaim the sinfulness of man and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Humility and boldness are mutually exclusive; but, rather, humility and boldness are complementary – as long as we are bold in Christ. Paul talks about this earnest desire that he had to be bold in his service to the Lord: **"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death"** (Phil. 1:20).

And, we find that the same boldness that John the Baptist had was shared also by the Apostles of Jesus Christ, and the first church in Jerusalem: **"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness"** (Acts 4:31). O, that we would be willing to speak **"the word of God with boldness!"** This is the same Word that has been used by God, for centuries, to save the souls of His people. This is the same Word that has been used by God, for centuries, to edify the hearts and minds of His people. This is the same Word, that, for 2000 years, has been kept pure by the churches of Jesus Christ, and for which these churches have lived and died, as they proclaimed it.

(Continued on page 19)

He Must Increase

(Continued from page 18)

Why, then, should we ever be **"ashamed"** of that Word or of the Saviour that is proclaimed in that Word?

CLARITY

We read about John the Baptist, and his ministry, in Luke 3:3-6: **"And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias, the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."**

It was a part of John's ministry unto the Lord, to **"make his paths straight."** And, he also was sent to make the **"crooked"** to **"be made straight, and the rough ways"** to **"be made smooth."** In the book of Isaiah, this portion of the verse is as follows: **"...and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."** I suppose that what is primarily meant here, is that the persons that would be brought unto the Lord Jesus Christ, would be **"made straight"** and **"made smooth"** (or **"plain"**). And this was John's ministry, **"...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord"** (Luke 1:17).

But, I think that we could also say that John the Baptist came to make the way of the Lord to be clear unto all that would hear him. In other words, it was a part of his ministry to make the words and will and ways of God, to be **"straight"** and to be **"smooth"** (or **"plain"**). He came to clearly declare the gospel that God gave unto him. He came to make known and **"plain"** the Word of God. I believe that this is our responsibility also. We are here on this earth as ambassadors from God. And, we are here on this earth as the ministers and proclaimers of the Word of God. Therefore, let us be about the business of making the Word of God to be known and to be clearly understood, in the ears and in the hearts and in the minds of those that would hear us. We read in II Corinthians 3:12, **"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech."** Let us not seek to complicate the word of God, or our manner of service unto Him. But, let us preach and teach with clarity, so that there can be no doubt as to what we believe and what we stand for.

Paul told the Corinthians, **"I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue"** (I Cor. 14:18-19). Of course, the Apostle Paul is saying here that he would rather speak words that the church could understand, than words in another language that they could not understand at all – even though, in a smaller way, Christ would be glorified by the fact that Paul had the ability to speak in tongues at all. So, I think that you and I could also apply this passage in this way: It is better for us to use plain speech and to seek to edify the saints and preach to the lost; then it would be for us to use difficult and deep words and meanings, and seek to edify any of the saints or to preach to the lost. Or, it is better for us to use plain speech, and deliver a simple and clear and plain message, then it is to have a wondrous and beautiful worship service, that would only serve as an attraction or an appeasement unto the flesh and the world.

Certainly John the Baptist did not mince words with the people that he called unto repentance. And, certainly John did not mince words with the Pharisees and others that called into question his methods or motives (as we will see next).

INDIGNATION

During the course of John the Baptist's ministry, he had to deal with many that did not believe, and who sought to obstruct his ministry. In these cases he was bold (an attitude we have already noticed that he possessed), but he was also indignant against the offences of the Pharisees and others that resisted the Word of God. We read the words that John had for these folks in Luke 3:7-9: **"Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."**

We can also read about John the Baptist's righteous anger (which led, eventually, to his own death) in the case of Herod. You see, Herod had taken his brother's wife, and John the Baptist did not hesitate to tell him of his sin. We read in Mark 6:18, **"For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."** Later, Herodias, Herod's wife, would connive to have John beheaded. (See Mark 6:19-28). But, no matter how great the danger, and no matter how powerful the sinner, John was always ready to stand up against sin and sinners!

I pray that God would give you and me that same indignation against sin, and those that commit those sins. David referred to this righteous indignation in Psalm 139:19-24: **"Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."** It seems that one reason David wanted the **"wicked"** to **"depart from"** him, was that he knew God would, one day, **"slay the wicked."** If nothing else, we ought to dissociate ourselves from sin and sinners, in order that we might be preserved and kept from the judgment of God that may, at any time, **"slay the wicked."** But, I believe David was also indignant against the sinners because he just loved the Lord, and he was offended by the sins of **"wicked"** men. He wanted the Lord to see a difference between him and the **"wicked."** I wonder how many of us could say, with King David, **"Search**

(Continued on page 20)

He Must Increase

(Continued from page 19)

me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting?"

The Apostle Paul recommended the church at Corinth to this same indignation and righteous anger in II Corinthians 7:9-11: **"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."**

COMPASSION

Another characteristic that John the Baptist expressed in his service unto God was compassion – compassion unto others as he sought to fulfill his ministry. Everywhere he went, he preached about the kingdom of Heaven. And, everywhere he went, he baptized the people – all of those that brought forth fruits meet for repentance. Certainly, as we study the Scriptures, we find that John the Baptist's ministry was a ministry unto the people, especially the poor and sinners. We read about those that came to hear John the Baptist in Matthew 3:5-6: **"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."** Over in the book of Luke, we find that John ministered to the common **"people"** (Luke 3:10); to the **"publicans"** (Luke 3:12); and to the **"soldiers"** (Luke 3:14). Wherever the people of the Lord were to be found, John the Baptist was there, preaching the gospel of the kingdom. He had a great compassion for the lost – even those amongst the poor and the sinners and the publicans and the soldiers.

We, too, ought to have compassion for the lost. We, too, ought to have a desire to take the gospel of the kingdom wherever it is that the Lord would have us go. We should not just "pick and choose" who it is that we want to preach unto. But, we should give the Gospel, freely, to all. The Lord will determine who it is that will be saved, and He is the One that will build up and edify the hearts and minds of His people. Sometimes I think that instead of exhibiting compassion (as John the Baptist did), we tend to exhibit selfishness. We seek to keep the Word of God to ourselves – or at least we determine to keep it from certain others. How do we do this? Well, sometimes timidity is to blame. And, more often, laziness is to blame. But, in either case, our actions are selfish any time that we do not share the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ to all of those that we come in contact with. The psalmist David said, **"I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue"** (Ps. 39:2-3). O, that my **"heart"** would be **"hot within me"** with a desire to share the Gospel, and to speak **"with my tongue"** unto those that have such a desperate need of Jesus Christ!

WISDOM

What wisdom and understanding the first Baptist possessed! I would to God, that we could demonstrate such wisdom as he demonstrated. He understood that the Lord Jesus must increase, while he himself would decrease. This very simple verse that is our text, summarizes the wisdom of John the Baptist, as he went about fulfilling his service to Jesus Christ. He understood that he came to prepare the way and the people for the Lord. And, as a part of that preparation he exhibited the very wisdom of God in his preaching and teaching.

I believe that we, too, ought to demonstrate the wisdom of God in our interaction with the world around us, and in our relationships with the people of God. When the man Stephen preached before the people of Israel, it is said of him, **"And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake"** (Acts 6:10). I pray to God, that when we have opportunity to speak before men, that we, too, would speak with **"wisdom."** I am so ashamed, sometimes, as I consider the lack of **"wisdom"** that is demonstrated in my day to day speech and my day to day interactions with men. So often I look back, and I wonder why I said what I did to a particular person; or I will look back and I will have a desire that I would have said something else or something more to a particular person. I am ashamed as I consider the many foolish words that I have spoken, and the many wise words that I have left unsaid! Well, if we will seek the wisdom of God, and if we will demonstrate His wisdom (just as the Baptist did), then we will not have so many lost opportunities as we speak to those around us.

I pray to God that you and I would have wisdom as we need it in our relationships with men. James said, **"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him"** (James 1:5). There is wisdom available to us to help us to serve God, but, we need to ask the Lord for that wisdom. Paul mentions this wisdom, that he, too, possessed in his ministry in the cause of Christ: **"Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus"** (Col. 1:28). If we want to **"present"** ourselves, and others, **"perfect in Christ Jesus,"** then we need to call upon the wisdom that comes from above.

CONCLUSION

There is a lot that we could notice in the life and ministry of John the Baptist which would be good for us to consider, and then to emulate in our own lives and ministries. However, if we could just exhibit John's humility, boldness, clarity, indignation, compassion, and wisdom, then we would be much more useful servants in the service of Jesus Christ.

END

THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

KENTUCKY ADOPTS 20-WEEK ABORTION BAN, ULTRASOUND BILL

(WNS)--Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin signed two pro-life bills on Jan. 9 after they rocketed through the Republican-controlled House and Senate on Jan. 7. The state Senate approved the measure requiring an ultrasound before an abortion in a 32-5 vote, and the House voted 83-12 in favor of a 20-week abortion ban. While the bills passed overwhelmingly in the legislature, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) already had a legal challenge prepared, immediately filing suit against the ultrasound requirement.

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WORLD WATCH LIST: AT LEAST 1,207 CHRISTIANS MARTYRED IN 2016

(WNS)--Persecution against Christians worsened again in 2016, with an estimated 215,000 experiencing "high, very high, or extreme persecution" in 50 nations around the world, according to the 2017 World Watch List. Open Doors, an international organization that monitors and supports persecuted Christians, compiled the list and released it on Jan. 11 in Washington, D.C., calling it a "wake up call for Christians" to advocate on behalf of their persecuted brothers and sisters and "a call to world leaders to take action." Although reliable figures were not available for all nations, Open Doors estimated at least 1,207 Christians were killed because of their faith, and roughly 1,329 churches were attacked or damaged in 2016.

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PHYSICISTS MEASURE ANTIMATTER BUT STILL CAN'T FILL BIG BANG THEORY HOLES

(WNS)--European scientists have figured out a way to measure the energy level of antimatter, a discovery they hope will help solve some of the mysteries surrounding the beginning of the universe. Until now, it has been incredibly difficult to create antimatter and retain it for any extended period of time because antimatter and matter annihilate each other when they come into contact. According to the Big Bang theory, only energy existed in the first fraction of a second after the explosion. As the universe cooled and expanded, it produced both matter and antimatter particles. According to the laws of physics, matter and antimatter particles had to be created in pairs so the quantity of matter and antimatter would be the same. But that isn't possible because the matter and antimatter, which attract one another because they have opposite electrical charges, would have destroyed each other and the universe would not exist.

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PRAYERS FOR THE PRESIDENT

(WNS)--The newly inaugurated president and vice president and their families gathered January 21 for the traditional post-inaugural National Prayer Service at Washington National Cathedral. Considering the diversity of faiths represented, however, it was often difficult for those in attendance to determine to whom the prayers were directed. The interfaith service, with President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence in the front pew, included readings and prayers from Protestant (evangelical, prosperity gospel, Greek Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Episcopal), Jewish, Sikh, Mormon, Buddhist, Roman Catholic, Bahá'í, Hindu, and Native American religious leaders. But conservative evangelicals were well represented and did not shy away from proclaiming the name of Jesus.

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM TOPS TRUMP'S NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST ADDRESS

(WNS)--In a wide-ranging address at the 65th annual National Prayer Breakfast, President Donald Trump promised to defend religious freedom in the United States. "America will flourish as long as our liberty, and, in particular, our religious liberty is allowed to flourish," Trump said at the Washington Hilton Hotel on Feb. 2. "Freedom of religion is a sacred right but it is also a right under threat all around us." Since 1953, every U.S. president has attended and spoken at the breakfast. This year brought together a crowd of more than 3,000, representing all 50 states and 140 countries from around the world. Trump's speech came amid worldwide protests over his recent order suspending the U.S. refugee resettlement program and limiting immigration and travel from some Middle Eastern countries.

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NATIONAL STUDY FINDS LITTLE PROOF OF POT'S MEDICAL BENEFITS

(WNS)--Marijuana advocates tout the drug and its compounds as therapeutic for everything from treating glaucoma to stopping nightmares. But a new systematic review of more than 10,700 scientific studies conducted by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine found verifiable benefits for only two disorders—chronic pain and the nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy. Despite growing support for legalization efforts, the review found numerous and serious health and social consequences for marijuana use. This report simply adds to the mountain of evidence that marijuana use is a serious danger to public health and safety, said Scott Chipman, founder of Citizens Against the Legalization of Marijuana.

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PRO-LIFE TSUNAMI FLOODS STATE LEGISLATURES

(WNS)--Pro-life leaders say a nationwide surge in optimism is driving the wave of pro-life bills already introduced in the first few weeks of this year's state legislative sessions. The nearly 50 new bills include bans on dismemberment abortions and any procedure after 20 weeks gestation, fetal burial requirements, and bills that would defund Planned Parenthood. "With the election of a pro-life president, with all of the gains that we made across the different states with last year's election, I think we are very optimistic in passing laws that protect the unborn baby and their moms," said National Right to Life Committee's Ingrid Duran.

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TRUMP REINSTATES PRO-LIFE 'MEXICO CITY POLICY'

(WNS)--President Donald Trump followed in former President George W. Bush's footsteps on Jan. 23 by reinstating a law blocking foreign aid to abortion providers. In Mexico City at a United Nations conference in 1984, the Reagan Administration introduced what became known as the "Mexico City Policy," which required nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) receiving

◇ (Continued on page 22)

Bible & the Newspaper

(Continued from page 21) ◊

U.S. aid to sign agreements that they would not perform abortions. Just as former President Bill Clinton blocked the law when he took office in 1993, former President Barack Obama again overturned it in 2009. The repeal of funding to abortion-providing NGOs adheres lockstep to the pro-life platform on which Trump campaigned. Pro-abortion advocates have decried Monday's order, but pro-lifers are cheering it.

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ONE-THIRD OF COLORADO HOSPITALS OPT OUT OF ASSISTED SUICIDE

(WNS)--Nearly one-third of Colorado hospitals say they will not allow doctors at their facilities to kill patients under the state's new physician-assisted suicide law. Recently, two of the state's largest hospital systems, both faith-based, released statements saying they plan to "opt out" of a state law approved by voters in November legalizing the prescription of life-ending medication to terminally ill patients. Now that they've taken a stand, the hospitals likely will be forced to defend it in court. The two systems, Centura Health and SCL Health, both associated with Catholic Health Initiatives, say the new Colorado statute contains conscience provisions that protect their right to opt out. But assisted-suicide advocates are pushing back, saying a legal challenge is a "distinct possibility." At issue is whether a system of hospitals can dictate for all its facilities and staff how to handle physician-assisted suicide.

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TRUMP'S STANCE ON LGBT ORDER STUNS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ADVOCATES

(WNS)--The White House confirmed on Jan. 31 President Donald Trump will not overturn the Obama administration's 2014 LGBT executive order for federal contractors that limits how religious groups that do not approve of homosexuality can work in government. "The president is proud to have been the first ever GOP nominee to mention the LGBTQ community in his nomination acceptance speech, pledging then to protect the community from violence and oppression," according to a White House statement released early this morning. "The executive order signed in 2014, which protects employees from anti-LGBTQ workplace discrimination while working for federal contractors, will remain intact at the direction of President Donald J. Trump."

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NEW PLANNED PARENTHOOD VIDEOS GET LAWMAKERS' ATTENTION

(WNS)--Lawmakers gathered in front of the U.S. Capitol on Feb. 2 to spotlight new undercover pro-life videos and to reiterate their commitments to defunding Planned Parenthood. The videos, made by pro-life activist Lila Rose's organization Live Action, show Planned Parenthood employees telling women seeking prenatal care to go somewhere else for their ultrasounds. "Oh, we won't be able to tell you if it's healthy or the gender," an unnamed Planned Parenthood worker in Farmington, N.M., told an undercover activist. "We specialize in abortions. You know, that's what our ultrasounds are for, to see how far along the, um, patient is." Live Action said it reached out to 97 separate Planned Parenthood facilities across the country, and only found five willing to check on the health of the child. All the others required the women to schedule an abortion.

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INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

SWEDISH MIDWIFE STILL FIGHTING EMPLOYER'S ABORTION MANDATE

(WNS)--A third court in late January heard the case of a Christian Swedish midwife denied employment because of her pro-life convictions. Despite the support of international laws granting medical professionals in Europe the right to freedom of conscience, the midwife, Ellinor Grimmark, has faced an uphill battle defending her rights. "As a midwife, I want to exercise a profession which defends life and saves lives at all cost," Grimmark told Catholic News Agency. "Somebody has to take the little children's side. Somebody has to fight for their right to life." In 2014 Grimmark filed a religious discrimination complaint after a women's center in Jönköping, Sweden, withdrew a job offer because she said she could not perform abortions. Two other medical clinics denied her employment on the same grounds. A court ruled in favor of the women's center, saying the job offer was rescinded "not because of her religion, but because she was not prepared to perform duties that were part of the job description."

END

The Short Pews

Brief Articles by Curtis Pugh

"WHEREFORE, MY DEARLY BELOVED, FLEE FROM IDOLATRY," (1 Corinthians 10:14).

It will be evident to the candid observer that Mardi Gras, Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Easter are all tied together in the religious world. One follows after the other and are connected in the liturgical calendar. The various pagan days and even liturgical colors which are used in decorating crosses and buildings along with the liturgical calendar have been adopted by the Catholic hierarchy. So the observance of such paganism on the days decided by these prelates is obedience to them. We should hasten to add that there is nothing in the Bible instructing anyone to observe any of these days nor how such observance should be carried out. In spite of this, some Baptist churches have begun to drape crosses with the liturgical colors, and already most observe the pagan feast of Ishtar (Easter).

Mardi Gras actually means "Fat Tuesday" and is the height of the carnival season. This day got its name as being the last day on which meat could be eaten before the observance of Lent. Lent, not counting the six Sundays involved, lasts for forty days leading up to Easter. The celebration or observance of Easter actually includes Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday although in some countries different names are used. For instance in some countries what is called "Good Friday" in the U.S. is called "Black Friday" because it is erroneously believed that Christ was crucified on Friday which is an impossibility, of course.

Mardi Gras is given over to carnival. The word carni/val comes from two words: "carne" means flesh as in "chili con carne" which is literally "chilies with meat." "Val" is connected with our English word "valedictorian" - the "good bye speech" common at graduations. So the meaning of carnival is "good bye to meat." "Mardi Gras" is "Fat Tuesday" and immediately precedes "Ash Wednesday" commonly called because in the beginning of Lent comes the practice of going to

◊ (Continued on page 23)

The Short Pews

(Continued from page 22)

"church" and getting the sign of the cross made on the forehead by the priest using ashes.

So Mardi Gras is carnival – a time of immorality, debauchery, drunkenness, over indulgence in feasting – in short: a time of base carnality and wickedness before settling down to the time of penance and self denial before Easter. In other words it is one last super-big fling before trying to be good for forty days so that the individual can observe Easter.

Doing one's "Easter Duty" means that the Catholic church requires every person who has received their first communion take the Eucharist (mass) during the time around Easter. To make it easy, the time period called "Easter season" runs for fifty days from Easter to Pentecost. Sometime during this time, in order to stay in the good graces of the Catholic church, every Catholic must attend mass and eat the sun-shaped wafer which has been turned into the body and blood of Christ by the priest's hocus pocus.

THE LORD DOESN'T KNOCK

There is a popular but erroneous idea going about in some religious circles. It is that the Lord Jesus is standing outside knocking on the door of the sinner's heart, obviously wanting to come in. He is waiting on the sinner to open his heart's door. The idea comes from a misunderstanding of a part of one Bible verse: Revelation 3:20 which says: **"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."** These words were not addressed to a sinner, but to the "angel" or messenger of a congregation. The context proves this. Verse 14 of that chapter says, **"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write..."** The door at which the Lord Jesus is said to be standing is the door of the church or congregation in the ancient city of Laodicea. That church was in such a sorry spiritual condition that Christ was on the outside!

Further proof of this is seen in the Lord's promise. He said, **"I will come in to him."** He did not say I will come "into" him. Anyone who understands the English language will know the difference between coming "in to" a person and coming "into" a person. To come "in to" a person is to come "in to" where they are. To come "into" a person is to enter within that person or to indwell a person. There is absolutely no Bible basis for telling sinners that Jesus is standing at their heart's door patiently knocking waiting on them to open the door so He can come "into" them! That is a man-made teaching based upon the idea that God cannot save whom He wants to save when He wants to save them! It makes God a powerless failure to accomplish what He wants to do.

The fact is, God has the ability to open the heart. We read about Him doing that very thing in Acts 16:14 where the Bible says, **"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened..."** What! The Lord opened Lydia's heart? She did not open it! Why would the Lord stand knocking at the imaginary door of a sinner's heart when He has the power to open the heart? Why would a homeowner stand knocking at the door of his house while holding the key to that door in his hand?

Do not try to make an excuse saying that the Lord is waiting on the sinner to exercise his free will. The Bible says, **"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"** (Phil. 2:13). God causes men to "to will" and "to do." He causes sinners "to want to" and "to do." Has the Father drawn you to Christ? (see John 6:44).

BUT WE DO KNOW

Often we hear it said regarding the birth date of the Lord Jesus, "Well, nobody knows the exact day when He was born." This is true, but the general attitude seems to be that since we do not know the precise date of His birth then we can celebrate just any day of the year. Whether or not it is idolatry to observe Christmas is not our subject and so we will not enter upon that area here and now.

But the truth is that while we cannot know the precise date of the Lord's birth, we most certainly do know the season of the year when he was born. Let me explain. Take, for example, a man who dies precisely on the same date that he was born. Regardless of his age, we may assuredly say that if he died in the Spring, he was born in the Spring also: given that he died the exact same date as he was born. Take another man, for example. This man we will say lived to be about seventy-and-a-half years old, give or take a few days. If he died in the Spring, that half year of his life tells us that he lived about six-months past his last birthday. So we may be assured that such a man who died in the Spring and who lived six months past his last birth day was born in the Fall. He was born six months (and however many years he lived)

(Continued on page 24)

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER
Financial Report
1-1-2017 to 1-31-2017

Beginning Balance	$2,114.14
RECEIPTS:	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX	50.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	25.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	313.45
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	150.00
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Elder & Mrs. Eldon Joslin, Birmingham, AL	500.00
Emmanuel B. C., Oldtown, KY	200.00
Eve Knowles, Scarborough, ME	100.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR	25.00
Gail Knowles, Portland, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, kY	100.00
Grace B. C., Rual Hall, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Grace M B C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	35.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Parkway Landmark B. C., Springfield, OR	100.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Twinbrook Hills B. C., Hamilton, OH	500.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	69.00
Anonymous	225.00
Dividing checks	150.00
Sub Total	$3,787.45
TOTAL	$5,901.59
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	662.13
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.90
Dividing checks	150.00
Supplies	39.93
Bank charge	$13.00
Total Expenditures	$3,830.96
ENDING BALANCE	$2,070.63

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST
Financial Report
1-1-2017 to 1-31-2017

Beginning Balance	$6,333.45
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
	425.00
TOTAL	6,758.50
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	400.00
Progrom production	195.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	595.00
ENDING BALANCE	$6,163.50

The Short Pews

(Continued from page 23)

prior to his death date. The math is simple.

Now all credible Bible scholars are agreed that the Lord's earthly ministry was about three-and-one-half years long. Especially from the seasons and the Passover feasts mentioned in the Gospel of John is the length of the Lord's preaching ministry clear. And we know that He entered His preaching ministry when He was about thirty years old. Probably that means He was in His thirtieth year. (See Luke 3:23). A Jewish man was expected to have married and entered his life's work by the age of thirty. In fact, the Jewish priests did not begin their service in the temple until they were thirty years old. The Bible is clear: **"From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation"** (Num. 4:3). We cite this last only to show that the life-work of a Jewish man was expected to have begun by his thirtieth year.

Leaving aside the time that the Lord's earthly family traveled to Bethlehem for the tax registration and other circumstances, let us get back to the season of the Lord's birth. Beginning His preaching when He was about thirty years old and laboring at that work for about three-and-one-half years means that Christ was about thirty-three-and-one-half years old when He was nailed to the tree. Probably He was in His thirty-third year. It is that half-year that does it. We know that He died during Passover season. The Jewish Passover was and is still observed in the Spring – our March or April, depending upon the phases of the moon.

Now if the Lord Jesus died in the Spring, and without controversy He did, and He lived some six months beyond His last birthday, then go back six months from His date of death and you will be near His date of birth. He died in the Spring, therefore He was born in the Fall. And that fits with all the other facts, secular and sacred, regarding His birth.

So why does the world celebrate His birth in mid-Winter? (This question is aside from the question as to why professing Christians celebrate His birth at all!) The fact is the mid-Winter celebration existed from most ancient times – long before the birth of Christ. It was a pagan celebration tied to the Winter solstice: to sun worship: to the worship of the fertility gods and goddesses as is all paganism ultimately. The early Catholic church (before she was divided into the Eastern and Latin or western branches) saw her "converts" very much wrapped about with pagan customs and practices – pagan worship. So she incorporated the supposed observance of Christ's birth in with and originally on the dates of the pagan celebrations and called it Christmas.

So there you have it: WE DO KNOW the season in which Christ was born AND WE DO KNOW that while God never commanded its observance, He did forbid idolatry to His people.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Windsor Baptist Church in Windsor, IL is seeking a qualified candidate for pastor. We are a sovereign grace independent Baptist church, small in number but rich in truth. We are seeking a candidate qualified for the position as described in I Timothy 3. Any interested potential candidate please contact Brother John Gregory at windsorbaptist.grace@gmail.com or phone 217-728-8311.

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The Landmark Baptist Church in Moncks Corner, South Carolina, is without a pastor. The members of this local New Testament church would like to make a request to pastors and members of other New Testament churches: do you have a man in your membership that believes the Lord is calling him to the ministry, and if so, would he consider relocating to this area and work in the church here teaching the truth of God's Word? It is our prayer that the Lord will send as He did in the church at Antioch. Even though we are without a pastor, we would carefully consider the one who the Lord God sends as pastor after the church has observed areas of qualification that are mentioned in First Timothy 3. For answers to questions you may have, please contact Brother Andrew Cook at acook1947@gmail.com.

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The Lord's Baptist Church in Tacoma Washington is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact Gaylen Russell at 360-879-5565 (home) or 253-495-4567 (cell) or by Email: gaylenr@rainierconnect.com.

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The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Caldwell, KS is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact the church in writing at SGBC, 400 N. Main St., Caldwell, KS 67022, or by phone Brother Darin Wiley 620-863-2431.

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The Faith Missionary Baptist Church of Cobbitty, South Wales, Australia is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact David Jackson at 4 Station Street, Thirlmere, NSW 2572, Australia or Email: shellie45@bigpond.com.au.

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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.

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ARTICLE INDEX

Being Conformed by Todd Bryant ..... p. 1
The Bible and the Newspaper ..... p. 21
Christ Is All In All by Milburn Cockrell ..... p. 1
David's Dance by Curtis Pugh ..... p. 1
He Must Increase by Paul Stepp ..... p. 1
Forum ..... pp. 12-13
Little Hills by Nathaniel Hille ..... p. 3
The Short Pews by Curtis Pugh ..... p. 22
Slavery to Public Opinion by Francis Wayland ..... p. 1