

# The Berea Baptist Banner

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

## Nothing But Leaves

By Charles Spurgeon

(1834 - 1892)

**"He found nothing but leaves"** (Mark 11:13).

Most of the miracles of Moses were grand displays of divine justice. What were the first ten wonders but ten plagues? The same may be said of the prophets, especially of Elijah and Elisha. Was it not significant both of the character and mission of Elias when he called fire from heaven upon the captains of fifties; nor was he upon whom his mantle descended less terrible when the she-bears avenged him upon the mockers? It remained for our incarnate Lord to reveal the heart of God. The only begotten was full of grace and truth, and in His miracles pre-eminently God is set forth to us as LOVE. With the exception of the miracle before us, and perhaps, a part of another, all the miracles of Jesus were entirely benevolent in their character; indeed this one is no exception in reality, but only in appearance. The raising of the dead, the feeding of the multitude, the stilling of the tempest, the healing of diseases — what were all these but displays of the lovingkindness of



Charles Spurgeon

God? What was this to teach us but that Jesus Christ came forth from His Father on an errand of pure grace?

*"Thine hands, dear Jesus, were not arm'd  
With an avenging rod,  
No hard commission to perform  
The vengeance of a God.  
But all was mercy, all was mild,*

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## A Christian in the USA

By Billy Holbrook

Oblong, Illinois

Today upon this good day the 4th of July we celebrate the independence of the United States of America. On this day of the year 1776, 13 colonies officially separated from Great Britain and broke all allegiances to her and to her king. It's the day that we celebrate ourselves being a free Nation. This day we do give thanks to our Eternal God for the blessed



Billy Holbrook

privileges that we so enjoy. I believe the reason that we have as much freedom as we do is that God is the One who established this Nation and those who were the founding Fathers had the hand of God on them. We have come a long way since

that day of 1776, and are now over a period of time enslaving ourselves again to the lawless ideas of men in power. Nonetheless we do greatly enjoy the freedom that our good God has been pleased to give us still today. I believe one of the reasons we enjoy the freedoms that we do today is because God had a major role in the founding of this Nation and that His Word is what influenced the original laws of the land. Our founding fathers believed that the laws that were established needed to be in line with the Word of God and if not so they were of no "validity." Alexander Hamilton a signer of the Federal Constitution stated: *"The law...dictated by God himself is, of course, superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times. No human laws are of any*

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## Have We Misunderstood the Great Commission?

By Milburn Cockrell

Part 2

(1941-2002)

**"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen"** (Matt. 28:16-20).

The great commission was not given



Milburn Cockrell

to the world. It was not given to an association or a convention. It was not given to a religious club or a missionary society. It was given to the Jerusalem church and those churches which came from her by a succession. No man has the scriptural right to preach or to teach authoritatively, nor to baptize believers, unless authorized by the church to do so.

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## A Godly Man is a Lover of the Word

By Thomas Watson

(1620 - 1686)

**"O how love I thy law"** (Psa. 119:97).

A: A godly man loves the Word written. Chrysostom compares the Scripture to a garden set with knots and flowers. A godly man delights to walk in this garden and sweetly solace himself. He loves every branch and part of the Word:

1. He loves the counseling part of the Word, as it is a directory and rule of life. The Word is the mercurial statue, which points us to our duty. It contains in it things to be believed and practiced. A godly man loves the aphorisms of the Word.



Thomas Watson

2. He loves the threatening part of the Word. The Scripture is like the Garden of Eden: as it has a tree of life in it, so it has a flaming sword at its gates. This is the threatening of the Word. It flashes fire in the face of every person who goes on obstinately in wickedness. **"God shall wound the... hairy scalp of**

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## Studies in Esther 6:1-14

By Jeff Short

Mantachie, Mississippi

In the fifth chapter, the time for prayer and fasting had ended. The time for Esther to act had come. She arrayed herself in her royal apparel and went in before the King. She did not know what the outcome would be, but she stepped out in faith in service to God and to her people. She had resigned herself to the will of God, trusting Him for her personal safety. She said, **"So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I**



Jeff Short

perish" (Est. 4:16). She did go in before the King and found favor with him. She further endeared herself to him by not requesting some great gift of the kingdom; rather she requested that the king and Haman come to a banquet she would prepare. At that banquet, the king felt very gracious toward Esther and encouraged her to ask whatever it was that she wanted and assured her that it

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## Nothing But Leaves

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*And wrath forsook the throne,  
When Christ on his kind errand came  
And brought salvation down."*

Let us rejoice that God commendeth His love towards us, because in "due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Yet, as if to show, that Jesus the Savior is also Jesus the Judge, one gleam of justice must dart forth. Where shall mercy direct its fall? See, my brethren, it glances not upon a man, but lights upon an unconscious, unsuffering thing — a tree. The curse, if we may call it a curse at all, did not fall on man or beast, or even the smallest insect; its bolt falls harmlessly upon a fig tree by the wayside. It bore upon itself the signs of barrenness, and perhaps was no one's property; little, therefore, was the loss which any man sustained by the withering of that verdant, mockery, while instruction more precious than a thousand acres of fig trees has been left for the benefit of all ages. The only other instance at which I hinted just

now was the permission given to the devils to enter into the swine, and the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. In that case, again, what a mercy it was that the Savior did not permit a band of men to become the victims of the evil one. It was infinitely better that the whole herd of swine should perish than that one poor man should be rendered a maniac through their influence. The creatures choked in the abyss were nothing but swine — swine which their Jewish owners had no right to keep; and even then they did not perish through Jesus Christ's agency, but through the malice of the devils, for needs must even swine run when the devil drives.

Observe, then, with attention, this solitary instance of stern judgment wrought by the Savior's hand. Consider seriously that if only once in His whole life Christ works a miracle of pure judgment, the lesson so unique must be very full of meaning. If there be but one curse, where does it fall? What is its symbolic teaching? I do not know that I ever felt more solemnly the need of true fruitfulness before God than when I was looking over this miracle — parable — for such it may justly be called. The curse, you at once perceive, falls in its metaphorical and spiritual meaning upon those high professors who are destitute of true holiness; upon those who manifest great show of leaves, but who bring forth no fruit unto God. Only one thunderbolt and that for boasting pretenders; only one curse, and that for hypocrites. O blessed Spirit, write this heart-searching truth upon our hearts!

**I. We will commence our exposition with the remark that THERE WERE MANY TREES WITH LEAVES ONLY UPON THEM, AND YET NONE OF THESE WERE CURSED BY THE SAVIOR, SAVE ONLY THIS FIG TREE.**

It is the nature of many trees to yield to man nothing but their shade. The hungering Savior did not resort to the oak or to the elm to look for food, nor could the fir tree, nor the pine, nor the box, offer Him any hope of refreshment; nor did He breathe one hard word concerning them, for He knew what was in them, and that they neither were, nor pretended to be fruit-bearing trees. So, dear friends, there are many men whose lives bear leaves, hut no fruit-and yet, thanks be unto God, almighty patience bears with them. They are allowed to live out their time, and then it is true they are cut down and cast into the fire; but while they are permitted to stand, no curse withers them: the longsuffering of God waiteth to be gracious to them. Here are some of the characters who have leaves but no fruit.

There are thousands who ignorantly follow the sign and know nothing of the substance. In England, we think ourselves far in advance of Popish countries; but

how much of the essence of Popery peeps out in the worship of very many! They go to Church or chapel, and they think that the mere going into the place and sitting a certain time and coming out again is an acceptable act to God: mere formality, you see, is mistaken for spiritual worship! They are careful to have their infants sprinkled, but what the ceremony means they know not; and without looking into the Bible to see whether the Lord commands any such an ordinance, they offer him their ignorant will — worship either in obedience to custom, or in the superstition of ignorance. What the thing is, or why it is, they do not enquire, but go through a performance as certain parrots say their prayers. They know nothing about the inward and spiritual grace, which the Catechism talks about, if indeed, inward spiritual grace could ever be connected with an unscriptural outward and visible sign. When these poor souls come to the Lord's Supper, their thoughts go no farther than the bread and wine, or the hands which break the one and pour out the other; they know nothing whatever of communion with Jesus, of eating His flesh and drinking His blood; their souls have proceeded as far as the shell, but they have never broken into the kernel to taste the sweetness thereof. They have a name to live and are dead; their religion is a mere show; a signboard without an inn, a well-set table without meat; a pretty pageant where nothing is gold, but everything gilt, nothing real, but all pasteboard, paint, plaster, and pretense. Nonconformists, your chapels swarm with such, and the houses of the Establishment are full of the same! Multitudes live and die satisfied with the outward trappings of religion, and are utter strangers to internal vital godliness. Yet such persons are not cursed in this life! No, they are to be pitied, to be prayed for, to be sought after, with words of love and honest truth; they are to be hoped for yet, for who knoweth but that God may call them to repentance, and they may yet receive the life of God into their souls?

Another very numerous class have opinion but not faith, creed but not credence. We meet them everywhere. How zealous they are for Protestantism! They would not only die for orthodoxy, but kill others as well. Perhaps it is the Calvinistic doctrine which they have received, and then the five points are as dear to them as their five senses. These men will contend, not to say earnestly, but savagely for the faith. They very vehemently denounce all those who differ from them in the smallest degree; and deal damnation round the land with amazing liberality to all who are not full weight according to the balance of their little Zoar, Rehoboth, or Jireh: while all the while the spirit of Christ, the love of the Spirit, bowels of compassion, and

holiness of character are no more to be expected from them than grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. Doctrine, my brethren, is to be prized above all price! Woe to the Church of God when error shall be thought a trifle, for truth be lightly esteemed; and when truth is gone, what is left? But, at the same time, we grossly mistake if we think that orthodoxy of creed will save us. I am sick of those cries of "the truth," "the truth," "the truth," from men of rotten lives and unholy tempers. There is an orthodox as well as a heterodox road to hell, and the devil knows how to handle Calvinists quite as well as Arminians. No pale of any Church can insure salvation; no form of doctrine can guarantee to us eternal life. "Ye must be born again." Ye must bring forth fruits meet for repentance. "Every tree which bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Stopping short of vital union to the Lord Jesus by real faith, we miss the great qualification for entering heaven. Yet the time is not come when these mere head — knowers are cursed. These trees have leaves only, but no fatal curse has withered them hopelessly. No; they are to be sought after; they may yet know the Lord in their hearts, and the Holy Spirit may yet make them humble followers of the Lamb. O that it may be so!

A third class have *talk without feeling*. Mr. Talkative, in "Pilgrim's Progress," is the representative of a very numerous host. They speak very glibly concerning divine things. Whether the topic be doctrinal, experimental, or practical, they talk fluently upon everything. But evidently, the whole thing comes from the throat and the lip; there is no welling up from the heart. If the thing came from the heart, it would be boiling, but now it hangs like an icicle from their lips. You know them — you may learn something from them, but all time while you are yourself aware that if they bless others by their words, they themselves remain unblest. Ah! Let us be very anxious lest this should be our own case. Let the preacher feel the anxiety of the apostle Paul, lest, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway; and let my hearers feel the same concern, lest, after talking about the timings of God, they should prove to be mere lip-servers, and not accepted children of the Most High.

Another tribe springs up just now before my eye — those who have *regrets without repentance*. Many of you under a heart-searching sermon feel grieved on account of your sins, and yet never have the strength of mind to give them up. You say you are sorry, but yet go on in the same course. You do really feel, when death and judgment press upon you, a certain sort of regret that you could have been so foolish, but the next day the strength of temptation is such, that you fall a prey to

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the very same infatuation. It is easy to bring a man to the river of regret, but you cannot make him drink the water of repentance. If Agag would be killed with words, no Amalekite would live. If men's transient sorrows for sin were real repentance on account of it, there is not a man living who would not, sometime or other, have been a true penitent. Here, however, are leaves only, and no fruit.

We have yet again, another class of persons who have *resolves without action*. They will! Ah! That they will! But it is always in the future tense. They are hearers, and they are even feelers, but they are not doers of the Word: it never comes to that. They would be free, but they have not patience to file their fetters, nor grace to submit their manacles to the hammer. They see the right, but they permit the wrong to rule them. They are charmed with the beauties of holiness, and yet deluded with the wantonness of sin. They would run in the ways of God's commandments, but the road is too rough, and running is weary work. They would fight for God, but victory is hardly won, and so they turn back almost as soon as they have set out; they put their hand to the plough, and then prove utterly unworthy of the kingdom.

The great majority of persons, who have any sort of religion at all, bear leaves, but they produce no fruit. I know there are some such here, and I solemnly warn you, though no curse falls upon you, though we do not think that the miracle now under consideration has any relation to you whatever, yet remember, there is nothing to be done with trees which bring forth only leaves, but in due time to use the axe upon them, and to cast them into the fire: and *this must be your doom*. As sure as you live under the sound of the gospel, and yet are not converted by it, so surely will you be cast into outer darkness. As certainly as Jesus Christ invites you, and ye will not come, so certainly will He send His angels to gather the dead branches together, and you among them, to cast them into the fire. Beware! Beware! Thou fruitless tree! Thou shalt not stand forever! Mercy waters thee with her tears now; God's lovingkindness digs about thee still; still the husbandman comes, seeking fruit upon thee year after year. Beware! The edge of the axe is sharp, and the arm which wields it is nothing less than almighty. Beware! Lest thou fall into the fire!

### II. Secondly, THERE WERE OTHER TREES WITH NEITHER LEAVES NOR FRUIT, AND NONE OF THESE WERE CURSED!

The time of figs was not yet come. Now, as the fig tree either brings forth the fig before the leaf, or else produces figs and leaves at the same time, the major part of the trees, perhaps all of them, without

exception of this one, were entirely without figs and without leaves, and yet Jesus did not curse any one of them, for the time of figs was not yet come.

What multitudes are destitute of anything like religion; they make no profession of it; they not only have no fruits of godliness, but they have no leaves even of outward respect to it; they do not frequent the court of the Lord's house; they use no form of prayer; they never attend upon ordinances. The great outlying mass of this huge city — how does religion affect it? It is a very sad thing to think that there are people living in total darkness next door to the light; that you may find in the very street where the gospel is preached, persons who have never heard a sermon. Are there not, throughout this city, tens and hundreds of thousands who know not their right hand from their left, in matters of godliness? Their children go to Sabbath schools, but they themselves spend the whole Sabbath day in anything except the worship of God! In our country parishes, very often neither the religion of the Establishment nor of Dissent, at all affects the population. Take, for instance, that village which will be disgracefully remembered as long as Essex endures, the village of Hedingham. There are in that place not only parish Churches, but Dissenting meetinghouses, and yet the persons who foully murdered the poor wretch supposed to be a wizard, must have been as ignorant and indifferent to common sense, let alone religion, as even Hottentots or Kaffirs, to whom the light of religion has never come. Why was this? Is it not because there is not enough of missionary spirit among Christian people to seek out those who are in the lowest strata of society, so that multitudes escape without ever coming into contact with godliness at all? In London, the City Missionaries will bear witness that while they can sometimes get at the wives, yet there are thousands of husbands who are necessarily away at the time of the missionary's visit, who have not a word of rebuke, or exhortation, or invitation, or encouragement, ever sounding in their ears at all, from the day of their birth to the day of their death; and they might, for all practical purposes, as well have been born in the center of Africa as in the city of London, for they are without God, without hope, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, far off; not by wicked works only, but by dense ignorance of God.

These persons we may divide into two classes, upon neither of whom does the withering curse fall in this life. The first we look upon with hope. Although we see neither leaves nor fruit, we know that "the time of figs is not yet." They are God's *elect*, but they are *not called*. Their names are in the Lamb's Book of Life, and were there from before the foundations of the world; though they be dead in trespasses,

## Berea Baptist Broadcast

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WFTA, Tupelo, MS .....	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m. ....	101.9 .....	3,000 FM
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WCNA, Myrtle, MS .....	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m. ....	95.9 .....	3,000 FM
WCTT, Corbin, KY .....	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m. ....	680 .....	5,000 AM
KARI, Blaine, WA .....	Saturday 10:30 - 11:00 a.m. ....	550 .....	5,000 AM
KORE, Springfield, OR ....	Sunday 8:00 - 8:30 a.m. ....	1050 .....	5,000 AM
DXRA, Davao City, Philippines	Sunday 8:15 - 8:45 a.m. ....	783 Khz...	10,000 AM
DWSS, Manila, Philippines	Sunday 5:30 - 6:00 p.m. ....	1494 .....	16,000 AM

they are the objects of divine love, and *they must*, in due time, be called by irresistible grace, and turned from darkness to light. "The Lord hath much people in this city," and this should be the encouragement of every one of you, to try to do good, that God has among the vilest of the vile, the most reprobate, the most debauched and drunken, an elect people who *must* be saved. When you take the Word to them, you do so because God has ordained you to be the messenger of life to their souls, and they must receive it, for so the decree of predestination runs; they must be called in the fullness of time to be the brethren of Christ and children of the Most High. They are *redeemed*, beloved friends, but not *regenerated* — as much redeemed with precious blood as the saints before the eternal throne. They are Christ's property, and yet perhaps, they are waiting around the ale-house at this very moment until the door shall open — bought with Jesus' precious blood, and yet spending their nights in a brothel, and their days in sin; but if Jesus Christ purchased them He will have them. If He counted down the precious drops, God is not unfaithful to forget the price which His Son has paid. He will not suffer His substitution to be in any case an ineffectual, dead thing. Tens of thousands of redeemed ones are not regenerated yet, but regenerated they must be; and this is your comfort and mine, when we go out with the quickening Word of God. Nay, more, these ungodly ones are prayed for by Christ before the throne. "Neither pray I for these alone," saith the great Intercessor, "but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." They do not pray for themselves; poor, ignorant souls, they do not know anything about prayer; but Jesus prays for them. Their names are on His breast, and ere long, they must bow their stubborn knee, breathing the penitential sigh before the throne of grace. "The time of figs is not yet." The predestinated moment has not struck; but, when it comes, *they shall*, for God will have His own; *they must*, for the Spirit is not to be withstood when He cometh forth with power — they must become the willing servants of the living God. "My people shall be willing in the day of my power." "He shall justify many." "He shall see of the travail of his soul." "He shall divide a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong."

No curse falls upon these; they deserve it, but eternal love prevents it. Their sins write it, but the finished sacrifice blots it out. They may well perish because they seek not mercy, but Christ intercedes for them, and live they shall.

Alas! However, among those who have neither leaves nor fruit, there is another class which *never* bring forth either the one or the other; they live in sin and die in ignorance, perishing without hope. As these leave the world, can they upbraid us for neglecting them? Are we clear of their blood? May not the blood of many of them cry from the ground against us? As they are condemned on account of sins, may they not accuse us because we did not take the gospel to them, but left them where they were? Dread thought! But let it not be shaken off; there are tens of thousands every day who pass into the world of spirits unsaved, and inherit the righteous wrath of God. Yet in this life, you see, no special curse falls upon them, and this miracle has no special bearing upon them; it bears upon a totally different class of people, of whom we will now speak.

### III. WE HAVE BEFORE US A SPECIAL CASE.

I have already said, that in a fig tree, the fruit takes the precedence of the leaves, or the leaves and the fruit come at the same time; so that it is laid down as a general rule, that if there be leaves upon a fig tree, you may rightly expect to find fruit upon it.

To begin then with the explanation of this special case, in a fig tree fruit comes before leaves. So in a true Christian, fruit always takes the precedence of profession. Find a man anywhere who is a true servant of God, and before he united himself with the Church, or attempted to engage in public prayer, or to identify himself with the people of God, he searched to see whether he had real repentance on account of sin — he desired to know whether he had a sincere and genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he perhaps tarried some little time to try himself to see whether there were the fruits of holiness in his daily life. Indeed, I may say that there are some who wait too long; they are so afraid lest they should make a profession before they have grace in possession, that they will wait year after year — too long — become unwise, and make what was a virtue

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become a vice. Still this is the rule with Christians: they first give themselves to the Lord and afterwards to the Lord's people according to His will. You who are the servants of God — do you not scorn to vaunt yourselves beyond your line and measure? Would you not think it disgraceful on your part to profess anything which you have not felt? Do you not feel a holy jealousy when you are teaching others, lest you should teach more than God has taught you? And are you not afraid even in your prayers lest you should use expressions which are beyond your own depth of meaning? I am sure the true Christian is always afraid of anything like having the leaves before he has the fruit.

Another remark follows from this — *where we see the leaves, we have a right to expect the fruit.* When I see a man a Church-member, when I hear him engage in prayer, I expect to see in him, holiness, the character and the image of Christ. I have a right to expect it, because the man has solemnly avowed that he is the partaker of divine grace. You cannot join a Church without taking upon yourselves very solemn responsibilities. What do you desire when you come to see us, and ask to be admitted into fellowship?

You tell us that you have passed from death unto life, that you have been born again, that there has been a change in you, the like of which you never knew before, one which only God could have wrought. You tell us you are in the habit of private prayer; that you have a desire for the conversion of others. If you did not so profess, we dare not receive you.

Well now, having made these professions, it would be insincere on our part if we did not expect to see your characters holy, and your conversation correct; we have a right to expect it from your own professions. We have a right to expect it from the work of the Spirit, which you claim to have received. Shall the Holy Spirit work in man's heart to produce a trifle? Do you think that the Spirit of God would have written us this Book, and that Jesus Christ would have shed His precious blood to produce a hypocrite? Is an inconsistent Christian the highest work of God? I suppose God's plan of salvation to be, that which has more exercised His thoughts and wisdom than the making of all worlds and the sustenance of all providence; and shall this best, this highest, this darling work of God, produce no more than that poor, mean, talking, unacting, fruitless deceiver? Ye have no love for souls, no care for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, and yet think that the Spirit has made you what you are! No zeal, no melting bowels of compassion, no cries of earnest entreaty, no wrestling with God, no holiness, no self-denial, and yet say that

you are a vessel made by the Master and fitted for His use! How can this be? No, if you profess to be a Christian, from the necessity of the Spirit's work, we have a right to expect fruit from you. Besides, in genuine professors we do get the fruit, we see a faithful attachment to the Redeemer's cause, an endurance to the end, in poverty, in sickness, in shame, in persecution. We see other professors holding fast to the truth, they are not led aside by temptation, neither do they disgrace the cause they have espoused; and, if you profess to be one of the same order, we have a right to look for the same blessed fruits of the Spirit in you, and if we see them not you have belied us.

Observe further that *our Lord hungers for fruit.* A hungry person seeks for something which may satisfy him, for fruit, not leaves! Jesus hungers for your holiness. A strong expression, you will say, but I doubt not of its accuracy. For what were we elected? We were predestinated to be conformed unto the image of God's Son; we were chosen to good works, **“which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”** What is the end of our redemption? Why did Jesus Christ die? He **“gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”** Why have we been called but that we should be called to be saints? To what end are any of the great operations of the covenant of grace? Do they not all point at our holiness? If you will think of any privilege which the Lord confers upon His people through Christ, you will perceive that they all aim at the sanctification of the chosen people — the making of them to bring forth fruit that God the Father may be glorified in them. O Christian, for this the tears of the Savior! For this the agony and bloody sweat! For this the five death wounds! For this the burial and the resurrection, that He makes you holy, even perfectly holy like unto Himself! And can it be, that when He hungers after fruit, you think nothing of fruit-bearing? O professor, how base art thou, to call thyself a blood-bought child of God, amid yet to live unto thyself! How darest thou, O barren tree, professing to be watered by the bloody sweat, and digged by the griefs and woes of the wounded Savior — how darest thou bring forth leaves and no fruit? Oh! Sacrilegious mockery of a hungry Savior! Oh! Blasphemous tantalizing of a hungry Lord! That thou shouldst profess to have cost Him all this, and yet yield Him nothing! When I think that Jesus hungers after fruit in me, it stirs me up to do more for Him. Does it not have the same effect on you? He hungers for your good works; He hungers to see you useful. Jesus the King of kings, hungers after your prayers — hungers after your anxieties for the souls of others; and nothing ever will satisfy Him for the travail of his soul but seeing you wholly

devoted to his cause.

This brings us into the very midst and meaning of the miracle. *There are some, then, who make unusual profession, and yet disappoint the Savior in his just expectations.* The Jews did this. When Jesus Christ came, it was not the time of figs. The time for great holiness was after the coming of Christ and the pouring out of the Spirit. All the other nations were without leaves. Greece, Rome, all these showed no signs of progress; but there was the Jewish nation covered with leaves. They professed already to have obtained the blessings which He came to bring. There stood the Pharisee with his long prayers; there were the lawyers and the Scribes with their deep knowledge of the things of the kingdom. They said they had the light. The time of figs was not come, but yet they had the leaves, though not a single fruit; and you know what a curse fell on Israel; how in the day of Jerusalem's destruction the tree was withered altogether from its root, because it had its leaves, but had no fruit.

The same will be true of any *Church.* There are times when all the Churches seem sunken alike in lethargy — such a time we had, say ten years ago — but one Church, perhaps, seems to be all alive. The congregations are large. Much, apparently, is proposed for the growth of the Savior's kingdom. A deal of noise is made about it; there is much talk, and the people are all expectation; and, if there be no fruit, no real consecration to Christ, if there be no genuine liberality, no earnest vital godliness, no hallowed consistency, other Churches may live on; but such a Church as this, making so high a profession, and being so precocious in the produce of leaves, shall have a curse from God. No man shall eat fruit of it forever, and it shall wither away.

In the case of *individuals*, the moral of our miracle runs thus. Some are looked upon as *young believers*, who early join the Church. “The time of figs is not yet;” it is not a very ordinary case to see children converted, but we do see some, and we are very grateful. We are jealous however lest we should see leaves but not fruit. These juveniles are extraordinary cases; and on that account, we look for higher results. When we are disappointed what shall come upon such but a curse upon their precocity, which led them to the deception. Some of us were converted, or profess to have been, when young, and if we have lived hitherto, and all we have produced has been merely words, resolves, professions, but not fruit unto God, we must expect the curse.

Again, *professors eminent in station.* There are necessarily but few ministers, but few Church officers; but when men so distinguish themselves by zeal, or by louder professions than others, as to gain the ear of the Christian public and are placed in responsible positions — if they bring forth no fruit, they are the persons

upon whom the curse will light. It may be with other Christians that “the time of figs is not yet;” they have not made the advances which these profess to have made; but having been, upon their own profession, elected to an office which essentially requires fruit, since they yield it not, let them beware.

*To those who make professions of much love to Christ, the same caution may be given.* With the most of Christians, I am afraid, I must say that “the time of figs is not yet;” for we are too much like the Laodicean Church. But you meet with some men — how much they are in love with Christ! How sweetly they can talk about Him, but what do they do for Him? Nothing! Nothing! Their love lies just in the wind which comes out of their own mouths, and that is all. Now, when the Lord has a curse, He will deal it out on such. They went beyond all others in an untimely declaration of a very fervent love, and now they yield Him no fruit. “Yes,” said one, “I love God so much, that I do not reckon that anything I have is my own. It is all the Lord's — all the Lord's, and I am His steward.” Well, this dear good man, of course, joined the Church, and after a time, some mission work wanted a little help. What was his reply? “When I pay my seat rent, I have done all I intend to do.” A man of wealth and means! After a little time, this same man found it inconvenient even to pay for his seat, and goes now to a place not quite so full, where he can get a seat and do nothing to support the ministry! If there is a special thunderbolt anywhere, it is these unctious hypocrites who whine about love to Christ, and bow down at the shrine of mammon.

Or, take another case. You meet with others whose profession is not of so much love, but it is of much *experience.* Oh! What experience they have had! What deep experience! Ah! They know the humblings of heart and the plague of human nature! They know the depths of corruption, and the heights of divine fellowship, and so on. Yes, and if you go into the shop you find the corruption is carried on behind the counter, and the deceit in the day-book; if they do not know the plague of their own hearts, at least they are a plague to their own household. Such people are abhorrent to all men, and much more to God.

Others you meet with *who have a censorious tongue.* What good people they must be; they can see the faults of other people so plainly! This Church is not right, and the other is not right, and yonder preacher — well some people think him a very good man, but they do not. They can see the deficiencies in the various denominations, and they observe that very few really carry out Scripture as it should be carried out. They complain of want of love, and are the very people who create that want. Now if you will

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## Mini-Edition

By Joseph Harris  
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### The Law Is the Law...Isn't It? Not in California.

On August 12, 2004, the California Supreme Court ruled by a vote of 5-2 that the mayor of San Francisco overstepped his authority in ordering marriage licenses to be granted to homosexuals and that these licenses were null and void. This appears to be a ruling of sanity, but only if you don't look at the big picture. The whole issue is one of insanity.

Here is the wording from the ruling: "We hold only that in the absence of a judicial determination that such statutory provisions are unconstitutional, local executive officials lacked authority to issue marriage licenses to, solemnize marriages of, or register certificates of marriage for same-sex couples, and marriages conducted between same-sex couples in violation of the applicable statutes are void and of no legal effect."

Why did the highest court in the state even have to meet and reinforce what common sense and the law has already stated? California law prohibits the "marriage" of homosexuals. State law has already clarified the issue. The court then proceeded to nullify all the "marriages" that took place, which was again, insanity. Marriages that are illegal are not legal. Period.

The law is the law, right? The law should be enforced, right? Lawbreakers should be punished, right? Right...if you are a Bible believing conservative Christian who breaks the law. But if you are a liberal and the issue is about "diversity" or "tolerance", then that's another matter. Has Mayor Newsom or the county clerk who issued the licenses been prosecuted for their flagrant law breaking? No. But if he had given the order to issue licenses to preach the Gospel on government property or on public school property, he would have been shackled, tarred, feathered and declared public enemy number one and painted as a menace to society. Unfortunately, the outcome is determined by the issue at stake, not the official law on the books.

This issue was for the purpose of testing the waters. The agenda of the liberal left is to consistently push their perversity and force their filth by every available means, even breaking the law. Expect this to happen again until some judge or court suddenly rules on the "unconstitutional discrimination" against "gays" by upholding and endorsing their law breaking. This has already been done with murder under the name of abortion. The magic word is "unconstitutional" and believe me, their fight for "rights" has just

begun.

It seems to matter little that the people of California have already spoken on the issue by voting in State Proposition 22, which defines marriage as between one man and one woman. Whatever happened to the will of the people or "We the People" as the ruling class in this nation? Anarchy is alive and well in America. But, hey, it's just the natural result of a people who have abandoned God and His Word. When God is rejected as the ultimate authority, then all authority in every realm (which is given by God, Romans 13:1) is questioned and eventually challenged.

### Nothing But Leaves

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watch these very censorious people, the very faults they indicate in others, they are indulging in themselves; and while they are seeking to find out the mote in their brother's eye, they have a beam in their own. These are the people who are indicated by this fig tree, for they ought, according to their own showing, taking them on their own ground, to be better than other people. If what they say be true, they are bright particular stars, and they ought to give special light to the world. They are such that even Jesus Christ Himself might expect to receive fruit from them, but they are nothing but deceivers, with these high soarings and proud boastings; they are nothing after all but pretenders. Like Jezebel with her paint, which made her all the uglier, they would seem to be what they are not. As old Adam says, "They are candles with big wicks and no tallow, and when they go out they make a foul and nauseous smell." "They have summer sweating on their brow, and winter freezing in their hearts." You would think them the land of Goshen, but prove them the wilderness of sin. Let us search ourselves, lest such be the case with us.

#### IV. And now to close, SUCH A TREE MIGHT WELL BE WITHERED.

*Deception is abhorred of God.* There was the Jewish temple, there were the priests standing in solemn pomp, there were the abundant sacrifices of God's altar. But was God pleased with His temple? No, because in the temple you had all the leaves, you had all the externals of worship, but there was no true prayer, no belief in the great Lamb of God's passover, no truth, no righteousness, no love of men, no care for the glory of God; and so the temple, which had been a house of prayer, had become a den of thieves. You

do not marvel that the temple was destroyed. You and I may become just like that temple. We may go on with all the externals of religions, nobody may miss us out of our seat at Tabernacle, nay, we may never miss our Christian engagements; we may be in all external matters more precise than we used to be, and yet for all that, we may have become in our hearts a den of thieves; the heart may be given to the world while external ceremonies are still kept up and maintained. Let us beware of this, for such a place cannot be long without a curse. It is abhorrent to God.

Again, *it is deceptive to man.* Look at that temple! What do men go there for? To see holiness and virtue. Why tread they its hallowed courts? To get nearer to God. And what do they find there? Instead of holiness, covetousness; instead of getting nearer to God, they get into the midst of a mart where men are haggling about the price of doves, and bickering with one another about the changing of shekels. So men may watch to hear some reasonable word from our lips, and instead of that, may get evil; and as that temple was cursed for deluding men, so may we be, because we deceive and disappoint the wants of mankind.

More than this, this barren fig tree *committed sacrilege upon Christ*, did it not? Might it not have exposed Him to ridicule? Some might have said, "How goest thou to a tree, thou prophet, whereon there is no fruit?" A false professor exposes Christ to ridicule. As the temple of old dishonored God, so does a Christian when his heart is not right; he does dishonor to God, and makes the holy cause to be trodden under foot of the adversary. Such men indeed have reason to beware.

Once more, this tree might well be cursed, because its bringing forth nothing but leaves was a plain evidence of its sterility. It had force and vitality, but it turned it to ill account, and would continue to do so. The curse of Christ was but a confirmation of what it already was. He did as good as say, "He that is unfruitful, let him be unfruitful still." And now, what if Christ should come into this Tabernacle this morning, and should look on you and on me, and see in any of us great profession and great pomp of leaves, and yet no fruit, what if He should pronounce the curse on us, what would be the effect? We should wither away as others have done. What mean we by this? Why, they have on a sudden turned to the world. We could not understand why such fair saints should, on a sudden, become such black devils; the fact was, Christ had pronounced the word, and they began to wither away. If He should pronounce the unmasking word on any mere professor here, and say, "Let no man eat fruit of thee for ever," you will go into gross outward sin and wither to your shame. This will take place probably on a

sudden; and taking place, your case will be irretrievable; you never afterwards will be restored. The blast which shall fall upon you will be eternal; you will live as a lasting monument of the terrible justice of Christ, as the great head of the Church; you will be spared to let it be seen that a man outside the Church may escape with impunity in this life, but a man inside the Church shall have a present curse, and be made to stand as a tree blasted by the lightning of God for ever. Now, this is a heart-searching matter. It went through me yesterday when I thought, "Well, here am I, I have professed to be called of God to the ministry; I have forced myself into a leading place in God's Church; I have voluntarily put myself into a place where sevenfold damnation is my inevitable inheritance if I be not true and sincere." I could almost wish myself back out of the Church, or at least in the obscurest place in her ranks, to escape the perils and responsibilities of my position; and so may you, if you have not the witness of the Spirit in you that you are born of God — you may wish that you never thought of Christ, and never dreamed of taking His name upon you. If you have by diligence worked yourself into a high position among God's people; if you have mere leaves without the fruit, the more sure is the curse, because the greater the disappointment of the Savior. The more you profess, the more is expected of you; and if you do not yield it, the more just the condemnation when you shall be left to stand forever withered by the curse of Christ. O men and brethren, let us tremble before the heart-searching eye of God; but let us still remember that grace can make us fruitful yet. The way of mercy is open still. Let us apply to the wounds of Christ this morning. If we have never begun, let us begin now. Now let us throw our arms about the Savior, and take Him to be ours; and, having done this, let us seek divine grace, that for the rest of our lives we may work for God. Oh! I do hope to do more for God, and I hope you will. O Holy Spirit, work in us mightily, for in Thee is our fruit found! Amen.

### MARK OF THE BEAST

Look at your name on the front page of this month's paper. If you see the mark 9-04, so detestable to a Baptist, wash it out by renewal of greenbacks. If not your paper will stop next month. We are not able to credit. It is not a good plan.



## A Christian

*Continued from page 401*

validity if contrary to this." What I wish to do in the course of this message is state some responsibilities as Christians to our God that we have for our Nation and we will notice some more quotes from some of our founding fathers.

**1) The first responsibility to our Nation is giving it the gospel.** The great commission in Matthew 28 states: **"Go ye therefore and teach all nations..."** The Nation that we must start with must be the one that God has placed us in. We have a measure of responsibility to our God to give the gospel to our Nation. We have not been placed in the land of freedom to be lax and enjoy the freedoms and not make good use of them by carrying the gospel across the land. We have not been placed in our communities without a cause in the mind of God. It is to first take the gospel to our Jerusalem and Judea and in Samaria and then onto the uttermost part of the earth. Believe me that there are many Americans today that have never heard the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. Many have heard a watered down version that includes the works of man. We are ambassadors to our very own Nation sent by God above. Our 1st president George Washington realized the importance of bringing the gospel to the Indians. In his speech to the Delaware Indian Chiefs he stated: *"You do well to learn our arts and ways of life, and above all, the religion of Jesus Christ. These will make you a greater and happier people than you are. Congress will do everything they can to assist you in this wise intention."* I realize that all was not fair and right in the treatment of the Indians but it is obvious that some were concerned about the spiritual condition of the Indians. There were many good missionaries to the Indians in the start of the USA. Some no doubt felt the responsibility that God had given them to take the gospel to them. We need to feel the responsibility given to us by God to take the gospel to our countrymen. I believe we should feel a burden particularly for the souls of our Nation because this is where God has placed us and there should be a special love for our Nation. Paul said, **"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh"** (Rom. 9:3) We wish to send missionaries to other countries and that is all well and good but we are to be a missionary to the country that God has placed us in as well. Brother Andrew, (as he is called) smuggled Bibles behind the Iron Curtain and into Communist countries and he would encourage the people not to leave their countries but understand that they had an obligation as a Christian to be an influence for good and to take their country the gospel. Many stayed in the Communist countries because of his

message as they realized they had a responsibility as a Christian to take the gospel to their Nation. Yes, we see a departure from the gospel in our land ...all the more reason to take the pure gospel message to those around us. It's not a reason to quit and to only concentrate on foreign lands.

**2) A responsibility to pray for our leaders.** I Tim. 2:1-4. We see in these verses that for us to pray and to seek the salvation of our leaders is good and acceptable in the sight of God. This is one thing that all of us can do. In praying for our leaders and those in authority we are serving God and doing a good work that He has commanded us to do. Surely if there is a day when Christians need to take on the special task of praying for their leaders it is today. Most leaders are void of God's great salvation and know very little of the gospel of Jesus. They may be birds in the air to us in that we can't reach them by speaking directly to them but we can pray to the God of heaven that turns kings hearts wheresoever He so desires. We see in these verses that for us to seek the good of our leaders is not just for their good so that they can be saved but for the good of society. Verse two says, **"that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."** It is for the good of our children and grandchildren that we ought to pray for our leaders. These leaders are the ones that establish either God-honoring laws or God-hating laws. They need our prayers, we need to make supplications on their behalf because they are not making them for themselves. George Washington in his last official address to the Legislature of the United States said: *"I now make it my earnest prayer that God would have you, and the states over which you preside, in His holy protection...that He would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, without an humble imitation of whose example, we can never hope to be a happy nation."* I do indeed think our 1st president's prayer is a good prayer for our Nation. We may not be in a place of authority and power in our land and we may not know any that are but we know personally a greater power than any man. We know Jesus Christ who is the Mediator between God and men. We may not know the governor but we know of Whom it is said: **"...the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"** (Isa. 9:6). Knowing and speaking to one governor or even 10 may accomplish some things but knowing and speaking to Who has all power can accomplish anything. Use that great privilege of prayer you have for the good of the

Nation and the good of your grandchildren.

**3) To walk humbly, seek God and turn from sin.** II Chron. 7:14 states: **"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."** Do we see where our Nation may need some healing? We see and hear more and more of floods, draughts, tornadoes and the such. But not so much of a physical healing as a spiritual. God here lays a lot of responsibility upon His people. We could sure say a lot about the moral downslide of our Nation couldn't we? We could consider the sorry example our past president set with his lack of morals. We could consider all the ungodly laws that our leaders have put in place. But what about the moral downfall of God's people in this Nation? Are we reaping what our Nation has sown or is it that our Nation is reaping what we have sown? John Calvin said *"When God wants to judge a Nation he gives them wicked rulers."* Many times we hear it said that we get the leader that we deserve. That I believe can be especially true in America when it is the people that vote who they want to be president. In some times and places kings become kings because they were born kings. We however get to choose who we want to be our leader. The spiritual condition of the Nation can be seen in the spirituality of the leader. It's not a godlier leader that we need it is a godlier Nation. The godlier leader will come by the demand of the people. Now, why the downfall in our Nation in the moral law of God? It may be the moral downfall in Christendom.

When the land is in need of healing, whose sin is it in these verses that needs forgiven? It's the sins of the people of God. The people of God have started letting the ways of the world influence them rather than influencing the world for good and being the salt of the earth. God tells us first that for the healing of the land, it must be His people **"which are called"** by His name. So we can't lay the burden on all the false professors out there that lay claim to salvation but have never been born again. It lays on you as a child of God. And none of us can wait on another before we ourselves humble ourselves before God. We cannot humble others but we can humble ourselves. And we are much better off to humble ourselves than for God to humble us. Too many times Christians are lifted in pride in being American and think that they are really something. Being American doesn't change a thing between God and us. God isn't proud of us because we are American. God rejects and resists the proud, and proud many Christians have become.

Next, we are told that we must pray.

Surely humility must come before prayer. **"Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off"** (Psa. 138:6). How can we pray and draw nigh to God when we have pride in our hearts? I believe a proud spirit will not only hinder our prayers, it will hinder our praying at all. We as a Nation have become proud of our freedom and our power in our military. Surely God will humble us as a Nation if we don't humble ourselves. **"The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD."** And in being proud, we have voided out prayer to God in our Nation and in our schoolhouses. I'm certain that the two are connected. Oh how we need to humble ourselves underneath the mighty hand of God that He might lift us up.

Next, we are told to seek His face. Seeking the face of God is to seek the favor of God—to seek His smiling countenance. We as a Nation can never continue to prosper if the people of God are not seeking the favor of God and seeking only to please Him with their lives and hearts. George Washington said: *"We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious [favorable] smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained."* We don't need favor in the sight of the UN or in the sight of Germany. We need favor in the sight of God Almighty. Truly if God be for us then who can be against us. We as Christians sometimes get more involved in politics and are more concerned about what other Nations may think and how they might act to this move or to that. It must start with us to! We must only seek the favor of God in our lives and not be concerned about what anybody else in the world may think. God has told us here to seek His face for the healing of our land so let us say with David: **"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek"** (Psa. 27:8). If God favors us as a people then the possibilities are innumerable.

He also says **"...and turn from their wicked ways."** Not if the leaders who know not God turn but if God's people will turn from their wicked ways. You may think that there may not be very many born-again believers in this country. That is not the key here as to how many but if those that are His people turn from their wicked ways. That means you and I, as His people, need to turn from our wicked ways. This speaks loud and clear that God's people can have some wicked ways. We need to be ashamed that we as a people called out by God have been involved in things that God would not be pleased with and have allowed things into our lives and homes that God would call wicked. Do we want God to heal our land? Then it needs to start with God's people seeking a spiritual healing in their

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## Outlines for Country Preachers by a Country Preacher

Sermon Outlines by Milburn Cockrell

### The Hidden Life

Colossians 3:1-4

The essence of Christianity is not a creed, not a system of doctrines, not a particular mode of worship, but a life, and that life Christlike. Christianity is not a philosophy of life, but a life and a living process.

#### I. A Life From The Dead—"Ye are dead" (V. 3).

1. "Ye died," not "ye are dead," for they are alive now spiritually. This is a distinct element in Christian experience.
2. Man by nature is dead in sins (Col. 2:13)—dead to God—dead to the people of God and the church of God.
3. He sees no need of God or His mercy. He is dead to repentance—dead to faith—dead to spiritual things.
4. He is insensible to spiritual and heavenly matters, as a dead man in his grave to the things on earth.
5. No one can rise again with Christ, if he has not first died with Him.
6. We have passed through a death to earthly things—to sin, to self and the allurements of the flesh.
7. The crucifixion has its counterpart within us. Our life is a continual self-crucifixion (die daily).

#### II. A Resurrected Life—"Risen with Christ" (V. 1).

1. The dead leaves of the old life fall off in the springtime of the new.
2. By baptism we have symbolically been buried with Christ in His death, and we are risen with Him in newness of life (Col. 2:12-13; Rom. 6:4).
3. "With Christ" signifies in spiritual union with Him.
4. As Christ was raised from the dead, even so we are raised from moral and spiritual death to the new life in Him (John 15:5; Phil. 4:13).
5. We are risen to heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 2:6). This life is eternal—like the life of Christ.

#### III. A Life Concerned With Heavenly Things—"Seek those things which are above . . . set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (VV. 1-2).

1. This life, which is from above can only be fed and nourished with the things, which belong to the heavenlies.
2. Earthly things cannot satisfy a quickened spirit (Rom. 8:4-6).
3. We must prefer heavenly things above all earthly things.
4. Attachment to things on earth is unworthy of one who has risen with Christ. They are beneath him.
5. Love and think about Christ in Heaven, the glory of the heavenly land, the inhabitants of this land, the heavenly treasures, the golden harp, the coming heavenly kingdom (Matt. 6:33).

#### IV. A Substitutional Life—"Christ, who is our life" (V. 4).

1. His death was a substitute for us, so also is His resurrection and life (John 14:19; Gal. 2:20; I John 5:11).
2. Our life is not only with Christ, but He is the life itself (John 1:4 "In him was life"; 14:6).
3. As the Source and Keeper of life for us, He is really our life (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21).
4. Christ is the principle and end of the Christian life. He lives in us by His Spirit, and we live to Him in all we do.
5. Christ is the source, sustenance and summation of the Christian life.

#### V. A Secure Life—"Your life is hid with Christ in God" (V. 3).

1. Hid with Christ in God we are as safe as Christ Himself. Lost in the abyss of Deity!
2. This denotes security and safety of the life. For the Devil to get us he would have to go through God and Christ first. If the devil got into Christ, he would be saved!
3. The believer is in God and Christ—hidden in God's house and heart. "And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:23).
4. We have fellowship with both the Father and Son (I John 1:3).

#### VI. A Life Yet To Be Manifested—"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (V. 4).

1. When Christ comes out of His hiding place, our life shall accompany Him into openness and light.
2. When Christ appears in His glory, we shall appear in our glory (Rom. 8:17-19 " . . . that we may be also glorified together"; Phil. 3:21; I John 3:1-2).

3. We are to share His glory (John 17:22). This glory will never fade, for it is eternal.
4. The coming of Christ will be the manifestation of our sonship. "When He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. . ." (II Thess. 1:10).

#### Conclusion.

1. Are you looking for the blessed hope?
2. Are your affections on heavenly things? Is that where your treasures are? Your home? Your everlasting crown?
3. Is Christ your life?

## A Christian

Continued from page 406

homes and get rid of the wickedness. Taking a stand in their daily lives for righteousness and true holiness. To not go with the flow but go against the tide of wickedness in our day. Today there seems to be very little difference between the Christian and the person of the world. This should not be. We are being no influence for good if our lives don't prove to be a restraint on the wickedness around us. Don't look at the wicked ways of the president and think that if he changes then all will be well. Look at our ways before God and realize that God's Word is true and that our lives as Christians have a direct effect on who God will place as ruler over us.

**4) For Freedom to Continue these things must be.** II Corinthians 3:17 says: "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

I believe the reason that we have gotten to enjoy such liberty in this country is because our government was founded on God's Word. But more and more our Nation turns away from it and more and more our freedoms are being taken away as well. For the truth shall make us a free Nation but a false god will bind us and take away our liberties. Where the governments of other lands are geared toward favoring Islam or Hindu there is little freedom. God may be doing great things in India and saving people but the government is for Hindu and the laws of the land are enslaving to men and women. We need the Lord God of the Bible to be the one to guide men in their law making decisions and judgments. For without such we shall more and more be enslaved to the laws of man. Our founding Fathers saw this principle and knew that freedom was only possible for a Nation that followed the Lord. John Adams said: "It is religion and morality alone, which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. Religion and virtue are the only foundations...of republicanism and of all free governments." (When they spoke of religion they were speaking in more specific terms than we do when we use it today). Benjamin Franklin said: "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters." Indeed we have more and more laws but seemingly are growing more and more wicked. Then

lastly Thomas Jefferson said: "God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that His justice cannot sleep forever." Surely we cannot enjoy these freedoms for long as our Nation turns away more and more from God. This is not just a message of warning but hopefully of encouragement to us to live for the Lord our God. May we seek God, follow Him, seek the salvation of our countrymen whether God continues to allow us to have these freedoms we enjoy or not. And even if the entire world continues in ungodliness may we be found faithful to our God. I believe that the 4th of July ought to be a day of remembrance of the liberty that we enjoy as people in this land and thank God for this wonderful gift of freedom. James Madison said: "No people ought to feel greater obligations to celebrate the goodness of the Great Disposer of events and the Destiny of Nations than the people of the United States...And to the same Divine Author of every good and perfect gift we are indebted for all those privileges and advantages, religious as well as civil, which are so richly enjoyed in this favored land."

**By Way of Conclusion:** I know of a greater day of liberty that I enjoy far more than the 4th of July. It's the day that Jesus set me free from my bondage of sin. Sin had enslaved me, the law of God had bound me and I was unable to get free from its yoke. But Jesus fulfilled all the law's demands and by faith in Him I am free. I was a prisoner to my own sin but now I am set at liberty to serve God and enjoy Him. Sin had dominion over me and Satan was my god. But now thanks be unto God that has given me victory over the chains of death through my Lord Jesus Christ. As an American you may enjoy your freedom in this good land but do you have liberty in your soul because you know Jesus Christ as your Savior?



## Misunderstood

*Continued from page 401*

Today I shall ask my

### Third Question: Have We Misunderstood What Christ Commanded Us To Do?

In the great commission Christ said: **“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations. . .”** A better rendering of the Greek text is “make disciples of all nations” or more exact “disciple all nations.” We greatly need an English verb “disciple” for this passage and some others (Matt. 13:52; Acts 14:21). In the Gospel of John, chapter 4, verse 1, the literal translation is **“made disciples.”** The word **“teach”** in verse 19 is the Greek word *matheteuo*, which means “to disciple, to enroll as a scholar.” The word translated “teaching” in verse 20 is another word (*didasko*), which means “to learn, or to be taught.”

The commission requires that the churches of Jesus Christ make disciples or learners. This means evangelism in the fullest sense, not merely a revival meeting or a city-wide crusade. To disciple a person to Christ is to bring him into the relation of pupil to teacher. A disciple of Christ takes His authoritative instructions (Matt. 11:29); He accepts what He says because He says it. He submits to His requirements as right because He makes them. To be a real disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ requires more than mere human instructions: it requires the special work of the Holy Spirit of God.

Most professed Christians do not know what it is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. They think it is no more than making a decision, joining some church, or being baptized. Under easy believism they have been led to think it is something done in a few moments and which requires mere mental assent to some religious proposition. It is not viewed by them as a life-long process. Most religious professors in our day are in fact not real disciples of Jesus Christ. They are false professors who are in danger of Hell-fire!

According to the Bible, the requirements of discipleship are most severe. Our Lord said: **“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple”** (Luke 14:33). So discipleship requires that we forsake all for Christ and His service. According to Jesus Christ, one of His disciples must love his Lord more than his family: **“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple”** (Luke 14:26).

To be a disciple of Christ you must deny yourself ease and pleasure, possessions and country: **“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”** (Matt. 16:24). This is not to

be done for a few days and then you can quit. Discipleship requires perseverance: **“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed”** (John 8:31). Discipleship not only requires faithfulness, but also fruitfulness as well: **“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples”** (John 15:8). When you made your religious profession did the preacher tell you that these things were required of you? Are you a real disciple of Christ in the light of these truths?

Yes, many have misunderstood what Christ commanded us to do. He did not command that we go out and save souls by decisional regeneration. Only God can save a lost soul. Christ did not command that we go out and get people to make decisions by human persuasion and psychological manipulations. Rather, He said that we were to make disciples by teaching the people the things of the Lord. The great commission does not say we are to go out and get people to join our church. You can't be a baptized church member until you have become a disciple. Nor does the Lord tell us to go out and organize churches, line them up with our work, teach them to support the boards, the schools, and other denominational works so they may have the praise of the leaders at headquarters!

There is no command in the great commission for the Lord's churches to make false professors and hypocrites. When we get people to make decisions rather than becoming disciples this is what we make. Modern evangelism fails to carry out the great commission, for it makes decisions, not disciples. This is why the churches are filled with false professors and hypocrites. God help us! How many Baptist churches are filled with nominal believers who know nothing about being disciples of Jesus Christ. These people do not forsake all for Christ; they do not deny themselves pleasure and profit; they do not persevere in holiness; they are not fruitful! They are disciples falsely so-called!

But how do you make one a disciple of Jesus Christ? You begin by preaching the gospel to them: **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15). This is the command of Jesus Christ to His churches. In Mark 1:15 our Savior said: **“. . .repent ye, and believe the gospel.”** Those who repent of their sins and believe the gospel have entered the school of Christ and started to become disciples.

We must make them disciples by teaching them continually by the Word, while the Spirit teaches them internally. By such teaching they come to see themselves as sinners before God by nature, practice and choice. They learn to know Christ as Savior and Lord, and they come to see that peace, pardon, righteousness, life, salvation are all by Christ. **“It is written in the prophets,**

**And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me”** (John 6:45). Those who are so taught will be brought to believe in Christ, to part with all for His sake, to bear all for His glory, and to follow Him wherever He leads.

The church is not to confine their knowledge of the things of Christ to themselves. They are to communicate it to **“all nations.”** We must not shut up this knowledge inside our Baptist churches. Christianity is a religion for people in all nations. It is not just for the Jews scattered among the Gentiles, but the Gentiles themselves in every land. The Jews had expected the Messiah to bring salvation to their own nation. Nevertheless, Christ commissioned the Jewish church to carry the gospel to all nations. How I as a Gentile praise God **“that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”** (Eph. 3:6).

Before the time of Matthew 28:19-20 the church had operated under a limited and temporary commission, which did not allow the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles (Matt. 10:5-6). But in Matthew 28:19-20 the limited commission merged into a world-wide and age-lasting commission. Such expressions as **“all nations,” “among all nations”** (Luke 24:47), **“all the world”** (Mark 16:15), and **“the uttermost part of the earth”** (Acts 1:8) reveal that the gospel is to be heralded to every individual person in the world in each generation until Jesus returns for the church. The message of salvation is to be preached to all men without exception. We are to do our best to make all nations Christian nations. Christ is setting up a school in the world and commands us to make the nations His scholars.

We must all confess that as members of the Lord's churches we have miserably failed to carry out the great commission. In truth we have sent the gospel but to very few nations. Very few people in all nations are real Christians. We have failed to obey our Lord!

### Fourth Question: Have We Misunderstood The Importance Of Baptism?

Consider the second phrase of the great commission: **“. . .baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”** This does not mean the church is to baptize all nations, for the words for **“all nations”** are neuter gender, whereas **“them”** is of masculine gender. Those made disciples by preaching the gospel are to be baptized by the authority which Christ gave His church. Baptism is the first act of the born-again disciple in obedience to His Lord. It constitutes his public profession of faith in Christ to be His Savior and Teacher.

It is impossible to explain the words

in this part of the commission other than to say that water baptism is an outward ordinance to be administered to all who join His church. In I Corinthians 12:13 the Apostle Paul makes water baptism essential to church membership: **“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. . .”** Apart from this initiatory rite no one can be a member of a church. You can't be added to the church without water baptism. **“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls”** (Acts 2:41). The three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost were added by the Lord to the church after baptism in water. Baptism is a part of discipleship. You cannot be a disciple of Christ if you are unwilling to do the first thing, which Christ commanded every disciple to do.

In the time of the New Testament when a man believed he was almost immediately baptized, Jesus Christ said: **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”** (Mark 16:16). Peter told those converted at Pentecost to be baptized the very day they were converted (Acts 2:38). The very day that the eunuch believed with all his heart in Jesus Christ, he was baptized by Philip (Acts 8:36-38). The jailor and his household were baptized the very night that they were converted (Acts 16:31-33). As soon as Lydia believed she was baptized (Acts 16:14-15). Notice especially Acts 18:8: **“And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”**

Baptism is very important. It is not a non-essential ordinance. Those who claim to be believers and refuse baptism have rejected the counsel of God: **“And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him”** (Luke 7:29-30). Such persons are not friends of Christ who commanded believers to be baptized: **“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you”** (John 15:14). They have not put on Christ: **“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”** (Gal. 3:27). They do not have a good conscience because a good conscience requires that one be baptized: **“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”** (I Peter 3:21).

Modern evangelists in their week-long, city-wide crusades do not put any stress on baptism. They aim only to secure

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## Misunderstood

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decisions and then to leave the people to join the church of their choice, or no church at all in some cases. They see no connection between baptism and church membership. This proves again that they make decisions, not disciples. The big-time evangelists only seek to carry out the first phase of the great commission, while ignoring the other two commands in the threefold commission. If they put the proper stress on baptism and church membership demanded in the great commission, it would empty their crusade meetings of people. Those in union meetings are from all denominations, and they are very much disagreed as to the mode, the subjects, and the purpose of baptism.

Some see too much in the words of the great commission about baptism. They make baptism a sacrament of grace and salvation. They contend you must be baptized by one of their preachers in order to be regenerated and inherit the kingdom of God. Such a teaching makes the person who does the baptizing the savior of the sinner, not Jesus Christ. Outward baptism is not absolutely necessary to salvation as the case of the penitent thief shows us. Water baptism alone confers no benefit apart from true faith in Christ, for Simon Magus believed with his head and was baptized but went to Hell!

Others see in the great commission a command to practice infant sprinkling and by such a thing to admit infants into their religious societies. There is no command in the great commission to baptize babies. There were no babies ever baptized in the Bible. Our lord in the commission told us to baptize disciples, not unconscious, unbelieving infants. As to the baptism of infants the commission says nothing; it places no responsibility on the church or its ministry to practice it.

The baptismal formula for this age is seen in the great commission. It is to be in the name of the trinity: “. . . **baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.**” It is by the authority of these three divine persons who all approved of the administration of this ordinance at the baptism of Christ. The person who is baptized not only professes faith in each person in the Godhead, but he devotes himself to obedience to these three divine persons. This baptismal formula confirms the doctrine of the trinity and reveals the equality of the Godhead. We are baptized, not into the names, but unto the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which plainly shows these three are one (I John 5:7).

I cannot stress too much that to have this ceremony performed upon ourselves in the name of the trinity is an oath of

allegiance or pledge of devotion to them. To be baptized unto anyone is to publicly receive him as teacher and lawgiver. The Jews were baptized unto Moses (I Cor. 10:2). That is, they received the system he taught and acknowledged him as their lawgiver. Paul asked the Corinthians: **“Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”** (I Cor. 1:13). He meant, Were you devoted to Paul by this rite? He seeks to show the Corinthians by these words that at baptism they had given themselves up to devotion to God. Baptism is a solemn consecration to the service of the blessed trinity.

### **Question Five: Have We Misunderstood The Command To Teach What Christ Commanded?**

Those who are baptized disciples are to be taught by the church: **“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”** (Matt. 28:20). Baptized disciples are to be taught since they have only started the course of the Christian life. They are to be instructed in what Christ commanded so as to render lifelong obedience to all His teachings. The stress is not so much on teaching as upon the observance of His commandments. There is a grave difference in teaching one to know and teaching one to observe the things commanded. The duty of the church is the latter of these, for the church must be the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15).

The local church is responsible to the Lord for this teaching ministry. It is the only institution, which has the authority to do this job. Acts 13:1 speaks of certain teachers in the church at Antioch. In Ephesians 3:10 the Bible says the church is to make known the manifold wisdom of God in this age. Concerning the spiritual gifts of the ascended Christ to the church, Paul declared: **“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”** (Eph. 4:11-12). This is why one of the qualifications of a pastor in I Timothy 3:2 is **“apt to teach.”**

The church is limited in her teaching to all things, which Christ commanded. She is not to teach human invention or the doctrines of men, but the institutions of Christ. She is not at liberty to leave out some of what Christ taught for the well being of His church. She must teach her members to observe all things Christ commanded. There will never come a time when any part of Christ's teachings will become antiquated or untrue, inappropriate or needless.

Nothing could be plainer from the great commission than that Jesus Christ will be with a church that carries out the great commission. Consider the words: “. . . **and, lo, I am with you always, even**

**unto the end of the world.”** Christ has promised His personal presence to the church who is engaged in discipling others and in observing His commandments. But what about the church who does not carry out the great commission? Jesus Christ is not with such a church (Rev. 3:20) and will soon remove her candlestick out of its place (Rev. 2:5).

Our Savior is with the church that obeys Him all the days. He is with her members in the pulpit or prison, in fair days and foul days, in winter and summer days, in days of success and days of failure, in days of joy and days of sorrow, in youth and old age, in days of life and in the day of death. Christ is with His church to give her success in her ministry. He will be with her till making disciples, baptizing, and building by Christian instruction shall be no more.

The church is to enjoy the perpetual spiritual presence of Christ until the end of the age. This means that there must be true churches and true ministers on earth who will observe the ordinances of Christ until His second coming. Then His spiritual presence shall become a visible presence. In Revelation 1:13 we see Christ in the midst of the churches, and I am persuaded that there has not been a day or hour since the first century that He has not been working in and through His churches on earth.

Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ? Have you followed the Lord in Bible baptism? Are you a member of the church that Jesus built? Do you observe in the church you attend all things which Christ commanded?

## A Godly Man

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**such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses”** (Psa. 68:21). The Word gives no indulgence to evil. It will not let a man halt between God and sin. The true mother would not let the child be divided (I Kings 3:26), and God will not have the heart divided. The Word thunders out threatenings against the very appearance of evil. It is like that flying roll full of curses (Zech. 5:1).

A godly man loves the menaces of the Word. He knows there is love in every threat. God would not have us perish; He therefore mercifully threatens us, so that he may scare us from sin. God's threats are like the buoy, which shows the rocks in the sea and threatens death to such as come near. The threat is a curbing bit to check us, so that we may not run in full career to hell. There is mercy in every threat.

3. *He loves the consolatory part of the Word—the promises.* He goes feeding on these as Samson went on his way eating the honeycomb (Jud. 14:8-9). The promises are all marrow and sweetness. They are our Bezar stone when we are

fainting; they are the conduits of the water of life. **“In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul”** (Psa. 94:19). The promises were David's harp to drive away sad thoughts; they were the breast, which gave him the milk of divine consolation.

A godly man shows his love to the Word written:

(i) By diligently *reading* it. The noble Bereans **“searched the Scriptures daily”** (Acts 17:11). Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24). The Word is our Magna Carta for heaven; we should be daily reading over this charter. The Word shows what is truth and what is error. It is the field where the pearl of price is hidden. How we should dig for this pearl! A godly man's heart is the library to hold the Word of God; it dwells richly in him (Col. 3:16). It is reported of Melancthon that when he was young, he always carried the Bible with him and read it greedily. The Word has a double work: to teach us and to judge us. Those who will not be taught by the Word shall be judged by the Word. Oh, let us make ourselves familiar with the Scripture! What if it should be as in the times of Diocletian, who commanded by proclamation that the Bible be burned? Or as in Queen Mary's days, when it spelled death to have a Bible in English? By diligent conversing with Scripture, we may carry a Bible in our heads.

(ii) By frequently *meditating* on it: **“It is my meditation all the day”** (Psa. 119:97). A pious soul meditates on the truth and holiness of the Word. He not only has a few transient thoughts, but leaves his mind steeping in the Scripture. By meditation, he sucks from this sweet flower and ruminates on holy truths in his mind.

(iii) By *delighting* in it. It is his recreation: **“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart”** (Jer. 15:16). Never did a man take such delight in a dish that he loved as the prophet did in the Word. And indeed, how can a saint choose but take great pleasure in the Word? All that ever he hopes to be worth is contained in it. Does not a son take pleasure in reading his father's will and testament, in which he bequeaths his estate to him?

(iv) By *hiding* it: **“Thy word have I hid in mine heart”** (Psa. 119:11)—as one hides a treasure so that it should not be stolen. The Word is the jewel; the heart is the cabinet where it must be locked up. Many hide the Word in their memory, but not in their heart. And why would David enclose the Word in his heart? **“That I might be kept from sinning against thee.”** As a man would carry an antidote about him when he comes near an infected place, so a godly man carries the Word in his heart as a spiritual antidote to preserve him from the

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# The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit questions on any Bible topic

The Berea Baptist Banner, PO Box 39, Mantachie, Mississippi 38855

## 1. What are the "fruits meet for repentance" mentioned in Matthew 3:8? — Illinois



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**"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance"** (Matt. 3:5-8).

The above passage of Scripture has to do with John the Baptist preaching the message of repentance and baptizing all those who came to him **"confessing their sins."** I believe from this context we can safely conclude that the actual confessions of sin were the **"fruits meet for repentance"** that John the Baptist required.

From Matthew chapter 23, we find the Lord accusing the scribes and Pharisees of many sinful acts such as hypocrisy, extortion, deceit, false judgment, and self-righteousness. Since we know that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, John then, would have expected the Pharisees and Sadducees to come forward and admit the vile sins they had committed rather than be proud of themselves and self-righteous.

It is interesting to note that the people of Judaea were not coming forward saying, "I'm a sinner and I want to be baptized." No, they came forward actually **"confessing their sins."** Anyone can admit they are a sinner because everyone is a sinner and there is no personal shame in admitting one is a sinner. But when someone is so broken over their sin that they confess specifically what they have done which they are truly ashamed of, then the fruits of repentance are being manifest.

If the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to show the fruits of repentance, they would have to come before John the Baptist as well as the present congregation and admit that they had been deceiving their followers, and extorting from them while appearing to be righteous. They would have to confess this to the very

people whom they had wronged and seek to make amends however possible. This admission would be like a knife cutting their pride and wounding their souls so deeply that they would hate the very thought of continuing in this self-righteousness. Then they would beg God to forgive them of their iniquity. This is what it really means to repent.

John the Baptist knew these Pharisees and Sadducees all too well. He saw their pride and knew they thought of themselves as blameless rabbis rather than depraved, wanton sinners. He was right to refuse them baptism until they **"bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."**

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Repentance is a change of mind regarding one's sinful course and conduct, followed by a distinct change in behavior. Once the sinner is brought to the place of repentance by the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, he at once sees and understands what he is in the sight of a Holy God—a filthy, bankrupt, unrighteous transgressor of the law worthy of condemnation and wrath. Once his sinfulness is discovered within the heart and mind of the poor sinner, he wants more than anything else in the world to forsake his present course of enmity with God and embrace the redeeming power of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospel. He is willing to leave all in order to close with Christ and be united to Him by saving faith. This is repentance unto life and proof that the Holy Spirit has wrought a work of grace in the heart.

The **"fruits meet for repentance"** are simply the characteristics of a changed life that give evidence to all that a remarkable, powerful conversion has taken place. Where there is no change, there is no repentance, and thus no evidence of salvation. II Corinthians 7:10-11 declares: **"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 fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."**

In the case of the Pharisees and Sadducees that John was addressing, they would need to give evidence that they had given up their false hopes, self-righteousness, hypocrisies, legalistic pride, and damnable doctrines to prove that they indeed had been changed by the power of God.

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The text cited reads: **"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:"** and is, without doubt declaring, **"Bring forth** (show forth, or demonstrate) **therefore fruits meet** (or answerable to amendment of life) **for repentance."**

John the Baptist is insisting that those who then sought, or who now seek baptism, give clear evidence that repentance has indeed been granted, and that the lives of those who make such declaration attest to this change, not in word only, but also in deed.

James also makes similar demands when he writes, **"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou has faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works"** (James 2:17-18).

Now, it is scripturally evident that repentance and faith are inseparable graces, and both are produced by the work of God the Holy Spirit in "granting repentance" and "giving faith," for no one has either apart from the grace of God being exercised toward them. The creature does not, and cannot be the source of repentance or faith, or any suitable and acceptable "fruit." And this reality is overwhelmingly stated everywhere in Scripture where the matter is mentioned, suggested, or implied

What the creature is capable of producing, and does produce, is stated in Galatians 5:19-21 under the grouping of **"... the works of the flesh ..."** (Gal, 5:19). What the Spirit produces in the life of the "new creature" spoken of in II. Cor. 5:17, is now stated in Galatians 5:22-23 and is clearly contrasted as **"... the fruit of the Spirit ..."** what the flesh can produce in the preceding verses (19-21). This production of the Holy Spirit in the redeemed man is what John the Baptist demanded in Matthew 3:8. And now, as then, if no evidence of "fruit" is present, then there is no reason to believe that a change has occurred.

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**"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance"** (Mat. 3:8).

The scene we have before us in this verse is rarely seen in today's Christian world. In fact, most churches will baptize anybody who will request it without question as long as that person is willing to repeat some prayer, sign some card, or some other ceremonial rite. However, these Pharisees and Sadducees were not saved and were bearing fruits which proved it. Interestingly enough, they desired to be baptized by John—probably only as a show since John had become so popular with the common people. Yet, desiring baptism was not enough to John. He knew baptism didn't save and therefore instructed them that they needed to repent of their sins and later told them about Christ (v. 11). Then, he instructed them to prove that they had truly repented by bearing **"fruits meet for repentance."**

I have always held to the opinion that John meant by these words that he baptized only those whose life he had seen a change in. In reality, he was telling them that they were lost and in need of a Savior as he went on to tell them about that One. **"Fruits meet for repentance"** simply means "fruits which prove repentance has occurred."

TODD BRYANT



# The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit questions on any Bible topic

The Berea Baptist Banner, PO Box 39, Mantachie, Mississippi 38855

## 2. Does demon possession exist today, and is it sometimes the cause of illness? — Alabama



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Yes, and yes. Demon possession does exist today, and is sometimes the actuating cause of illness or maladies that trouble the flesh of mortal, created beings. While these problems confront men, we must not lose sight of the undeniable fact that the power to inflict such misery is only as God allows, for ultimate power is God's alone, and only as He permits can other beings such as Satan and his demons bring about these afflictions.

The patriarch Job was greatly afflicted as God gave particular and special leave for Satan to so trouble the flesh of Job, but not to touch his life. And no doubt, the case of Job is classic, but it is a case where God allowed specific liberties to Satan, but also disallowed unfettered access to challenge the existence of mortality.

Now, aside from the particular and unique case of Job, there are other examples that constitute the ordinary activities of demons among men, and these, so far as I am able to discern have not been terminated. I call attention to the case of the man who was **"possessed with a devil,"** his actions while so possessed, and his actions that followed his being freed from this possession, are as recorded in Mark 5:1-21 and also in Luke 8:26-37. A prayerful and careful reading of this event will reveal that this man ( a real, certain man), was literally and actually possessed (taken over) by evil, demon spirits who not only influenced, but in reality dominated or controlled his mind and body and provided their evil, motivating, and causative control to dictate his actions. They possessed him, and what he did and what he said were as he was directed to do and say. He was unregenerate and acted as he was directed. At Jesus' command however, he was absolutely and completely freed from this possession, and his actions, words, and demeanor were changed to reflect the change that Jesus had wrought (Note Mark 5:15).

Another example is cited in Acts 16:16-24. Here too, an individual was not only influenced by demon spirits, but was

actually controlled by them. Note that verse 16 states that this young woman was **"... possessed with a spirit of divination..."**, which means that she was, under such control as to perform as a "soothsayer," or as we would say a "fortuneteller." While under such possession, she acted and said such as is recorded.

I'm sure many other similar cases can be cited, but this should be sufficient to cause those who want to know the truth of this matter to be settled and comforted in learning what Jesus can do in these cases.

DOYAL THOMAS



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It is clear from the gospels that Christ personally cast out many demons during His earthly ministry, and it is also clear that demon possession still existed after He finished His work on earth and ascended back into heaven (see Acts 5:16, 8:7, 16:18, & 19:12). I do not personally know of any Scriptural evidence or prophecy that would lead me to believe that demon possession no longer exists today.

Concerning illness, demon possession is probably not the cause most physical sickness. As far as I know, every specific case of demon possession recorded in Scripture involved some kind of mental or behavioral problems, although there were occasions when it caused physical symptoms too. However, this does not mean that all mental illness is caused by demon possession. It just means that when a demon does possess an individual it affects the mind and behavior of that person.

The devil can be the cause of physical illness too, even in believers. He does not have to possess someone in order to make him or her sick. Consider Job. At no time was he ever demon possessed, but God allowed Satan to afflict him with a dreadful sickness to try his faith. Thank God that the devil can do no more than what God allows him to do. God always possesses His people.

MATT JAMES



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Yes, demon possession has existed in every age. It was especially prevalent during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ as evidenced by the varied accounts in the four Gospels. I believe that since the Second Coming of Jesus is near, we are seeing an increase in demon possession in the last days. I think that many of the godless rock and roll stars are demon possessed. There are many other examples that could be cited, but suffice it to say, demon possession is definitely evident in our world.

I am not a medical doctor, so I hesitate to answer the second part of the question. Certainly, demon possession could contribute to mental illness as evidenced by the account of the demoniac of Gadera in Mark chapter five. I am sure it could also be related to a variety of physical illnesses as well. Inherent depravity and indwelling sin are the root causes of all physical and spiritual sickness. Demon possession would certainly compound the symptoms and make them more severe and pronounced.

I thank God I am washed in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and indwelt by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. I John 4:4 declares: **"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."**

TOM ROSS



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**"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils"** (I Tim. 4:1).

In light of this verse, I'd have to say that demon possession not only exists today,

but, that demonic activity is increasing and will continue to increase until the Second Advent. I have yet to find one Scripture that gives even a hint that demon possession was or is limited to a certain age

Interestingly enough, the Bible has much to say about demon possession. Jesus delivered 7 demon possessed persons. Some of these were insane (Mat. 8:28), mute (Mat. 9:33), deaf (Mrk. 9:25), afflicted with seizures and fits (Mat. 17:15-18), blind (Mat. 12:22), and even had physical defects (Luk. 13:11). I can see no reason to doubt that demonic possession can have the same effects today. Let me take this opportunity to say that the Bible does NOT teach that ALL sickness or even most sickness is the result of demon possession as some wrongly teach today. However, that doesn't mean that some sickness isn't the result of demon possession.

Therefore, in light of the fact that the Scripture plainly teaches that demonic activity would increase in the latter days, we must conclude that demon possession absolutely does exist today and will continue to increase. We can see no reason to conclude that demon possession has changed in its effects and since it has, according to many passages we have already cited, caused illnesses in the past; it can cause illness today as well.

TODD BRYANT

## A Godly Man

*Continued from page 409*

infection of sin. Why have so many been poisoned with error, others with moral vice, but because they have not hidden the Word as a holy antidote in their heart?

(v) By *defending* it. A wise man will not let his land be taken from him but will defend his title. David looked upon the Word as his land of inheritance: **"Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever"** (Psa. 119:111). And do you think he would let his inheritance be wrested out of his hands? A godly man will not only dispute for the Word, but die for it: **"I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God"** (Rev. 6:9).

(vi) By *preferring* it above things most precious: (a) Above food: **"I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food"** (Job. 23:12). (b) Above riches: **"The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver"** (Psa. 119:72). (c) Above worldly honour. Memorable is the story of King Edward the Sixth. On the day of his coronation, when they presented three swords before him, signifying to him that he was monarch of three kingdoms, the king said, "There is still one sword missing." On being asked what that was, he answered, "The Holy Bible, which is

*Continued on page 412*

## A Godly Man

Continued from page 411

the 'sword of the Spirit' and is to be preferred before these ensigns of royalty."

(vii) By *talking* about it: "**My tongue shall speak of thy word**" (Psa. 119:172). As a covetous man talks of his rich purchase, so a godly man speaks of the Word. What a treasure it is, how full of beauty and sweetness! Those whose mouths the devil has gagged, who never speak of God's Word, indicate that they never reaped any good from it.

(viii) By *conforming* to it. The Word is his sundial, by which he sets his life, the balance in which he weighs his actions. He copies out the Word in his daily walk: "**I have kept the faith**" (2 Tim. 4:7). Paul kept the doctrine of faith, and lived the life of faith.

*Question:* Why is a godly man a lover of the Word?

*Answer 1:* Because of the excellence of the Word.

1. *The Word written is our pillar of fire to guide us.* It shows us what rocks we are to avoid; it is the map by which we sail to the New Jerusalem.

2. *The Word is a spiritual mirror through which we may see our own hearts.* The mirror of nature, which the heathen had, revealed spots in their lives, but this mirror reveals spots in the imagination; that mirror revealed the spots of their unrighteousness, this reveals the spots of our righteousness. "**When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died**" (Rom. 7:9). When the Word came like a mirror, all my opinion of self-righteousness died.

3. *The Word of God is a sovereign comfort in distress.* While we follow this cloud, the rock follows us. "**This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me**" (Psa. 119:50). Christ is the fountain of living water; the Word is the golden pipe through which it runs. What can revive at the hour of death but the word of life (Phil. 2:16)?

*B:* A godly man loves the Word, because of the efficacy it has had upon him. This daystar has risen in his heart, and ushered in the Sun of righteousness.

A godly man loves the Word preached, which is a commentary upon the Word written. The Scriptures are the sovereign oils and balsams; the preaching of the Word is the pouring of them out. The Scriptures are the precious spices; the preaching of the Word is the beating of these spices, which causes a wonderful fragrance and delight. The Word preached is "**the rod of thy [God's] strength**" (Psa. 110:2) and "**the breath of his lips**" (Isa. 11:4). What was once said of the city of Thebes, that it was built by the sound of Amphius' harp, is much more true of soul conversion. It is built by the sound of the gospel harp. Therefore the preaching of the Word is called "**the power of God**" to salvation (1 Cor. 1:24).

By this, Christ is said (now) to speak to us from heaven (Heb. 12:25). This ministry of the Word is to be preferred before the ministry of angels.

A godly man loves the Word preached, partly from the good he has found by it—he has felt the dew fall with this manna—and partly because of God's institution. The Lord has appointed this ordinance to save him. The king's image makes the coin current. The stamp of divine authority on the Word preached makes it an instrument conducive to men's salvation.

*Use:* Let us test by this characteristic whether we are godly: Are we lovers of the Word?

1. *Do we love the Word written?* What sums of money the martyrs gave for a few leaves of the Bible! Do we make the Word our bosom friend? As Moses often had "**the rod of God**" in his hand, so we should have "**the Book of God**" in our hand. When we want direction, do we consult this sacred oracle? When we find corruptions strong, do we make use of this "**sword of the Spirit**" to hew them down? When we are disconsolate, do we go to this bottle of the water of life for comfort? Then we are lovers of the Word! But alas, how can they who are seldom conversant with the Scriptures say they love them? Their eyes begin to be sore when they look at a Bible. The two testaments are hung up like rusty armor, which is seldom or never made use of. The Lord wrote the law with his own finger, but though God took pains to write, men will not take pains to read. They would rather look at a pair of cards than at a Bible.

2. *Do we love the Word preached?* Do we prize it in our judgments? Do we receive it into our hearts? Do we fear the loss of the Word preached more than the loss of peace and trade? Is it the removal of the ark that troubles us?

Again, do we attend to the Word with reverential devotion? When the judge is giving his charge on the bench, all attend. When the Word is preached, the great God is giving us His charge. Do we listen to it as to a matter of life and death? This is a good sign that we love the Word.

Again, do we love the holiness of the Word (Psa. 119:140)? The Word is preached to beat down sin and advance holiness. Do we love it for its spirituality and purity? Many love the Word preached only for its eloquence and notion. They come to a sermon as to a music lecture (Eze. 33:31-32) or as to a garden to pick flowers, but not to have their lusts subdued or their hearts bettered. These are like a foolish woman who paints her face but neglects her health.

Again, do we love the convictions of the Word? Do we love the Word when it comes home to our conscience and shoots its arrows of reproof at our sins? It is the minister's duty sometimes to reprove. He who can speak smooth words in the

pulpit, but does not know how to reprove, is like a sword with a fine hilt without an edge. "**Rebuke them sharply**" (Titus 1:13). Dip the nail in oil, reprove in love, but strike the nail home. Now Christian, when the Word touches on your sin and says, "**Thou art the man,**" do you love the reproof? Can you bless God that "**the sword of the Spirit**" has divided between you and your lusts? This is indeed a sign of grace and shows that you are a lover of the Word.

A corrupt heart loves the comforts of the Word, but not the reproofs: "**They hate him that rebuketh in the gate**" (Amos 5:10). "Their eyes flash with fire!" Like venomous creatures that at the least touch spit poison, "**When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth**" (Acts 7:54). When Stephen touched them to the quick, they were mad and could not endure it.

*Question:* How shall we know that we love the reproofs of the Word?

*Answer 1:* When we desire to sit under a heart-searching ministry. Who cares for medicines that will not work? A godly man does not choose to sit under a ministry that will not work upon his conscience.

*Answer 2:* When we pray that the Word may meet with our sins. If there is any traitorous lust in our heart, we would have it found out and executed. We do not want sin covered, but cured. We can open our breast to the bullet of the Word and say, "Lord, smite this sin."

*Answer 3:* When we are thankful for a reproof: "**Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head**" (Psa. 141:5). David was glad of a reproof. Suppose a man were in the mouth of a lion, and another should shoot the lion and save the man, would he not be thankful? So, when we are in the mouth of sin, as of a lion, and the minister by a reproof shoots this sin to death, shall we not be thankful? A gracious soul rejoices when the sharp lance of the Word has pierced his abscess. He wears a reproof like a jewel on his ear: "**As an earring of gold . . . so is a wise reprovener upon an obedient ear**" (Pro. 25:12). To conclude, it is convincing preaching which must do the soul good. A nipping reproof prepares for comfort, as a nipping frost prepares for the sweet flowers of spring.

### BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST

#### Financial Report

7-1-2004 to 7-31-2004

Beginning Balance .....	\$464.86
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....	300.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY .....	100.00
.....	400.00
TOTAL .....	864.86
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time .....	715.00
Postage .....	52.70
TOTAL EXPENDITURES .....	767.70
.....	97.16
Bank Charge .....	-10.00
Stop payment on Check #0433 .....	-29.00
.....	58.16
Add in Check #0433 .....	200.00
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$258.16
<b>CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT</b>	
Beginning Balance .....	\$891.52
RECEIPTS:	
Total .....	891.52
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT .....	200.00
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$691.52

### BEREA BAPTIST BANNER

#### Financial Report

7-1-2004 to 7-31-2004

Beginning Balance .....	\$3,262.94
RECEIPTS:	
Arthur D. Richardson, Cedarville, WV .....	100.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL .....	25.83
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....	1,100.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL .....	60.00
Berea M. B. C., Mansfield, OH .....	50.00
Berea M. B. C., Westpoint, TN .....	150.00
Bethel M. B. C., Pasadena, TX .....	100.00
Bible B. C., Sullivan, IL .....	80.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne WV .....	300.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY .....	100.00
Cedar Grove B. C., Millport, AL .....	50.00
Central Ave. B. C., Tampa, FL .....	25.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL .....	20.00
Faith M. B. C., Clarksville, TN .....	100.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR .....	25.00
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME .....	20.00
Gerald B. Price, Johnson City, TN .....	15.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY .....	100.00
Grace M. B. M., Marion, IL .....	25.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK .....	35.00
Hillcrest B. C., Winston-Salem, NC .....	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV .....	100.00
Joseph Jurzec, Lake-in-the-Hills, IL .....	25.00
L. H. Farrell, Des Allemands, LA .....	150.00
Landmark M. B. C., Moncks Corner, SC .....	50.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM .....	100.00
Morris St. B. C., Hobbs, NM .....	300.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH .....	100.00
New Testament B. C., Bristol, TN .....	10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN .....	50.00
Ocoonita M. B. C., Keokee, VA .....	40.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL .....	75.00
South Park M. B. C., Seattle, WA .....	25.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS .....	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Columbus, MS .....	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Galena, OH .....	150.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL .....	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Raleigh, NC .....	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX .....	30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA .....	200.00
Wendell Beall, Cedarville, WV .....	100.00
West Milton B. C., West Milton, OH .....	50.00
Subscriptions .....	206.00
Dividing checks .....	150.00
Sub Total .....	\$4,666.83
TOTAL .....	\$7,929.77
EXPENDITURES:	
Wages .....	3,920.00
Postage .....	781.42
FICA taxes .....	299.83
Dividing checks .....	150.00
Supplies .....	81.50
Total Expenditures .....	5,232.75
.....	2,697.02
Bank charge .....	-19.29
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$2,677.73

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## Studies in Esther

*Continued from page 401*

would be given to her. Once again, she humbly asked for the king and Haman to come the next night to a banquet she would prepare.

Haman went forth from the first banquet counting all his blessings on the earth. He was elated and happy in his riches. Suddenly, he was brought down when he saw Mordecai, who refused to bow to Haman. He spoke to his family and friends about his frustration and they encouraged him to build a gallows of fifty cubits in height to hang Mordecai on. The decree for the destruction of the Jewish people had already been enacted. However, to hang Mordecai in this manner would allow Haman to revel in his victory and power. So, Haman constructed the gallows and began thinking how he could accomplish the execution of Mordecai immediately.

**Verse 1 – “On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king”** (Est. 6:1). This night followed the first of Esther’s banquets. This was the night when Haman had seen Mordecai and become enraged again with his refusal to bow. Haman then went home and constructed the gallows for him.

The account tells us that the king could not sleep on this particular night. It is interesting that the *king of probably the most powerful kingdom on the earth was not exempt from losing sleep*. He had great power to command men, but he could not command sleep to come to his own eyes. Wealth and power often hinder sleep. Solomon knew this well and wrote, **“When the goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep”** (Ecc. 5:11). Greater positions of wealth and power are usually accompanied by multiplied troubles and worries. I would venture to guess that Ahasuerus knew this truth well and experienced sleeplessness more often than he wished.

*The gift of sleep is in the Lord’s hand to give or withhold as it pleases Him.* That sleep is a gift from God to His people is confirmed in Psalms 127:2, which states, **“It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.”** Sleeplessness can be the result of many different things, and it certainly can be the result of a medical condition that needs medical treatment. However, it could be that we are sometimes sleepless because of our vain worries. We might also turn endlessly upon our beds because of an uneasy conscience.

Real peace of mind is conducive to good sleep, which peace we have only from God. Paul sought for the Philippians, **“the peace of God, which passeth all understanding”** (Phi. 4:7). The world does not possess this peace; neither can they give it to a child of God. Jesus told His disciples, **“In the world ye shall have tribulation,”** but He first assured them, **“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace”** (John 16:33). A child of God should not be turning upon the bed of sleeplessness because of anxiety or worry over the condition of the world or things going on in their life, because we have the promise of Christ that in Him and in Him alone, we **“might have peace.”**

The Psalmist rested in God and declared, **“I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety”** (Psa. 4:8). We must put our trust and confidence in the Lord, who **“giveth his beloved sleep.”** We need not lose sleep for fear of what might happen. Solomon instructs us, **“When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken”** (Pro. 3:24-26). Sleep is a gift that God gives to His people and it may be had by faith.

Not only does God bestow sleep as a gift upon his children, but God also withholds sleep from the children of men as it pleases Him. Scripture records more than one instance of the sleep of wicked men being disturbed. Pharaoh in Egypt once dreamed a dream that disturbed his sleep. This nocturnal disruption facilitated the promotion of Joseph. Joseph understood that seemingly evil things were meant for His good for the preserving of the life of the nation of Israel. We cannot doubt that God took sleep from Pharaoh. Nebuchadnezzar also had his sleep interrupted by a dream. Similarly, God’s servant, Daniel, was promoted through this incident. It is safe to conclude that God took sleep from Ahasuerus this night to further His purpose in preserving His people.

The king could not sleep on this night, so he had the book of the chronicles read before him. It was the custom of eastern monarchs to have scribes that recorded the notable events of the kingdom. They made journals of the king’s life and it was not uncommon for those records to be read periodically before the king. No doubt, they would also read the records of previous kings. These could have been helpful to learn from past experiences. From the account, when Ahasuerus could not sleep he had some of the recent chronicles read to him.

**Verses 2-3 – “And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of**

**Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him”** (Est. 6:2-3). It so happened that a portion of the chronicles was read that recorded the honorable and heroic deeds of Mordecai to foil a conspiratorial assassination plot against the king. This prompted Ahasuerus to inquire from the chronicles, **“What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?”** He was informed that nothing had been done for him.

*Mordecai’s deed had gone unrewarded and unnoticed, as time had passed.* He had acted with honor, bravery, and loyalty and did a great thing. Due to his quick and decisive action, the assassination attempt was foiled and the two perpetrators were justly punished. For all of this, Mordecai was not rewarded outwardly or honored before men. Here again we see the strength of Mordecai’s character. He was indeed a man of integrity. He had not been rewarded, or acknowledged in any way, and he did not seek to be. He did not force the issue to be rewarded for this deed, which he considered his reasonable service.

It would be well if we were in company with more Mordecai’s today; alas, they are rare. Usually if someone does some sort of work, they make sure they get proper credit for their deeds. They want to get what is due to their name. Of course, they will act as if they did not expect it if they are acknowledged. Often people will not do any good work unless they are assured of getting the proper reward for their effort, no matter how minimal their effort may be. How far removed are the actions and attitudes of such persons from that of Christ, who said, **“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret”** (Matt. 6:3-4).

The Bible says plainly, **“For men to search their own glory is not glory”** (Pro. 25:27). Mordecai did not search his own glory and request honor for what he had done. If we are truly deserving of praise, we should be content to let another make that judgment. Solomon wrote, **“Let another man praise thee and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips”** (Pro. 27:2). We are not to praise ourselves. If we really deserve praise, then someone else will do it. And, if no one notices your work or it is forgotten about without acknowledgement, do not worry, **“Thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly”** (Matt. 6:4).

Though Mordecai’s act was forgotten for a time, it was eventually remembered

and would be rewarded. As Christians, we need not be overly disappointed by the faulty memories of men. We should not become despondent if our good works are unnoticed or unrewarded. Remember that our reward is not in this life and this world. More importantly, we need not fear any slips of the eternal mind, for *God has a book of remembrance*. **“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name”** (Mal. 3:16). God looks down upon the lives of His people and keeps a book of remembrance of their works. Christ assured that even the giving of a cup of cold water to one that needed a drink would not be forgotten.

Like Mordecai, our reward may be delayed in this life, or it may not come here at all. Mordecai was not really concerned about earthly reward or notoriety, what a contrast there was between him and Haman. The child of God may rest assured that God sees and knows and He is the judge of all the earth that shall do right.

*Ahasuerus was ashamed of his negligence.* He asked, **“What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?”** The answer came, **“There is nothing done for him.”** That word was a rebuke to Ahasuerus. He felt ashamed that he had let such a good deed go without proper reward. Ahasuerus was alive because of Mordecai. At the very least, he should have personally thanked him for his unselfish act of service to the king.

**Verses 4-9 – “And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king’s house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. And the king’s servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in”** (Est. 6:4-6). Haman came before the king and the language suggests that *he came very early in the morning*. The king had not been able to sleep. He had been up all night and they had been reading the chronicles to him. Now that the dawn had come, the king hears that someone is in the court. He asks who it is and finds out it is Haman. Perhaps Haman had not been able to sleep well since his mind was so exercised with his plans for Mordecai’s demise.

Notice Haman came to the king **“to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.”** Haman was urgent coming to the king early in the morning. It seems he did not want the sun to go down except that Mordecai was hung on the gallows he had made. Very fitting that Haman are the words of the prophet Micah, **“Woe**

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## Studies in Esther

*Continued from page 413*

**to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand**" (Mic. 2:1). These words describe Haman. He devised iniquity, worked evil upon his bed, and rose up early to practice it. In this, Haman's wickedness and depravity were manifested before God and all the world.

Ahasuerus was happy to have a counselor and he received Haman. Throughout this book, we have witnessed some wisdom in Ahasuerus for seeking the counsel of others in important matters. As soon as Haman came in, the king asked, **"What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?"** (Est. 6:6). He did not mention who it was he wanted to honor, he just pressed the question to Haman.

A season of reflection brought fondness again for Mordecai to the king's heart. He remembers the loyal service that Mordecai rendered without complaint. He desired to show appreciation for Mordecai's service. The king was thankful while he thought about how his life had been saved by another.

Times of reflection are good for us to remember the past deliverances of God. These reflections should stir us up to renewed praise of God. The Psalmist said in Psalm 103:2 that we should **"forget not all his benefits."** God has done many great and wondrous things for us. This is one reason why it is good for us to keep a journal or record of God's dealings with us. It is good to look back and remember mercies that we might otherwise forget. This is what the king had done when he thought about Mordecai and he desired to honor him appropriately.

Haman exhibited his pride once again by forgetting his own errand. He came there bent on the destruction of Mordecai but his whole countenance changed at the question of the king. The king said he wanted to honor someone and Haman thought he had to be the object of the king's favor. **"Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?"** (Est. 6:6). Apparently, in Haman's mind, the whole world revolved around him. When the king said he desired to honor someone, Haman thought it had to be him. He was the one most worthy of honor, in his own mind.

Consistent with the character of pride, Haman feigned humility in his answer to the king. Haman made a grand suggestion. **"And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: And let this**

**apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour"** (Est. 6:7-9). He essentially suggested that this man should be placed in the position of the king, even if just for a moment. This man should receive the pomp and majesty of the king for a little time. Why? Because that was what Haman desired, to be sitting in the place of the king. Haman revealed the wickedness of his heart in his answer to the king. He coveted after power and honor. Also, if he designed to take out Mordecai, his opponent at the time, it would not be long before he might design to take out King Ahasuerus to sit on his throne.

**Verses 10-11 – "Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken"** (Est. 6:10). The king was delighted with Haman's suggestion. Furthermore, he insisted that Haman personally carry this out for Mordecai. One can only imagine the shock to Haman to find out that Mordecai was the one the king was talking about.

**"Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour"** (Est. 6:11). At this point, it must have been difficult for Haman to maintain his sanity. The man that he hated the most upon the earth was the very man that he had to honor personally before all of the city. Haman had to eat a huge plate of crow.

**Verses 12-14 – "And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered"** (Est. 6:12). Verse 12 tells us what each man did after the parade. In the words of Kathryn Parrish, "Oh how different were they." We see the proud Haman and the humble Mordecai. Mordecai came again to the king's gate. He had worn the royal apparel, sat upon the king's horse, been paraded around by Haman, the highest dignitary of the land other than the king, and was put on display before all the people of the kingdom. What did Mordecai do after all this? He **"came again to the king's gate."** He returned to his work and duty.

In reality, all of this was a vain display, but Mordecai handled it properly. I am convinced that before God will exalt us in His service, He is going to humble us. God will humble His servants and those

that are truly humble can handle the exaltation, because they know that it is not from them. Mordecai did not pay a whole lot of attention to this. He could have thought that he was off the hook but he did not. He stayed rooted and grounded in reality; after the parade, it was business as usual.

However, Haman reacted quite differently. **"Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered."** Haman was abased and brought low. He covered his head and went into his home mourning. From this, we learn *there is no true happiness with pride.* Pride will never be happy with us. The Book of Job records, **"The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment"** (Job 20:5). Haman was elated within himself as he made his fantastical suggestion to Ahasuerus to honor the man the king delighted in. At that point, he thought he was the one who would receive those things and after honoring Mordecai, he hid his head in shame. We should not wonder that we are not to fret ourselves over evildoers. Like Haman, their prosperity is very short-lived, especially in terms of eternity.

*His misery is only increased by his counselors.* **"And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him"** (Est. 6:13). His wife and friends did not console him as they had done previously. They were the ones that told him to build the gallows. Now they began talking about Mordecai being of the seed of the Jews. They referred to the fact that he was of God's chosen people. Even the heathen and the wicked nations around the Jewish people knew of the great deliverances that God had wrought for them in the past. They knew of their history and some of them still feared what God might do if they stretched out their hand against the Jews. They interpreted these events as a sign that Haman the proud had become Haman the lowly and had begun to fall before Mordecai. They told him that he would surely fall and not prevail. I imagine that this did not cheer Haman in the least.

Here is evidence that even the wicked sometimes can see the working of God and know that it is His work. Even here in the book of Esther, though God's name is not written in it, the wicked saw God at work in preserving His people.

**"And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared"** (Est. 6:14). Haman was not given a lot of time to reflect upon the events and what they might mean. He did not have time to

consider what his next move might be. They came suddenly to take him away to the banquet.

**Conclusion** – In this chapter, there are certain notable providential events that evidence the working of God in the lives of the just and the unjust.

First, it was in the providence of God that Mordecai was not rewarded for his service immediately. Had he been rewarded immediately, then Haman would have never sought to perpetrate this plot against the Jews to have them destroyed. Mordecai would have obviously been in the king's favor and Haman would have never sought to kill the Jews. It is an amazing event, for if he had just saved a poor man's life, the poor man would have congratulated him, but he saved the life of the king; yet the king had not rewarded him. We see the providence of God that this was delayed in order to set the stage for the working of God's purpose.

Another providential event was the particular night that the king could not sleep. There were probably many nights that the king could not sleep, but this night was in the providence of God because the account says **"on that night."** It was a very certain night. Had the king slumbered as usual on this night, Haman would have come to him in the morning and, through his deceit and craftiness, Mordecai would have been hung from the gallows; but the king could not sleep.

It was providential that he called for the scribe. If he could not sleep and he desired to sleep, you would imagine that he would have called for the royal musician. A soothing melody would likely calm his mind and put him to sleep. Instead of that, he called for the scribe to read the chronicles of the king.

It was also providential that he read the account of Mordecai's act to save the king's life. I imagine the chronicles of the king was a rather large collection, and any number of events could have been read about. However, of all things, the scribe reads about Mordecai saving the king's life.

Also, it is a notable event of providence that Haman came first thing in the morning; right after the king had his mind on Mordecai and desired to honor him. Haman showed up at just the right time in order for the king to speak to him about doing honor to this man. The king did not make known who he was going to honor until after Haman had already made his suggestion.

Providentially, it was by Haman's hand and by his mouth that honor was bestowed upon Mordecai. This further heightened Haman's rage and made him exhibit his wickedness even more. This gave him more opportunity to highlight his depravity before God.

These are very notable events of providence. One thing that is good about

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# A Call to Separation

By Arthur Pink

(1886 - 1952)



Arthur Pink

**“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”** (2 Cor. 6:14-18) This passage gives utterance to a Divine exhortation for those belonging to Christ to hold aloof from all intimate associations with the ungodly. It expressly forbids them entering into alliances with the unconverted. It definitely prohibits the children of God walking arm-in-arm with worldlings. It is an admonition applying to every phase and department of our lives—religious, domestic, social, commercial. And never, perhaps, was there a time when it more needed pressing on Christians than now. The days in which we are living are marked by the spirit of compromise. On every side, we behold unholy mixtures, ungodly alliances, unequal yokes. Many professing Christians appear to be trying how near to the world they may walk and yet go to Heaven.

**“Be ye not unequally yoked together.”** This is a call to godly separation. In each dispensation, this Divine demand has been made. To Abraham Jehovah’s peremptory word was, **“Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house.”** To Israel He said, **“After the doings of the land of Egypt wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their ordinances”** (Lev. 18:3). And again, **“Ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you”** (Lev. 20:23). It was for their disregard of these very prohibitions that Israel brought down upon themselves such severe chastisements.

At the beginning of the New Testament, we are shown the forerunner of Christ standing outside the organized Judaism of his day, calling on men to flee from the wrath to come. The Savior announced that, **“He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out”** (John 10:3). On the day of Pentecost the word to believers was, **“Save yourselves from this untoward generation”** (Acts 2:40). Later, to the Christian Hebrews Paul wrote, **“Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp”** (Heb. 13:13). God’s call to His people in Babylon is, **“Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues”** (Rev. 18:4).

**“Be ye not unequally yoked together.”** This is God’s word unto His people today. Nor does it stand alone. In Romans 16:17,

it is said, **“Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”** In 2 Timothy 2:20 we read, **“In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use.”** 2 Timothy 3:5 speaks of those **“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,”** then it is added, **“from such turn away.”** What a word is that in 2 Thessalonians 3:14, **“If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him.”** How radical is the admonition of 1 Corinthians 5:11, **“Now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”**

**“Be ye not unequally yoked together.”** We are fully persuaded that it is disregard of this commandment, for command it is, which is largely responsible for the low state, which now obtains so generally among Christians, both individually and corporately. No wonder the spiritual pulse of many churches beats so feebly. No wonder their prayer-meetings are so thinly attended; Christians who are unequally yoked have no heart for prayer. Disobedience at this point is a certain preventative to real and whole-hearted devotion to Christ. No one can be an unshackled follower of the Lord Jesus who is, in any way, **“yoked”** to His enemies. He may be a truly saved person, but the testimony of his life, the witness of his walk, will not honor and glorify Christ.

**“Be ye not unequally yoked together.”** This applies first to our religious or ecclesiastical connections. How many Christians are members of so-called “churches,” where much is going on, which they know is at direct variance with the Word of God—either the teaching from the pulpit, the worldly attractions used to draw the ungodly and the worldly methods employed to finance it, or the constant receiving into its membership of those who give” are dishonoring their Lord? Should they answer: “Practically all the churches are the same, and were we

to resign, what could we do? We must go somewhere on Sundays,” such language would show they are putting their own interests before the glory of Christ. Better stay at home and read God’s Word, than fellowship with that which His Word condemns.

**“Be ye not unequally yoked together.”** This applies to membership in Secret Orders. A **“yoke”** is that which unites. Those who belong to a “lodge” are united in solemn oath and covenant with their “brother” members. Many of their fellow-members give no evidence of being born again. They may believe in a “Supreme Being,” but what love have they for God’s Word? What is their relation to God’s Son? **“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”** (Amos 3:3). Can those who owe their all to Christ, both for time and eternity, have fellowship with those who “despise and reject” Him? Let any Christian reader who is thus unequally yoked get from under it without delay.

**“Be ye not unequally yoked together.”** This applies to marriage. There are but two families in this world: the children of God, and the children of the devil (1 John 3:10). If, then, a daughter of God marries a son of the evil one, she becomes a daughter-in-law to Satan! If a son of God marries a daughter of Satan, he becomes a son-in-law to the devil! By such an infamous step, an affinity is formed between one belonging to the Most High and one belonging to His archenemy. **“Strong language!”** Yes, but not too strong. And oh the bitter reaping from such a sowing. In every case, it is the poor Christian who suffers. Read the inspired histories of Samson, Solomon, and Ahab, and see what followed their unholy alliances in wedlock. As well might an athlete, who attached to himself a heavy weight, expect to win a race, as a Christian to progress spiritually by marrying a worldling. Oh what watchfulness in prayer is needed in the regulation of our affections!

**“Be ye not unequally yoked together.”** This applies to business partnerships. Disobedience at this point has wrecked many a Christian’s testimony and pierced him through with many sorrows. Whatever may be gained of this world by seeking its avenues to wealth and social prestige, will but poorly compensate for the loss of fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Read Proverbs 1:10-14. The path which the disciple of Christ is called to tread is a narrow one, and if he leaves it for a wider road, it will mean severe chastenings, heartbreaking losses, and perhaps the forfeiting the the Savior’s **“Well done”** at the end of the journey.

We are to hate even the **“garment”**—figure of our habits and ways—spotted by the flesh (Jude 23), and are to keep ourselves **“unspotted from the world”** (James 1:27). What a searching and sweeping word is that in 2 Corinthians 7:1, **“Let us cleanse ourselves from all**

**filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”** If any occupation or association is found to hinder our communion with God or our enjoyment of spiritual things, then it must be abandoned. Beware of **“leprosy”** in the garment (Lev. 13:47). Anything in my habits or ways which mars happy fellowship with the brethren or robs me of power in service, is to be unsparingly judged and made an end of—**“burned”** (Lev. 13:52). Whatever I cannot do for God’s glory must be avoided.

**“For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?”** How explicit and emphatic are the terms used there! No excuse whatever is there for failing to understand the terms of this exhortation, and the reason with which it is supported. **“Fellowship, communion, concord, part, agreement”** are so plain they require no interpreter. All unions, alliances, partnerships, entanglements, with unbelievers are expressly forbidden to the Christian. It is impossible to find within the whole range of Holy Scripture plainer language on any subject than we have here. **“Righteousness, unrighteousness; light, darkness; Christ, Belial”**—what have they in common? What bond is there between them?

The contrasts presented are very pointed and searching. **“Righteousness”** is right doing; **“unrighteousness”** is wrong doing. The unerring and only standard of right doing is **“the Word of Righteousness”** (Heb. 5:13). By this alone is the Christian’s life and walk to be regulated. But the worldling disregards and defies it. Then what **“fellowship”** can there be between one who is in subjection to God’s Word with one who is not? **“Light”** and **“darkness.”** God is light (1 John 1:5) and His saints are **“the children of light”** (Luke 16:8). But the children of the Wicked One are **“darkness”** (Eph. 5:8). What communion, then, can there be between members of families so dissimilar? **“Christ”** and **“Belial”**—what concord can there be between one to whom Christ is everything, and one who despises and rejects Him?

**“For ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”** How blessed is this! First, we have the exhortation given, **“Be ye not unequally yoked together”**; second, the reason adduced, **“for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?”**; third, the inducement proffered. This is a divine promise, and it is striking to note it is a sevenfold one: 1) **“I will dwell in them,”** 2) **“and walk in them,”** 3) **“And I**

# 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.

## Perspective: Communist Party USA supports John Kerry

The southern Democrats must be thrilled by the news that the Communist Party of the United States of America, CPUSA, is publicly supporting the election of John Kerry.

The CPUSA has made available on its Web site, cpusa.org, an advertisement entitled Top Ten Reasons To Defeat Bush. This advertisement can be downloaded. The communist party urges readers to place this ad in local newspapers throughout the country to defeat President Bush.

Remarkably, the "Top Ten Reasons" of the Communist party are identical to those of the Democratic party; out-sourcing, homosexual rights, abortion and the like.

At first, I thought "This is only a coincidence." The Democratic party of the United States couldn't be in lock step with the Marxists! So, I wrote to a spokesman of the CPUSA in Georgia and here is part of his letter:

"The CPUSA supports the John Kerry campaign with donations and volunteer effort. We believe that defeating George Bush is the single most important issue this November ..."

Next, I discovered that one of Kerry's campaign themes is "Let America be America Again." This slogan was borrowed from a Communist poet, Langston Hughes. This is not common knowledge to the average American. "Let America be America Again" sounds good but is a rambling, gloomy poem.

Interestingly, another poem by Langston goes as follows;

"Goodbye, Christ Jesus, Lord, God, Jehovah, Beat it on away from here now.

Make way for a new guy with no religion at all — A real guy named Marx, communist, Lenin, Peasant, Stalin, Worker, ME — I said, ME!"

Then, if this was not enough to convince me that the Democratic party has lost it, a third discovery!

A Vietnam vet group took a trip to Communist Hanoi to investigate a report that John Kerry was in the "Hanoi Hall of Fame." Yes, there is a museum in Hanoi with a section dedicated to foreign activists who help defeat the United States Military in Vietnam. Of course, you would expect Jane Fonda's picture to be there. But, alas, there is John Kerry's picture shaking the hand of a communist official. Never has there been such a tragedy. Never has there been such a threat to America. The Democratic party has

been taken over by the far, far left!

Not only the communists, but the homosexual activists who are appalled that George Bush is married to a woman! They are enraged that the president wants a constitutional amendment to protect traditional marriage between a man and woman.

Then we have the ACLU running to a federal activist judge with every piece of legislation that doesn't fit into their leftist agenda. They support every Democratic socialist whim. The removal of the Ten Commandments is their top priority!

Why can't our children read? The liberal NEA runs the government schools. You can't mention God or the Ten Commandments, but you can teach Islam and have the children pray to Allah and pass out condoms. The teachers union is solidly behind the Democratic candidate, John Kerry.

How about the AFL-CIO? Solidly Democratic. How about the press? Solidly behind the left.

Case in point: Viacom owns CBS and Dan Rather. Dan is really the president of the American Leftist Establishment. Every night Dan informs the country what we, the troops, and the president did wrong that day. His boss, Viacom, just happens to own the company that published Richard Clark's attack on George Bush and company. Clark was the hero of the 9-11 hearing. Viacom pushed up the publication date of Clark's book to coincide with the hearings. Oh, by the way, Viacom not only owns CBS and Dan Rather, but MTV! Yes, the same MTV that featured Janet Jackson's breast at the Super Bowl half time!

Hollywood? There might be one or two votes for Bush from the filmmakers. But don't count on it. Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11" propaganda film hurt the president. Impressionable youth fall victim to lies. But, not to worry. Truth means nothing to the Left.

The quality of character of the Hollywood crowd is best illustrated by the recent antics of the starlet Britney Spears. After her 24-hour marriage, Britney is now engaged to a loser who left his unmarried, pregnant girlfriend and little child. There was not one eyebrow raised by the Hollywood-infatuated Network News. This is normal behavior for the left.

The deck is really stacked against the re-election of President Bush.

Now even the mass murderer Saddam Hussein agrees with Kennedy and Kerry that

the president is a criminal. Before the election in November, the press will clean up Hussein to look like a saint and George W. Bush a gangster.

John Kerry promises to save the union by going to the UN. Kerry may have to deal with Muslim Kofi Annan's son, Kojo, who received "consultant" fees from Swiss company, Cotecna, which oversaw Iraq's Oil-For-Food program. Some of the \$10 billion that was funneled through the "family run" UN program ended up in al Taqwa and Asat Trust, two of al-Qaida's front organizations. Funny, there are al-Qaida in Florida and the UN, but not in Iraq! Alas, but who is chopping off heads in Iraq?

While the bulk of our National Guard are over seas fighting terrorists, every leftist weirdo is coming out of the closet to hi-jack the November presidential election.

The question is: What are the "real" southern Democrats going to do? Will they join the CPUSA, NEA, ACLU and a host of other radical leftist groups or help save the country from this mob? (By D.P. Heimbold, St. Augustine, July 14, 2004)

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## 'I Had An Abortion' T-Shirt 'Insensitive,' Pro-Life Group Says

(CNSNews.com) - A pro-life group is outraged at the "insensitivity" of the nation's largest abortion provider who is selling t-shirts that proudly state, "I had an abortion."

Planned Parenthood's website advertises the t-shirt as "yet another t-shirt in our new social fashion line." It adds, "These soft and comfortable fitted tees assert a powerful message in support of women's rights."

"Once again, the callousness and insensitivity of Planned Parenthood provides another example of just how out of touch they are with the reality of abortion and the impact it has on women," said Olivia Gans, director of American Victims of Abortion, an outreach of National Right to Life.

"It is pretty clear that Planned Parenthood puts promoting abortion above concern for women," she said in a statement.

"Every abortion not only ends a life, but it can leave a woman emotionally wounded," said Gans. "The experience of abortion is traumatic and devastating and I am appalled that Planned Parenthood would exploit the tragic experience of women like myself to further their agenda," said Gans. (By Melanie Hunter, CNSNews.com Deputy Managing Editor, July 28, 2004)

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## The Baptists Blew Their First Shot

As you know if you've read our previous emails, a resolution asking Southern Baptist parents to remove their children from the "government schools" was submitted to be presented at their annual convention this year. We promised to keep you posted on its progress.

The first good news is that the resolution got wide coverage in the press. The bad news is that the SBC education committee refused to report the resolution out to the floor, so members could vote on it.

The next good news, according to

resolution co-author Bruce Shortt, is that "we did manage to bring our message to the floor by a motion to amend another resolution addressing the secularization of American culture." This amendment, proposed by resolution co-author T.C. Pinckney, a former SBC second vice president, did NOT specifically call for an exodus from government schools, but DID call for Southern Baptists to provide their children with a "thoroughly Christian education," defined as "home schooling, truly Christian private schools or some other innovative model of private Christian education."

As Shortt says, "Because our proposed amendment contained the core message of the Resolution, we got about 10-15 minutes to debate before the body of messengers whether Christian children should be in government schools."

The bad news is that the "leave them in to evangelize others" crowd still has apparently convinced the vast majority of Christians that the church and the family together have NO obligation to provide Christian children with a Christian education.

As far as we could piece it together, the SBC committee appears to believe individual Christian parents have a God-given right to NOT provide a Christian education, if God forbid they should incline that way, and it would be usurping parental rights for the SBC to inform them otherwise.

Since the SBC can't force parents to do anything anyway, this line of reasoning didn't impress us.

The biggest reason that Christian parents send their kids to public school is the free babysitting. If public school cost as much as private school or homeschool, I bet we'd see a major Christian exodus. So for any such massive exodus to occur, churches have to commit to making it financially possible for each and every Christian kid to be educated without government money. Fear of any such commitment, plus fear of offending those numerous Christians who work in the schools, is the major stumbling block at this time, in our opinion.

After Pinckney's amendment was defeated, according to a story on getthekidsout.org, "messengers approved the resolution on secularization with few opposing votes. The measure called for Southern Baptists to 'cry out in desperation to God' and seek His forgiveness 'for our part in the cultural decline that is taking place on our watch.'"

And what a mystery it is where the "cultural decline" is coming from, right?

The odds are 4 out of 5 that a public-schooled Christian kid will abandon Christ upon graduation from high school. In fact, it may be closer to 9 out of 10. And judging from the kids around here, even the "Christian" kids don't seem to have a clue about most issues of right and wrong.

However, all is not lost. Ed Gamble, executive director of the Southern Baptist Association of Christian Schools, may be picking up the torch. While he feels the

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Pinckney/Shortt Resolution was "too caustic," he agrees we may be seeing the beginning of a "sea-change" in how the SBC (and potentially other Christian denominations) view education. As he points out, if leaving Christian kids in the public schools to save their classmates and revive the schools is such a winning strategy, why hasn't it worked? (Home-School News, August 9, 2004)

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### Some pastors oppose amendment World should be 'more inclusive,' clergymen say.

Four Mid-Missouri clergymen and a retired minister gathered outside the Boone County Courthouse yesterday to signal their opposition to a state constitutional amendment that would limit marriage to a man and a woman.

The news conference was sponsored by the Constitution Defense League, which opposes the amendment that Missouri voters will decide on Aug. 3. The speakers represented a variety of faiths, although CDL organizer Carol Snively said each was speaking on his own and not on behalf of his church. The speakers opposed the amendment that would reinforce a state statute that prohibits gay marriage. Amendment proponents have said it's necessary because a judge could declare the state law unconstitutional.

John Baker of First Baptist Church said that the amendment should be a "nonissue" because of the state law and that it "would write real discrimination into our state constitution."

"The public needs to know that there are strong, faith-filled Christian persons of many denominations who are against this amendment and who do stand for liberty and justice for all," Baker said.

Jack Barden of First Presbyterian Church in Fulton said it seemed like only the Christian voices supporting the amendment were being heard in the public debate.

"I want people to know that there are Christians who don't believe in codifying hatred and fear into our constitution," Barden said. "There are Christians who believe that God wants a more inclusive world and includes all those, especially those who have been marginalized and oppressed by our society and by our own faith communities."

Asked about Bible passages that condemn homosexuality, the ministers indicated that those verses have been misinterpreted.

Baker, whose wife is legislative candidate Judy Baker, said "A very careful reading can bring new understanding other than the traditional, narrow views that are often applied to" the passages "with quick, hasty readings."

Fred Brandenburg of Columbia United Church of Christ said the Bible has been used to justify slavery and war. "So you can use it to justify many things, but that doesn't make it right," he said.

Amendment proponents are looking to

local churches and their congregations as key allies. The Coalition to Protect Marriage in Missouri has produced brochures that can be downloaded from the Internet and inserted into church bulletins, and Missouri's Catholic bishops have urged parishioners to support the amendment.

Ed Phillips, adult ministry pastor at Columbia's Evangelical Free Church, said that rather than take an official position on the amendment, his church has taught that homosexuality is wrong according to the Bible.

Phillips said there has been a movement to reinterpret the Bible's condemnation of homosexuality in an effort to legitimize something that "is obviously wrong in Scripture."

Phillips construed the position of that movement: "We would rather say, 'Well, this other possible interpretation' - that probably only has the 10 percent chance of being the actual thoughts of the writer - 'we like that interpretation better, so we'll go with that.'" (Columbia Daily Tribune, July 15, 2004)

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### Missouri Voters Approve Same-Sex Marriage Ban

(EP) - Missouri voters overwhelmingly endorsed a state constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, and energized proponents of similar bans in at least nine other states.

With nearly all precincts reporting within 24 hours, the amendment had garnered 71 percent of the August 3 vote.

The amendment states: "That to be valid and recognized in this state, a marriage shall exist only between a man and a woman."

Missouri became the first state in which voters passed a homosexual marriage ban since Massachusetts legalized same-sex weddings last year. The Massachusetts ruling left Legislatures in several states considering how to strengthen laws against same-sex marriages.

Missouri was one of 37 states which already had laws defining marriage as exclusively between one man and one woman. But amendment supporters feared courts could overrule state laws, and believed a constitutional amendment would add a firmer level of protection.

The Coalition to Protect Marriage in Missouri spearheaded efforts to encourage voters to support the amendment. "I'm very gratified and encouraged and thankful that the people of this state understand our current policy's a wise public policy and they want to see it protected from a legal challenge," coalition spokeswoman Vicky Hartzler told reporters.

The coalition's grassroots efforts proved effective, despite a more visible and better-funded campaign waged by amendment-opponents. The Constitution Defense League, which opposed the amendment, raised more than \$360,000, mostly from gay-rights groups, and ran a television ad in the days before the vote.

The Coalition to Protect Marriage, however, raised only a few thousand dollars.

Instead of television, the group spread its message by knocking on doors and appearing at churches and community events.

Hartzler said the victory in Missouri should motivate supporters of similar amendments in other states to persist in their efforts. "I think it sends a very positive message to people in other states who are trying to protect traditional marriage there," she said. "It says that people of this country value traditional marriage and they want to see it protected from judicial activism."

Louisiana voters are scheduled to vote on a marriage amendment on Sept. 18. Eight more states are set to vote on amendments Nov. 2: Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Utah. Similar initiatives are pending in Michigan, North Dakota, and Ohio.

Alaska, Hawaii, Nebraska, and Nevada already have similar amendments in their constitutions.

Even a constitutional amendment is not airtight, however. Opponents could challenge such amendments as contradicting the federal Constitution. Amendment opponents in Missouri say they are not planning a challenge at this time.

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### Bloody Attacks on Christians in Iraq Leave Eleven Dead, Dozens Injured

(EP) - The fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq has meant the rise of radical Islam in the war-torn country over the past year. Muslims once persecuted by the ex-dictator now dominate much of public life. The Christian minority in Iraq, meanwhile, has feared that it will grow increasingly endangered under threats of persecution.

The fears of Iraq's estimated 750,000 Christians were realized on Aug. 1 when a series of bombings across the country left at least eleven dead and more than 50 injured. The coordinated attacks hit four churches in Baghdad and one in Mosul, and represented the first major attack on the Christian minority since the onset of the U.S.-led invasion last year.

No group claimed responsibility for the attacks, but intelligence insiders believed Al Qaeda allies may be responsible.

Iraq's most senior Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, condemned the bombings, calling them "hideous crimes" that "targeted Iraq's unity stability and independence," according to the Associated Press. The cleric also called on the government and Iraqis to work together to end the violence.

Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh vowed authorities would find those responsible for the attacks. "The interim government of Iraq is united in condemning all acts of terrorism and is determined to use all available force in Iraq to pursue and destroy the people who plan and carry out such atrocities," he told reporters.

Iraqi Christians, however, have been uneasy about the government's ability to protect them, and hundreds have already fled to neighboring Jordan and Syria. The recent attacks deepened their fears.

Wissam Sagman is an Iraqi Christian who told reporters that he had already attempted unsuccessfully to leave the country, fearing his family would not be safe. This month's attacks confirmed his fears, he said. Sagman stood in his living room, wrecked from a car bomb attack on an Armenian church across the street. "These people, they love blood. They hate humanity. They hate us," Sagman told AP. "They want all the Christians to leave."

Sagman said he will continue to try to leave the country. "I feel despair now," he said. "Only despair."

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### Virtual Smite: The "Christian Game Market" Heads Toward an Edgier, More-Violent Game Style

(EP) - If you've ever gotten the urge to hurl a big ball of holy smite at your enemies, now's your chance. "Eternal War: Shadow of Light" - the latest addition to video games aimed at Christians - allows players to smite at will. They can also take down demons with "soul disks" and "Trinity blasts," while assuming the role of an angel named Mike sent to save a suicidal teen.

"Eternal War" is not the average video game. Low-key, mostly-innocuous games like "Heaven's Quest," "Pilgrim's Progress" and "VeggieTales" have dominated the small "Christian game market" for years. But a new, edgier style is emerging as a handful of software developers create games that combine King James language with aggressive violence. The target audience for the new genre ranges from Christian teens to twenty-somethings who've never picked up a Bible, according to Tim Emmerich, organizer of the Christian Game Developers Conference, which met last month in Portland, Ore.

Emmerich claims that the games serve a dual purpose: providing an alternative to the "blood and guts" violence of popular secular games, and delivering an evangelistic message through spiritually-oriented plot lines. The plots of the newer games, however, often employ grim spiritual violence, and if non-Christians learn about Christianity from the games' content, they may end up confused.

For example: Mackenzie Ponech, CEO of Two Guys Software and creator of "Eternal War," thinks his game is "a good stepping block for people to learn more about Christianity in a modern way without having to feel threatened or pressured." But the game's plot doesn't exactly read like the Gospels: The player takes on the role of an angel sent to save a suicidal teen named John Coronado from the demons of drugs, porn and self-mutilation. The player launches balls of smite, Trinity blasts and holy daggers at the demons. If the player wins the game, John's soul is saved. If he loses, John goes to hell.

Ponech says, "I'm not concerned about the game giving people the wrong idea about how the Christian faith works... I think it presents a reality that people face every day."

The violence in "Eternal War," with its 50/50 chance of the main character's eternal

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damnation, is different from violence in secular games, according to Ponech: "The difference between "Eternal War's" violence and any other action game's violence is that we don't glorify it. You won't see blood splashing all over the place, and you won't see chunks of enemies flying through the air. Our enemies fade away with a scream, much like you'll see when a demon is cast out from a person."

Emmerich says he plays "Eternal War," but "I don't let my children watch while I play it." He says two other popular "Christian games" on the market – "Ominous Horizons" and "Catechumen," both developed by N'Lightning Software – also require parental discretion. N'Lightning spent more than \$1 million to develop the two games over the last five years. The company's CEO Ralph Bagley told the Associated Press that his games avoid "all the blood and guts and gore" of mainstream fare.

The games may not have all the blood and guts, but they do have plenty of demon possession and calling down God's wrath. In "Catechumen," the player's role is that of a Christian trying to save his friends from demon-possessed Roman soldiers in the catacombs of Rome. The player obliterates demons with the "sword of the Spirit." When he hits soldiers, they're immediately converted and fall to their knees, as Handel's Hallelujah Chorus rings out in the background. In "Ominous Horizon," the player tries to recapture the stolen Gutenberg Bible from Satan while using Moses' staff to zap druids who get in the way.

"Christian video game" sales were estimated at \$200 million last year and are likely to grow. Two Guys Software is working on a sequel to "Eternal War;" N'Lightning has a new adventure game in the works, and the newly-formed Left Behind Games Inc. is set to release next year its first game based on the apocalyptic book series.

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### Bush Administration Appeals Injunction Against Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act

(EP) – The Bush administration on August 2 appealed a federal judge's order blocking enforcement of a federal ban on partial-birth abortion.

U.S. District Judge Phyllis Hamilton, in a challenge brought in San Francisco by Planned Parenthood Federation of America in June, ruled the ban was an unconstitutional limitation on a woman's "right to choose."

The law, which President Bush signed in November, is aimed at stopping a procedure, usually performed during the second trimester of pregnancy, in which a baby is partially delivered, its skull punctured and its brain removed, often by suction.

Justice Department attorneys said the procedure is inhumane, causes pain to the fetus and is never medically necessary. A government lawyer told the judge that it "blurs the line of abortion and infanticide," according to The Associated Press.

In its appeal to the San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the government is challenging Hamilton's ruling that the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act was vaguely written and might apply to most late term abortions. The government is also appealing Hamilton's ruling that the law was an "undue burden" on the right to choose.

The ruling applied to the nation's 900 or so Planned Parenthood clinics and their doctors, who perform almost half the 1.3 million abortions done each year in the United States.

Federal judges in New York and Nebraska also heard challenges to the law earlier this year from other abortion-rights forces but have yet to rule. Those judges have temporarily blocked the government from enforcing the act, pending their decisions.

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### Textbook Controversy Brewing in Texas: Will Abstinence-Only Health Education Prevail?

(EP) – A Texas-sized argument is shaping up over the state's purchase of health class text-books. The issue is whether the books will follow Texas law and focus only on abstinence or whether the abortion industry, led by Planned Parenthood, will get its pro-condom bias into the pages.

The controversy centers around the "abstinence-plus" message some groups are pushing to have presented in the books. That's code for education that offers condom use as the best protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

"The free-sex crowd has reigned for so long and had so much control over what our school kids learn, you know they're just screaming like demons being exorcised out of the system," said Kyleen Wright of the Texans for Life Coalition.

It may sound like a Texas issue only, but decisions of the state's Board of Education carry big weight across the nation. Textbook publishers cater to Texas, and what Texas wants is often all that's available to other states.

Textbooks can last a dozen years, meaning even kids who are 3 years old today may be affected by what the board decides in November. That long shelf life also motivates the abortion industry.

"That is why they're fighting so hard to get this information into the health textbooks," said Terri Leo, a member of the Texas Board of Education. "(They hope) every last child will be reading what they want them to read."

Experts say the place to teach so-called comprehensive sex education — another code phrase for condom advocacy — is a class where opting out is allowed. But that's not a possibility in most health classes.

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### Nation's First Christian Outlet Store Opens in Minnesota

CHANHASSEN, Minn. (EP) – The crowded and demanding arena of book sales has forced many Christian retailers to compete with mainstream giants that are discounting Christian best sellers like "The

Purpose Driven Life."

Revelation Christian Outlets (RCO) in Chanhasen, Minn., just south of Minneapolis, has opened a new type of bookstore in hopes of counteracting this trend.

RCO, the first Christian outlet store in the country, offers deep discounts of up to 40 percent off on top-selling CDs, Bibles, T-shirts, books and gift cards. "We have a low cost structure so we can create different types of values. It's a completely different formula than anything else in the Midwest," said owner David Happe, who worked as a corporate buyer for Best Buy and Wal-Mart. "We've tried to tie my strength in retail with spreading God's Word in the community. We want God's Word to explode."

RCO carries the top 50 best-selling books, the top 40 CDs as well as DVDs, and provides child-friendly interactive entertainment in the store, with fresh new merchandise coming in each week.

What the store doesn't carry, its Web site does. Rcoobooks.com has over 125,000 titles available.

RCO's marketing strategy is a three-fold blend of 1) the superstore chain concept of everyday prices, 2) the wholesale concept of carrying the best of what's available and 3) a discount retailer concept of off-price, high-volume one-time specials on top-selling items. "We built the store backwards. We built it from a consumer viewpoint versus a retailing standpoint. We want to keep our costs down so it doesn't become an obstacle for people getting into God's Word," Happe said.

Happe believes there is room in the Twin Cities for traditional Christian retailers and his outlet store. "The demand for Christian products exceeds what's out there today. A lot of Christian bookstores are strong in gifts. RCO is not, and because of that, we'll undergird them. Where the Christian retailers are strong, they'll still do well. We're not trying to be everything to everybody."

As an industry, the inspirational retail marketplace experienced increased sales in the past year, but during that same time period, Christian retailers suffered a 6-percent decline, resulting in a loss of over 250 independent Christian retailers nationwide. Yet, according to a survey conducted with Christian Booksellers Association, Christians desire to use their shopping dollars at Christian bookstores because of selection and atmosphere. As a service to those faithful customers, Happe has trained his employees to be in tune to RCO's walk-in traffic.

"We train our staff to let a customer derail their day, so that we can meet people where they are, whether it's to have a cup of coffee, to receive prayer or to share God's Word," he said.

In the back of the store is a 400-square-foot room made available free of charge on a sign-up basis to the Christian community. "Last week we had a moms Bible study in here. We believe that everything we have is from God, and so we want to give back to the community and let them use that space for

whatever they need it for," Happe said. Upcoming plans include a book release party for local authors as well as CD signings timed with fall concerts of top Christian recording artists.

As for future expansion plans, Happe, who co-owns the shop with his wife, Lisa, is open to where God leads them. "Our success for this location won't be based on how much we sell but how faithful we are to what He (God) has called us to do, and that's to make His product affordable to anyone who wants it."

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### Roy Moore Looks to U.S. Supreme Court to Reclaim Job

(EP) – Roy Moore still isn't giving up. Nearly nine months after his removal from the office of chief justice of Alabama, Moore is appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court to reclaim his position.

Moore lost his job last November after refusing a federal court order to remove his Ten Commandments monument from the capitol rotunda. The former chief justice says he was ousted for "professing a belief in God."

In a legal brief filed August 2, Moore's attorneys said that a state judicial ethics panel imposed an "unconstitutional religious test" on Moore when it fired him. The brief also said the panel wrongly refused to consider Moore's contention that the federal court order was illegal.

"Certainly you should not be removed from office for professing a belief in God," Moore said at a news conference the same day.

Presiding Judge William Thompson said that Moore was not expelled for professing a belief in God. "The chief justice placed himself above the law," Thompson said.

Moore appealed his expulsion to a stand-in Alabama Supreme Court which upheld his termination in April. He said he expects to know by mid-October or early November if the Supreme Court will hear his appeal.

"If the Supreme Court doesn't hear it, it's over," Moore said.

Phillip Jauregui, one of Moore's attorneys, said if the Supreme Court hears the case it could do one of three things: send the case back to Alabama courts for another trial, reverse the decision of the Court of the Judiciary and put Moore back in office, or rule against Moore.

Attorneys said the appeal was given to the court late last week, contending the action against Moore violated "due process standards required by this court," according to the Associated Press.

U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson ruled that the monument's placement in the rotunda was an unconstitutional promotion of religion by government. After a federal appeals court upheld Thompson's order, the U.S. Supreme Court declined Moore's motion to hear his case.

The 5,280-pound monument, installed by Moore in the summer of 2001, was wheeled into a storage room at the courthouse in August at the direction of the eight associate justices. It recently was moved out of the

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Judicial Building by a veterans' group and is on a tour scheduled to end in mid-October in Washington, D.C.

If Moore's appeal to the Supreme Court fails, his only chance of returning to the chief justice's office would be to run for the post in 2006.

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### American Psychological Association Backs Same-Sex Marriage

(EP) – One of the nation's chief professional organizations for psychologists has endorsed same-sex marriage, but many top-rank psychologists oppose the group's decision.

"Prohibiting civil marriage for same-sex couples is discriminatory and unfairly denies such couples, their children and other members of their families the legal, financial and social advantages of civil marriage," the American Psychological Association (APA) said in a resolution adopted July 28 by its Council of Representatives, which met in Hawaii.

The group added that it is opposed to "discrimination against lesbian or gay parents in adoption, child custody and visitation, foster care and reproductive health."

Keeping gays from marrying "puts a particular stress on them just because of their sexual orientation," according to APA President Diane Halpren. "It's a health issue and a mental health issue."

"We're going out on a limb," she said, "but we're doing what we should be doing." Many psychologists, however, disagree. One of those most opposed: Dr. James Dobson, founder and chairman of Focus on the Family.

"The APA's decision to endorse same-sex marriage flies in the face of logic, science and the historical experience of every culture on the face of the planet," said Dobson, a former professor at the University of Southern California and staff member at Children's Hospital in Los Angeles.

"Let's be clear: What we're talking about here is intentionally creating hundreds of thousands of motherless and fatherless families, permanently depriving little boys of a father and little girls of a mother."

Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, president of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, said he isn't surprised the APA would take such a position — just angered.

"The American Psychological Association is a scientific organization," Nicolosi said, "and what they owe us is science — the hard data on gay relationships and on gay parenting. Instead, they've let political activists take over the APA, and they are giving us their own values-laden take on the issues."

The APA also said officially that there is no evidence that kids raised by homosexual couples have poorer mental health than those with traditional families — and responsible psychologists find that very troubling, according to Bill Maier, Psy.D., a clinical

psychologist and a Focus on the Family vice president.

"Apparently, the APA's Council of Representatives has concluded that the desires of 2 percent of the population are more important than the best interests of America's children," he said. "Every responsible psychologist in the APA should be ashamed; the organization is obviously more concerned with appeasing its powerful gay lobby than it is with retaining any semblance of moral or ethical duty."

Phil Swihart, Ph.D, a longtime APA member and clinical psychologist, said there are no long-term studies on the effects on children being raised by homosexuals.

"I'm not aware of any longitudinal studies on the consequences of same-sex marriage in terms of being an adequate environment in which to raise children," he said. "And until that kind of long-term research is done, science is either silent, or has little to say on the subject."

Nicolosi, meanwhile, said one thing the APA does ignore is the considerable body of research showing that children need both a father and a mother. What's more, he said, it has turned a blind eye to studies done on the effects of homosexuality on individuals.

"When research does come in — as it indeed has — showing gays and lesbians to be much less psychologically healthy than straights, for example, the APA simply rationalizes it away," Nicolosi said. "They simply say the psychological problems are due to society's homophobia."

New York psychotherapist Ed Eichel said decisions like the APA's illustrate the networking that has taken place in the last few decades among the leadership of professional organizations that deal with sexual issues.

It is a network, he said, steeped in the so-called research of Indiana University's Alfred Kinsey, which takes as its foundation Kinsey's idea that bisexuality, not heterosexuality, is the fundamental state of mankind.

"The fight against marriage is really to disenfranchise marriage as anything unique or special," Eichel said. "It's not that gay men in bathhouses really wanted to get married, I can assure you. It advances their cause to end marriage, because marriage is unique to heterosexuality, and has to go if you are ever going to legalize sexual relations with any sex partner you want."

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### Human-Rights Activists Give Credit to Bush For Fight Against International Slave Trade

(EP) – Duly noted by the media on President George Bush's trip to Florida last month: a reference to rampant prostitution in Cuba, and the four ham, cheese, and pork sandwiches he bought from the local Cuban café la Tropicana. Bush was in Tampa on July 16 for a Justice Department conference on human trafficking—a presidential visit, not an official campaign stop. But paying attention to Cuban-Americans in a swing state during an election year inevitably received more attention than his message.

That was a pity to some conference attendees, who have appreciated Bush's opposition to human trafficking. The practice is modern-day slavery, involving the sale of 600,000 to 800,000 people a year across international borders into forced prostitution or labor. About 80 percent are women, and 70 percent of them are funneled into the sex trade. "Human life is a gift of our Creator," Bush told the audience. "It should never be for sale."

Most nonprofit groups fighting against trafficking praise Bush for his gung-ho leadership against the scourge. But is it enough of an election issue to persuade anti-trafficking warriors on the left to support him? The answer depends on how much credit they think goes to stiff laws, and how much to Bush.

"Trafficking is an issue that everyone recognizes is a priority with the Bush administration," said Derek Ellerman, executive director of Polaris Project. The group is nonpartisan, although he describes most of its employees as "leftists." "Whatever other disagreements we have with the Bush administration, they've done well on that." Nonetheless, Ellerman thinks Democrats might do just as well. "I think it's hard to say; there's never been a Democratic administration with this kind of law."

The law is the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, signed by President Clinton in the twilight of his second term in October 2000. It created tougher penalties for traffickers, increasing prison terms for slavery from 10 to 20 years. The law also required the State Department's Trafficking in Persons office to submit an annual report that ranked countries in three tiers according to how actively they fight trafficking.

Those in the lowest tier, making little effort to prosecute offenders, risk U.S. economic sanctions. Last September Bush sanctioned North Korea, Cuba, and Burma. Since 2001, when the first report appeared, roughly 20 countries per year have landed in the lowest tier. The threat of sanctions has been enough to spur several to the negotiating table. Last year, 24 countries adopted "new, comprehensive" anti-trafficking laws, according to State's 2004 report.

With the law in its court, the Bush administration has been able to charge 149 traffickers since 2001, three times the number prosecuted in the previous three years. Number of convictions: 94, twice the number secured over the previous three years. The United States has also provided \$295 million for anti-trafficking efforts in 120 countries.

Ann Jordan, Global Rights' anti-trafficking director, says Bush's successes are a natural outgrowth from the Clinton administration's foundational efforts: "It's not because of who he is—there's more money in it. We have organizations that are funded now." More progress is "just natural."

Still, Bush has done well to press the issue in the international community, said Michele Clark, co-director of Johns Hopkins University's Protection Project. Last

September he spoke before the United Nations General Assembly, and devoted several minutes of his speech to human trafficking, the first time a U.S. president has addressed the issue on an international platform. Clark says the speech helped define trafficking for countries still hesitating over how to approach the problem, which some nations confuse with issues of illegal migration.

Clark, a conservative, argues that Bush's leadership has also been essential in ensuring the U.S. anti-trafficking efforts actually took off. "The legislation signed by the former president could have just remained on the books," she said. "As for anything, the earliest years for new legislation are very important. They do require leadership from the top in order to gain momentum."

Human-rights activist Aaron Cohen, though he's not a conservative, also praises Bush. He calls himself and his clients liberals. His clients have included U2 lead singer Bono and pop star Ricky Martin, whom he helped gain access to Washington heavyweights when they began charity work on debt relief and slavery. "If George Bush does well in trafficking, I'm going to say so," he said. "It's not an opinion."

As important as fighting human trafficking is, Jordan doesn't believe Bush's performance is enough to sway fellow activists' votes. She says the Bush administration has laid sufficient groundwork for future leaders. "To me it's not so much if you're a Republican or Democrat, but if you will make this a high priority."

Will John Kerry grab some votes by hopping onto this issue? "If I could hear from John Kerry on what he would do on this issue," Cohen said, "I'd be more inclined to vote for him."

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(EP) – A Washington state court ruled on Aug. 4 that homosexuals can "marry" under state law. He said barring them from doing so is a violation of their constitutional rights. "The denial to the plaintiffs of the right to marry constitutes a denial of substantive due process," King County Superior Court Judge William L. Downing said in his ruling. Same-sex couples shouldn't start lining up to get married, however. Downing's decision is stayed until the state Supreme Court reviews the case, meaning no marriage licenses can be issued until then. The ruling came in response to a lawsuit filed by a group of homosexuals who challenged Washington's Defense of Marriage Act, which restricts marriage to one man and one woman. Opponents of same-sex marriage decried the court's decision: "We were quite surprised, especially when the judge said he didn't find any prohibition on same-sex marriage in the state constitution," Rick Forcier, head of the Christian Coalition in Washington state, told AP. "But neither would he find a prohibition of pedophilia in the constitution. So it's pretty shaky ground for him to make a ruling based on what he didn't find."

## Studies in Esther

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them for us to understand is that many of these events seem coincidental. Haman arrived at just the right time after the king had been reading just the right records on just the right night. Surely, we cannot conclude that these are random erratic happenings of chance. These must be ordered by the Divine providence. I am afraid we miss the hand of God many times in our lives because we think the happenings are trivial. We just "happen" to be here at a certain time, or something just "happens" to work out the way it does. Of a truth Solomon testified, "**A man's heart deviseth his way; but the LORD directeth his steps**" (Pro. 16:9). If we are alert, we can see the blessing and working of God in our lives in ways that we have probably missed before.

## A Call to Separation

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will be their God," 4) "**And they shall be My people,**" 5) "**And I will receive you,**" 6) "**And will be a Father unto you,**" 7) "**And ye shall be My sons and daughters.**"

"I will dwell in them," is fellowship; "and walk in them," is companionship; "and I will be their God," is relationship. First, in them, then for them; and "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). "**And they shall be My people,**" is ownership, acknowledged as His. "**And I will receive you,**" means being brought to the place of experimental and conscious nearness to God. "**And will be a Father unto you**" means "I will manifest Myself to you in this character, impart to your hearts all the joys of such." "**And ye shall be My sons and daughters**" means, that such godly separation from the world will afford demonstration that we are His "**sons and daughters.**" Compare Matt. 5:44.

"**Saith the Lord Almighty.**" This is the only time the divine title "**Almighty**" is found in all the twenty-one Epistles of the New Testament! It seems to be brought in here for the purpose of emphasizing the sufficiency of our Resource. As another has said, "Let any Christian act on the Command of separation given in 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, and he will find his path so beset with difficulties and so tending to arouse the hostility of all, that if his eyes are not kept fixed on the Almighty God who has thus called him out, he will surely have a breakdown." But let it be noted that these promises are conditional, conditional on obeying the preceding exhortations. Yet if the heart lays hold of this blessed inducement, then obedience to the command will be easy and pleasant.



### Missionary Sacrifice

By David Livingstone

A missionary, surely, can not undervalue his commission, as soon as it is put into his hands. But what means the lugubrious wail that too often bursts from the circle of his friends? The tears shed might be excused if he were going to Norfolk Island [one of the South Sea groups, at the time inhabited by cannibals] at the Government expense. But sometimes the missionary note is pitched on the same key. The white cliffs of Dover [England] become immensely dear to those who have never cared for masses of chalk before. Pathetic plaints are penned about laying their bones on a foreign shore, by those who never thought of making aught of their bones at home. (Bonedust is dear nowhere, we think.) And then there is the never-ending talk and wringing of hands over missionary "sacrifices." The man is surely going to be hanged, instead of going to serve in Christ's holy Gospel! Is this such service as He deserves Who, though rich, for our sakes became poor? There is so much in the manner of giving; some bestow their favors so gracefully, their value to the recipient is doubled. From others a gift is as good as a blow in the face. Are we not guilty of treating our Lord somewhat more scurvily than we would treat our indigent fellow-men? We stereotype the word "charity" in our language, as applicable to a contribution to His cause. "So many charities, — we can not afford them." Is not the word ungraciously applied to the Lord Jesus, as if He were a poor beggar, and an unworthy one too? His are the cattle on a thousand hills, the silver and the gold; and worthy is the Lamb that was slain. We treat Him ill. Bipedes of the masculine gender assume the piping phraseology of poor old women in presence of Him before Whom the Eastern Magi fell down and worshipped, — ay, and opened their treasures, and presented unto Him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They will give their "mites" as if what

they do give were their "all." It is utterly unfair to magnify the little we do for Him by calling it sacrifice, or pretend we are doing all we can by assuming the tones of poor widows. He asks a willing mind, cheerful obedience; and can we not give that to Him Who made His Father's will in our salvation as His meat and His drink, till He bowed His head and gave up the ghost?

Hundreds of young men annually leave our shores as cadets. . . Thousands rush to California, from different parts of the world, on the discovery of gold! How many husbands left their wives and families! How many Christian men tore themselves away from all home endearments to suffer, and toil, and perish by cold and starvation on the overland route! How many sank from fever and exhaustion on the banks of the Sacramento! Yet no word of sacrifice there. And why should we so regard all we give and do for the Well-beloved of our souls! Our talk of sacrifices is ungenerous and heathenish.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Conferences and Special Meetings

The Landmark Missionary Baptist Church of Granite Bay, CA will be hosting their annual Bible conference September 17th through the 19th. Services will begin on Friday the 17th at 7:00 p.m. The morning services will begin on Saturday and Sunday at 9:30 a.m. The theme of the conference will be "Missions" and some missionaries and their pastors will be present to preach and speak about their work. For more information, contact Pastor Rick Perdue at 916-791-7046 or via email at rperdue@jps.net.

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The Covenant Baptist Church of Troy, MI will be hosting a Bible conference beginning Tuesday September 21st and continuing through Thursday the 23rd. The services will begin on Tuesday evening at 7:00 p.m. Services will continue all day Wednesday and Thursday. A meal will be served on Tuesday evening at 5:00 p.m. for those attending from out of town and lunch and dinner will be served on Wednesday and Thursday for all in attendance. For more information, contact Pastor Bill Senich at home at (586) 977-8809, at the church building at (248) 689-6722, or via email at wrsenich@sbcglobal.net.

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### Churches in Need of a Pastor

The Landmark Baptist Church of Tulsa, OK is currently in need of a pastor. Any interested preacher that is not currently pastoring may contact Sis. Katie Wilson at 918-437-3904 for more information.

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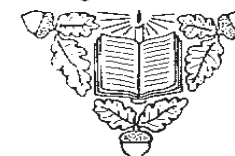
The Unity Missionary Baptist Church of Paron, AR is currently in need of a pastor. Any interested preacher that is strong in the doctrines of God's sovereign grace and not currently pastoring may contact Anthony Johnson at 501-594-5218 for more information.

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### A Special Thank You!

The Berea Baptist Church would like to acknowledge the efforts of Bro. Bernardo and Sis. Daisy Salacup, the Christological Baptist Church of Quezon City, the Philippines, Bro. Mark Minney, and the Dessie Baptist Church of Clem, WV in getting the third edition of the Berea Baptist Hymnal printed in the Philippines. We appreciate very much the work that was done and especially the extra effort and persistence that was required to get the books shipped to us in the U. S. Thank You!

## The Berea Baptist Hymnal



THIRD EDITION

## The Berea Baptist Hymnal Third Edition

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This is the second printing of the Third Edition of The Berea Baptist Hymnal. This hymnal contains 405 songs, including many written by Sovereign Grace Landmark Baptists.

These books were printed and bound in the Philippines. They are printed on bright white paper with 12-stitch hardback binding. There is only a small quantity of these books left.

We do have available some loose-leaf piano books for sale. These are individual pages in sheet protectors in a 3-ring binder. We are selling these at our cost of making them, which is \$30 each.

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